Prophecy of Two Boys

by Smartiepants

Summary

People who are born with two souls in their body are rare. But since when did Harry and Percy obey the rules? Follow them as they try to survive after their brother was mistaken for being the Boy-Who-Lived. AU. Wrong BWL
**Prologue**

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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**Prologue**

There once was a prophecy, concerning the fall of a Dark Wizard Lord. It said that two boys, connected by mind and body, would defeat him. Unfortunately, the seer who delivered this prophecy wasn’t a very good one, and the prophecy was misinterpreted;

*The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches…*

* Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…*

*And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…*

*And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…*

*The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies…*

At this time the Wizarding World knew of three children who had been born on July 31st. Two twins to the Potter Family and a small boy to the Longbottom’s. As the Light Wizards didn’t know which family would be targeted, which child was the boy of the prophecy, Light Lord Dumbledore sent both families into hiding. Unfortunately, the Potters placed their trust in the wrong man and, on the Night of Halloween, the Dark Lord broke into their safe house while Lily and James Potter where out at an Order of the Phoenix meeting. The Dark Lord quickly killed the girl who was babysitting the two boys, Harry and Charles. Then he turned his wand on the two babies, staring innocently up at him. Deciding to kill the both of them, the Dark Lord first shot the killing curse at Harry.

A bright ball of sea-green light enveloped the baby, acting as a shield, and reflected the killing curse straight back to its caster. The only damage was a lightning shaped scar on the small boy’s forehead. But even as it killed the Dark Lord, the killing curse exploded, sending rubble flying everywhere. It hit both the babies, cutting Charles across the cheek in a star shaped pattern and knocking Harry unconscious.

By the time Lily and James returned, their house was in ruins, but their babies were still safely lying in their cots, both sleeping peacefully.

This left the Light Wizards at a loss. Which boy was the boy of the prophecy? In the end Dumbledore told the press it was Charles, just to get them off his back, and it stuck. Harry was pushed back into the shadows, forgotten as his brother was shoved into the spotlight of fame, fame for a deed that he didn’t do….

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As the years when by Lily and James Potter started to neglect Harry more and more as they doted on Charles. Harry was a strange child, considered to have a multiple personality disorder by most who spoke to him – not that many people did. For the first five years of his life he only ever saw his brother, parents, godfather (Severus Snape – an old school friend of Lily’s) and his ‘honorary uncles (Sirius Black and Remus Lupin – his dad’s school friends and Charles’ Godfathers.) But after his fifth or sixth birthday he stopped getting visitors. Severus had an argument with James and was banned from seeing Harry. Sirius and Remus slowly started leaving Harry out to spend more time
with Charles.

So Harry spent five years of his life alone, forgotten by even his own family. But he wasn’t completely alone. Harry was a rare conundrum. He shared his body with another soul. A soul of a Demigod, Perseus (as they had both decided to call him) or Percy for short.

It would appear the night Lily had gotten pregnant with Harry and Charles, she had also slept with one of the Greek Gods. Not that Harry and Percy knew what Percy was at the time, but the fact remained; he was a Demigod.

This was the reason the world seemed to think Harry had a multiple personality disorder. Sometimes he was in control of their body and sometimes Percy was. Although their personalities were similar, the way they spoke, walked, ate and even carried themselves was subtly different to each other. Percy tended to be more politely spoken, and preferred exercise much more than the book-loving Harry did. On the other hand, Harry walked more upright and stiffly, unlike Percy who was in the habit of slouching.

And if anyone cared to look, not that anyone did, the green of the boys’ eyes changed ever so slightly depending on who was in control. Harry’s eyes were bright green, the colour of the killing curse. Percy’s were a softer sea-green that seemed to draw people in – or they did when people used to be around to see them.

During their five years of solitude the boy’s spent a lot of time either in the library or in the gym. Harry liked the library more than Percy, as (due to his godly heritage) Percy was dyslexic and ADHD, which sometimes even annoyed Harry when it got really bad. In the gym, however, Percy could spend hours working on his stamina at running or swimming, or learning martial arts or swordsmanship.

It was when they turned 11, however, that the two boys were suddenly shoved back into the real world…

Chapter End Notes

Ok, the Prologue's short... The chapters will get lengthier, I swear! This is just a small introduction. Please comment! Feedback is always welcome, however good or bad. This was just an idea I've had floating round in my mind... Enjoy!
Chapter 1

Percy's Point of View

I was watching as Harry poured over a book of magical theory when the yelling started. Harry had read this book before, and I had already had it memorised, so I was daydreaming slightly of what it felt like when we actually used our magic (wandlessly, of course, as we aren't yet old enough to have a wand) as the library door was flung open and our screaming parents came tearing into the room.

"What do you mean there are two letters from Hogwarts?" Lily was yelling at James, her fiery red hair looking like a messy halo of fury as her green eyes – Harry's green eyes – burned with fury.

James just ran a hand through his black mess of hair (the same hair we had) and groaned. "Exactly that, Lily-flower. Two letters – one for Charles, one for Harry."

A spark of confused recognition dimed the furious flames in Lily's eyes. "Harry…?"

Harry stood up from where we had been distracted from his book, and I sighed as he opened his mouth to speak. "Yes mother?"

Both Harry and I flinched as Lily let out a small scream. "Who- what- how-?"

"Oh dear Merlin," Guilt dulled James' blue eyes as he stared at us. "How could we for-"

"Forget us?" Harry finished his sentence. "Well, my memory is a little fuzzy, but I think it was something to do with the fact we apparently have a 'multiple personality order'. I don't have a split personality. Percy lives within me."

I mentally giggled as I saw our parent's shock slackened faces. Normal 11 year olds apparently didn't have the mental maturity that Harry and I did. It took a good minute and a half for our parents to collect their thoughts, but we waited patiently until they did.

"Honey, who's Percy?" Lily asked eventually.

"Percy is the other boy sharing our body. He's very nice, why don't you like him?" Harry asked, innocent confusion literally dripping of his words. I was just as confused. Did my parents hate me? I was always polite and kind to them, why didn't they like me?

Father frowned. "Harry, Percy doesn't exist. He's just a figment of your imagination."

I mentally screamed. In the back of our mind I broke down in emotional tears, shutting out the world as Harry shouted back at our father. You'd think I'd be used to this by now, having had at least 3 psychiatrists tell us the same thing when we were 3 or 4, but hearing it from my own parents hurt a lot more. From the hot wet tears trailing down our cheeks it must have hurt and angered Harry too, but I was only vaguely aware of what Harry was feeling. I was drowning in a pool of pain and nothing was going to pull me out…

Percy, snap out of it! Father is an ignorant idiot, don't listen to him! Harry shouted at me mentally,
equivalently slapping me across the face. Suddenly the pool of pain felt more like puddle.

Thanks Harry. I smiled weakly.

I returned my attention to our parents, who were looked rather confused at how to treat us. James had tried to tell us that I didn't exist, and Harry had gone from acting almost grown up to having a full on screaming fit. Then he had blanked the pair of them as he comforted me, which made them slightly mad. Now we were just staring at them, making both Lily and James really uncomfortable.

Harry poked me with a gentle soothing thought and we slowly merged. I couldn't read all of Harry's thoughts, but I was more in tune to his emotions and the thoughts he was sending to me, just as he was with me, giving both of us equal control over our actions. This wasn't something we did often, but when one of us was slightly emotionally unstable it made it easier for us both to cope.

"May we have our letter?" We asked our tone deadly serious and slightly childish at the same time. We saw Lily flinched, and a slight frown brushed our forehead. We were only asking for our letter.

"Err, yes, of course." Our father agreed readily. "It's in the kitchen. Charles should be up soon, are you joining us for breakfast?"

A childish delight filled us and a wondered smile lit up our face. "We can join you?"

Guilt once again replaced the confusion in our parent's eyes. A small tear trailed down Lily's face. "Of course you can."

We grinned and hugged Lily tightly, then hugged James to. "Thank you!"

After we turned 6 our parents had yelled at me when I had slouched in our chair at meal times, and so we had assumed that we weren't welcome to join our parents at meals. Knowing we were allowed made us happy. Maybe our parents hadn't deliberately blocked us out their lives…

We sat silently in our chair, waiting for Charles to come downstairs with the smell of cooking bacon and eggs filling the room. Harry was subconsciously making sure that we were sat up straight with our elbows off the table as we used my polite speech patterns to make small talk with our parents. It felt… right.

Then Charles came crashing down into the kitchen and stopped short at the sight of me. "Who are you?" He demanded rather rudely.

"We're Harry and Percy." We answered. Charles took a step back, fear lighting up his eyes. Hurt dimmed the happy feeling that our parents acceptance had given us.

"Charlie, dear, this is Harry, your brother, don't you remember him?" Lily introduced us.

Charles reply was short and sharp. "No."

Silence filled the kitchen, only broken by the soft tapping of our feet on the floor as my ADHD made us fidget.

"Hi?" We offered hopefully.

Charles just huffed and turned his gaze on our parents. "Did my letter come? Can I see it?"

Our mother smiled happily. "Of course you can."

James handed Charles his letter, then passed ours to us. A ghost of a smile lifted our lips as we
slowly caressed the seal on the back. Then, carefully so not to damage the wax seal bearing the shield of Hogwarts, we opened the letter.

_Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry_

**Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore**

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chief Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

_Dear Mr Potter,_

_We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of necessary books and equipment. Term starts on 1st September. We await your owl by no later than 31st July._

_Yours sincerely,_

_Minerva McGonagall,_

_Deputy Headmistress_

We can finally go to school. the thought struck us both at the same time. Then a second though hit us. We need to learn how to write properly…

"Um… Mother, Father." We spoke up hesitantly. "Will you teach us to write? We mean, we can write, but it's always very messy."

"For Merlin's sake!" Charles shouted. "You're mad! Stop saying 'we', there's only one of you!"

"Charles!" Lily gasped. "Don't shout at your brother!"

Something about the fear in Lily's voice made us wonder what had happened in the library when Harry had been comforting me. It wouldn't have been the first time accidental magic had sparked when we were highly emotional. But the library had looked normal when we came back to them…

"He's just doing it for attention." Charles whined. "Seriously, it's just immature."

"Big word." Anger made Harry take back full control and sneer at our brother. "Are you sure you understand it?"

Charles started going red, much to my fascination. Harry, don't be mean. I think he's choking on something!

Concern echoed through the bond from Harry, and he touched a finger to Charles throat, magic sparking though the touch. Nothing happened, and we both frowned.

So he's not choking? Harry asked.

I was so confused at this point. So why is he red in the face then?

"Don't touch me, you freak!" Charles growled.

"Charles are you ok?" All the spiteful anger had left Harry's voice. "You've gone red."
James started laughing, making Harry stare at him in confusion now. What on earth was going on?

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"Honey, Charles isn't hurt." Lily told us. "He's angry."

"Then why is he red? I thought people only turned red if they were sick or hurt. That's what the medical books in the library told us." Harry blinked. We compared memories of what the library books had told us and we both had the same conclusion. People only turned red when ill or hurt. And sometime when overheated.

James was in hysterics by now, and Charles was starting to laugh too. Harry and I were completely confused at this point and just sat there silently watching everyone.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter One... Harry and Percy seem so innocent in this... Their character's will change over the next chapters, just so you know. I hope you like it.
Chapter 2

Harry's Point of View

Once everyone had stopped laughing at Percy and me (we still didn't understand what on earth was so funny) Lily decided that we needed to go to Diagon Alley for our school supplies.

I stared with narrowed eyes at the lit fireplace. Of course, Percy and I had seen our parents use the floo network (travelling through chimneys by lighting some special powder in a lit fireplace and clearly naming your destination), but we'd never used it ourselves.

Charles went first, stepping carefully into the flames and dropping his handful of floo powder into them, stating; "Diagon Alley." In an almost arrogant voice.

"Come on Harry. You're next." Lily smiled. I nodded, cautiously copying Charles. One minute we was standing in the fireplace at Potter Manor, the next we was moving quickly through a small space, surrounded by darkness. I shut our eyes tightly in an attempt to prevent the soot from getting in them. I hugged our body too after grazing my elbow on what felt like a rough brick wall.

I tripped as I exited the fireplace at the end, but managed not to fall flat on our face. Charles sneered at us when he saw our bleeding elbow, but I ignored him, touching our elbow lightly, and sending a small spark of magic to clean and heal the cut. Charles' eyes widened slightly, but then he hid his surprise by regaining sneer.

"Can't you even travel through the Floo properly?" He laughed nastily. I narrowed our eyes.

'I don't like him.' Percy stated flatly, mirroring my own opinions on our brother.

A small sigh escaped our lips. 'Un fortunately we're stuck with him.' I replied.' You know, being blood related and all.'

"Charles." James had stepped through the fireplace now. "Leave Harry alone. As I remember you skinned your entire arm the first time you Flooed. Besides, I can't see anything wrong with him!"

Charles glared at the floor. "He cut his elbow."

"Where?" Lily had now joined us.

"Where?" Lily had now joined us.

I trained our gaze on the floor. "Its fine, I healed it."

A small gasp came from my parents. I heard it echoed from behind us, and suddenly became aware of the pub-full of people staring at us. We were standing in a warmly lit room with the occasional wooden beam standing out amongst the numerous tables. It looked like something out of one of the Lord of the Rings films (Lily's muggle childhood had led to Charles and me watching several films...)

"Morning Mr Potter, Mrs Potter, Young Charles." The old man behind the desk grinned at our family. "Whose is this, then?"

"This is our youngest son, Charles' twin, Harry. He doesn't like crowds much, so he usually stays at home, but we needed to get their school equipment today, so we had to bring him along." Lily
smiled as she replied, the lies slipping off her tongue easily. Well, I guess they were only half-lies really. Percy and I – before we started being ignored – had never liked crowds when we were younger. We were feeling a bit uncomfortable know as well... So perhaps it wasn't so much of a lie as a half-truth...

"Hello, sir." I greeted the Bar-keeper politely in a small voice.

Whispers broke out all around us, and Lily and James hurried to move us out the back of the pub. Percy and I frowned as we reached a brick wall. James didn't miss a beat, however, tapping it with his wand so that the bricks parted to reveal the famous Diagon Alley. I tell you, books can't fully describe the beauty of Diagon Alley. Small mud streets, with old-fashioned shops build in a Mock-Tudor style lining them filled our sight. Witches and wizards rushed about their business chatting and laughing as they did so. We grinned. 'This place as brilliant!'

"Come along Harry dear, don't dawdle." Lily prompted. I ran to catch up with her, still gazing all around us as I did so.

'This place...' Percy trailed off. 'It feels like home.'

I nodded absentmindedly,

We eventually came to a stop outside a large marble building, labelled Gringotts. Inside was two rows of tables, with goblins sitting behind them, weighing various amounts of jewels, gold and other precious metals, lining a large cavernous hall. At the end was a high desk, with another goblin sitting there.

"Ah... the Potter Family. How might I... assist you?" The goblin asked as we approached, disdain practically dripping off his words.

'I take it he doesn't like our family...' I commented to Percy.

"We need to enter our vaults." James demanded pompously. Percy and I frowned slightly at him. No wonder the Goblins didn't like him, treating them as lesser beings.

"That is, if it isn't too much trouble, Master Goblin." We added in Gobbledygook. I knew that it hadn't been a waste of time to learn it, even if Percy hadn't agreed at the time.

The Goblin's eyes widened at the sound of his native tongue before he replied in the same language.

"You speak well, Young Master Potter. I am Hoplink, second to High Chief Ragnuk at this branch. I do not believe we have yet had the pleasure of meeting..."

"Harry and Percy. We are delighted to meet you, Master Hoplink. May your wealth swell with time." We introduced ourselves, Percy coming up to the front of our mind to share control with me.

Hoplink bowed his head slightly to us. "A rare being, you are, Young Masters. It is unusually to have two souls... May your vaults never run dry."

Lily and James stared at us in amazement as we conversed happily with Hoplink. After a short bow in farewell when another goblin arrived to take us to the Potter Vaults, we bade Hoplink a good day.

"Mother, what was that strange language?" Charles asked Lily, a note of fear in his voice.

We answered instead. "Gobbledygook. It is the language of the Goblins. Not all beings speak human languages, you know."
James gave us a curious look. "And where did you learn to speak it fluently?"

"The Potter Library has a whole range of books. It has at least five books on Goblin culture, as well as gobbledygook." We explained in a slightly bored voice. "You should read them sometime, they are most informative into the lives of our fellow magical beings."

"You are wise, Young Potter Masters, for one so young." Our goblin guide informed me.

We inclined our head in thanks. "But not wise enough." We replied graciously. "For one cannot fully understand another culture if they have not lived by its rules. I do understand, however, that my family have much reason to apologise for their bigotry behaviour towards you and your kin. Please accept our most sincere apologies on behalf of our ignorant family."

"That is quite alright, Young Masters, you cannot be held responsible for those who think themselves so mighty."

The goblin laughed, a harsh sound that echoed on the rocks as we reached what looked like a mine cart.

We shook our heads. "Please, call us Harry and Percy. Young Masters sounds too formal for what we are used to."

"As you wish, Harry and Percy. In return though, you must call me Griphook."

"Deal." We laughed, returning to English. The rest of our family were a few meters back, talking about something or another. We stepped into the cart, and waited patiently for them to get in as well.

'I like Griphook.' Percy grinned.

'Me too.' I nodded. 'He's a nice chap, too bad Wizards are ignorant to the disrespect with which they treat his kind...'

' Hmm.' Percy hummed in agreement.

The rest of our trip within the Vaults of the Bank went quickly and soon we were back in the open air, with bags of galleons (large golden coins) in our pockets.

We just followed our parents as they circuited the shops, buying our text books, potion ingredients, equipment... When we reached the robes shop, Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions, our parent's left us to be fitted while they went to buy us a birthday present, or something. We weren't really listening.

Madam Malkin was a swat smiling witch, who greeted us happily. "Hogwarts, dears?"

"That's right," Charles replied in his arrogant 'I-am-the-Boy-Who-Lived' voice, "I'm going to be top of the year."

Percy rolled our eyes while I sighed. "Charles, you can't know that. Besides, fame isn't everything."

"Huh!" Our brother snorted. I gave Madam Malkin an apologetic glance.

"We, I have another young man also being fitted, so if you'll follow me..."

We followed the cheerful seems-mistress to where a white-blond boy was standing on a stool, his head held high in a way only the oldest of Pure-bloods (wizards whose family lines weren't 'tainted' by non-magic blood) were capable of. Charles sneered disdainfully at the boy, which both Percy and I noted with a strange sense of apprehension.
"Malfoy."

"Potter."

We sighed and muttered softly. "Nice to know we're all on first name basis."

'Malfoy' turned his piercing grey eyes on us. "And who exactly do you think you are?"

"We are Harry and Percy Potter." We replied. "His brother," we indicated Charles, before adding in a murmur, "unfortunately..."

A smirk lifted Malfoy's lips. "So, you're the forgotten twin. Severus is my Godfather too."

"Really?" A smile lit up our face, and a wistful feeling echoed down my bond with Percy. "What's he like?"

"He's a potions master." Malfoy told me, as if that explained everything. "Strict, but within reason – at least with Sytherins, that is. He recognizes us as the best house. Fiercely loyal to those who've earned his trust... He's the best!"

"We wish we could remember him..." Percy trailed off, and I nodded in agreement.

Malfoy suddenly frowned. "You're talking in the plural."

A grin twitched at our lips. "That's because there's two of us. Percy and Harry, Harry and Percy. Born under the name Harry though..." A frown whipped the grin off our face.

"You're a twin-soul." Reverence destroyed any arrogance in the blond boy's voice. "Severus never told me..."

"A twin-soul? What in Merlin's name is that?" Charles scoffed.

Madam Malkin frowned at Charles. "A twin-soul is a magical creature born with two souls in their body. They often have incredible magical talents, having two magical cores to call upon."

"Draco?" An oily voice called from the front of the store. "Are you finished yet? Your father wants to get your wand."

"Oh, Uncle Severus!" Malfoy called back. "I'll be done in a minute. But there's someone I think you'd like to meet."

"Oh?" The newcomer inquired. He stepped into our line of sight, and the greasy black shoulder-length hair and dark almost black eyes and sallow face of the man seemed familiar...

"Uncle Severus, I'd like you to meet Harry and Percy, your other Godsons." Draco told him excitedly.

Oh! I exclaimed. It's Uncle Sevy!

"Two more? I was only aware of you and Harry Potter." Severus commented dryly.

"Well, that's the name we were born under. But our parents called us schizophrenic, and so we didn't get a second name, so we named Perseus ourselves." We explained, hope dancing like a candle-flame in our minds.

"Of course. Your parent's were quite certain that you were just imagining Percy." Severus smiled.
"It's a shame they didn't listen to you."

"Please!" Charles scoffed. "He's just doing it for attention."

The shop door opened then, and James and Lily walked in, followed by another man, who looked like an older version of Draco. James stiffened when he saw Severus.

"Snape." He nodded reluctantly, while Lily just stared emptily at him.

Draco-senior, as Percy dubbed him, smiled coldly. "Well, isn't this a touching reunion. I had no idea you treated your old friends so well Potter."

"Shut it Lucius!" James snapped.

"Gentlemen please! I will not stand arguing in my shop. Either stop or take it outside. You'll scare off all my customers!" Madam Malkin intercepted, her merry personality residing for a moment.

Seeing as Percy and I were finished, as was Charles, we grabbed our father's hand. "Come on, James. There's no point in fighting, you'll have lost the argument before it began, let's go."

"Smart boy." Lucius commented, surprise colouring his voice.

Draco muttered quietly. "Boys."

"What was that, Draco?" Lucius turned to his son.

Draco swallowed nervously. "Boys. Harry and Percy are a twin-soul."

"Indeed." The elder Malfoy raised an arched eyebrow. "Curious..."

Percy and I didn't pay any attention to anything that may or may not have been said as we pulled our fuming father out of the store, quickly followed by Lily and a complaining Charles.

Once outside the shop Charles exclamation drew our attention to the cages Lily and James were carrying. Inside the cages were two owls. One was a gorgeous snowy owl, and the other was a proud barn owl. Charles immediately jumped to get the barn owl, claiming it was more fitting for one of his status. We rolled our eyes. We preferred the snowy owl anyway.

"Happy Birthday boys!" Lily grinned at us. We couldn't help but return a small smile at the joy on our mother's face.

Having been fitted for our robes we next followed James and Lily to Ollivander's Wand Shop. The shop looked ancient, even without the sign claiming the store had been founded in 382AD.

'I don't think that shop's been given a new paint job since it was founded!' Percy sniggered. I snorted. It was true, the paint was peeling slightly and the glass looked frosted due to the amount of dust layered on it.

A bell rang out in welcome as we entered, and a short man with cheerful blue eyes and brown-going-silver hair appeared from somewhere in the back. The walls were lined with black boxes all the way up to the ceiling. In various places ladders were propped up against the selves to reach some of the higher up ones.

"Ah, yes. The Potter Family. I've been expecting you a while." The man smiled. Lily flashed a smile back.
"Yes, well, we didn't receive the acceptance letters until today, so..."

"Indeed. No matter, no matter. Now, shall we start with the eldest? Charles Potter... Let's start with this, Hawthorn, dragon's heart string, eleven inches, rather whippy..."

And so it began. Wand after wand was passed to my brother until he finally got his wand of Laurel with a dragon heartstring, extremely flexible, eight inches. This had been his sixth wand to try, and produces a few red sparks as he held it. We grinned. Our turn.

"Ah, interesting." Ollivander mumbled as he met our eyes. "A twin-soul. And currently sharing control, very rare, yes, very rare indeed..."

We tilted our head to one side and frowned, a mixture of both our habits when confronted with something confusing. Then Ollivander was off. The boxes he pulled off the shelves for us, however were different to the usual thin boxes. They were twice as wide, containing two wands.

"Shall we try this pair first? Ash, unicorn hair, thirteen inches, rather sturdy and Blackwood, dragon heart string, thirteen inches, whippy... No, no, no!" We had only just picked up the wands when they were taken from us again. It went on and on, until Ollivander had absolutely none of his paired boxes left. Charles just wouldn't stop complaining.

"Why is it taking so long? I want to go get and ice-cream. Hurry up already!"

"A tricky one huh?" Ollivander chuckled, grinning ear to ear at this challenge. "Hmm, I wonder..."

Ollivander walked into the very back of his shop, coming back with two normal sized boxes. Here, this one's Holly, phoenix feather core, thirteen and a half inches, sturdy."

We picked up the wand. Immediately it felt as if hot air had swept over me, energy filled my body and a warm feeling of right filled me. I beamed, though I felt no such feelings from Percy.

'This! This is the one!' I laughed, Percy laughing along as the echo of my joy running through him.

"Yes! Yes, this is good... Now, for Perseus..."

We stiffened at this, all laughter stopping. "How do you know who's who?" We demanded. "And how do you know Percy's name?"

Ollivander just smiled. "All in good time, young ones, all in good time..."

He held out another wand. This time I felt Percy filling with the same feeling of belonging I had just been filled with.

"English Oak, hippocampus hair, and, thirteen and a half inches, sturdy... interesting, these were some of my late father's work."

Percy and I grinned.

'Defying the normal once more, my friend.' Percy laughed.

'To defy normal that must first have implied we were once normal.' I retorted happily.

Finally, we were ready for magic. But the real question remained unanswered – was magic ready for us?
Chapter 3

Percy's point of view

The remaining summer flew by, and soon enough it was September first and we were off to Hogwarts. Harry had spent hours poring over our new text books, and I literally had to fight him for control to carry on with my usual exercise routine. Still, at last it was here, and I think I had just about every spell up to fourth year memorised thanks to Harry.

Platform 9 ¾ was a busy as ever, packed full of students and families waving goodbye. Harry, who I had given control, was weaving through the crowds after a quick goodbye to James and Lily. Steam was billowing out the top of the steam engine, and the sound of owls hooting, cats meowing and toads croaking filled the air that wasn't already filled with heart-felt goodbyes.

Finally we reached the train, and immediately sort out an empty carriage. A flick of Harry's wand kept our brother and any of his fans out, just to be safe. A quick levitation charm had our trunk safely in the rack above the seats. Finally, we sat down on the red velvet seats, watching the teeming people still outside the train.

A knock at the door brought our attention back to the present a few minutes later. It didn't take us a minute to recognise the bleach blonde hair of the Malfoy heir - Draco – who we had met in Madam Malkin's during our school shopping session at Diagon. Harry motioned him in with a beaming smile.

"Hey Draco!"

'Hey!' I chimed in, in our head. Harry mentally snorted at me for that, but I ignored him.

"Hey Harry, Percy." Draco nodded his head at us, sliding his trunk into the luggage rack and sitting opposite us. "How's your summer been?"

"Good. I got all our books read..."

'And memorised!' I muttered, but Harry ignored me.

"And a few more. You?"

Draco sniffed superiorly in the typical pure-blood fashion. "You did all that willingly? Father all but tied me to my desk to get me to do the same. I escaped enough to go flying though."

"I'd love to fly..." Harry murmured. At Draco's questioning look he explained. "My parent's hadn't looked at us for about five years before we received our letter, so I never got the chance to... plus I don't own a broom."

"Never mind, first years have lessons anyway, so you'll get your chance. If you inherited your father's genes you'll do fine - I'm no fan of Gryffindor, but even us Slytherin's respect talent when we see it." Draco grinned at us when he saw our bewildered expression.

'I like Draco.' I murmured to Harry. He grinned mentally back.

'Me too.'
A thud shook the carriage as two bulky boys shoved the door open. Harry and I looked curiously at the two boys as they came in. Then sat themselves on either side of Draco, much like body guards, and glared threateningly at us.

"Who's this?" Harry commented.

Draco gave the boys a fleeting look. "Crabbe and Goyle. We've been friends since we could walk."

'Friends?' I laughed. 'Body guards more like!'

Harry nodded in absentminded agreement. Our blonde friend raised an eyebrow. "Having a private conversation?"

"What? Oh, no, Percy was just commenting on how Crabbe and Goyle seem to be more like body guards than friends." Harry smiled apologetically. "He's a bit excited today."

I think that might have been the understatement of the year. I was all but bouncing around in our head, trying to expel the energy that my ADHD was providing in great quantities.

"Draco... Who is this?" One of the boys asked. He was shorter than the other, with a rounder more childish face. "He looks like a Potter."

"Ah, yes, sorry Crabbe. This is Harry and Percy Potter. They're a twin soul, and my god brothers." Draco explained.

After all the introductions were through the train slowly began to pull out of the station, gradually gaining speed the beautiful green scenery was a blur of colour. Occasionally a glimpse of trees or mountains could be made out, but it was hard to tell really.

A kind old woman came around at one point with a trolley of sweets. I'm ashamed to admit that Harry and I brought a lot of them – at least five of each type. But what can I say – we'd never actually eaten sweets before. That's what happens when you never leave the grounds, I guess.

Halfway through the journey our idiot brother decided we were worth paying a visit to. It was hilarious! He couldn't get passed the barriers we had put up.

"Oi, Slytherin scum!" The whining tones of my brother's voice made us sigh. Was it really too much to ask for some peace and quiet?

Of course, Draco, Crabbe and Goyle didn't take too well to being called 'Slytherin Scum' and immediately stood up to confront him.

"I'd rather be a snake over a lion any day. At least we know how to think things through!" Draco retorted, standing almost nose to nose with our brother.

With a sigh, Harry stood up from where we'd been hidden from sight. "Easy guys, I don't know about you but we weren't planning on getting a detention on the first night for fighting. And Charles – what would mummy say, insulting those who've done no wrong?"

'Idiot!' I growled. 'You're supposed to be preventing a fight, no starting one!'

Charles snarled at us, and took a step forward into the carriage. Or, at least, he would have, if not for the charms we'd placed round the door. Millions of tiny sparks of electricity tickled him, causing a mildly painful discomfort. Charles immediately leapt back, watching us warily.
"Just you wait, brother. Consorting with snakes... someone might even think you were one!" He spat at us.

"Like we need your advice. Go back to playing with your fame. It's much better suited to your... talents." Harry retorted smoothly. I laughed.

'He has talents?'

'Exactly, brother mine. Just wait until the rest of the world realises that too.'

A devilish grin lifted our lips, and our eyes sparkled with mischief. Charles saw this and ran off, terrified. It was the kind of look James got when he was planning a particularly humiliating prank, so I guess he had plenty of practise running from the expression we were wearing.

"What was that?" Draco asked after we had all sat back down.

"What, the door?" Harry smirked. "Just a precaution to prevent any boy-who-lived fans from sitting with me and being annoying. Oh, and of course I included my brother in the targets of who it would hit. Merlin that boy's stupid!"

The infamous Malfoy smirk graced the blonds lips as he spoke; "Potter, I think you might just be one of us. For as long as that attitude holds, you will forever be welcome in the Snake Pit."

Our conversation grew lighter after that, discussing various topics such as Quiddich, Teachers, subjects, books... Time flew by, thank Merlin. I don't think I would have survived cooped up in that carriage. At some point we all changed into our robes. They looked odd; missing the distinctive colours that marked out which house the owner belonged too. They were a bit of a pain to move around in too, and Harry almost tripped over when putting them on. I could see them getting incredibly hot during the summer...

__________________________________________________________________________

Anyway, it was dark by the time we reached the station at Hogwarts. The castle wasn't yet in sight, as we were in a small village a short way away from Hogwarts. Hagrid – the Gamekeeper and a family friend – stood a full head and shoulders above everybody (due to his half-giant heritage), allowing all the first years to easily locate him as he rounded us up. He took us a different route from the rest of the school, heading down towards a lake. About fifteen rowing boats lay in the shallows, a tall pole with a lamp fixed on top standing in the middle of each.

"Alright!" Hagrid grinned at us. "No more than four to a boat. Come on, in you go!"

We loaded into the boats. We were with Draco, Crabbe and Goyle again.

The waters were pitch black in the night, but I could feel all the life beneath our boat. A giant tentacle reached out of the depth and almost... caressed our face. It took all of Harry and my will not to flinch away. Draco looked terrified, cringing away from the slimy tentacle.

'Welcome Lords.' an ancient voice slipped into our minds. Harry started, flinching away from the voice. This caused a slip in control, which happened to be just enough to send up pitching head first into the lake. I took over just in time to scream, then the water closed over our head and everything was dark.

I panicked. I couldn't tell which way was up or down or even see any light from the boats.

'Percy.' Harry's voice was strangely calm. 'Percy calm down and pay attention.'
Instinctively, I took a deep breath to calm down. And I didn't choke on water. Instead clean oxygen flooded my lungs. I let out a shaky laugh.

'Harry, we're breathing! Underwater. Breathing...'

Harry laughed along with me. 'Not only that. Look at our robes.'

Curious, I followed his instruction. 'But... but they're dry. How- how are they dry?'

A strong slimy tentacle slipped round our waist, pulling us what I thought was up. After a minute or so, our head broke the surface of the lake.

'Sorry for startling you, Lords.' the voice apologised. 'Are you alright?'

'Yes. We're fine, thank you.' Harry and I spoke simultaneously, and grinned. We are so in sync.

'Who are you?'

'I believe the land-walkers call me the Giant Squid.' the voice answered.

'Thank you for saving us.' I thanked it politely. 'We need to get going, but we can come back and talk at a later date?'

The Giant Squid agreed, and hoisted us back into the boat we had fallen out of. Draco gave us an incredulous once-over.

"You just fell into the lake." He stated blankly. I nodded in agreement. "After been stroked by a tentacle thing."

"Yes." I agreed.

"And now not only are you perfectly dry, but you're not at all out of breath." Draco added.

"Yep." I nodded, Harry grinning mentally at him. "That just about sums everything up. Turns out we can breathe underwater, and our clothes don't get wet."

"How is that even possible?!" Draco exclaimed.

From the boat next to ours, Charles sneered at me. "Haven't you realised by now – Harry's a freak. A schizophrenic freak."

"I'll think you'll find I'm Percy." I sneered back at him merrily. "Gosh, can't you even tell your own brother's apart? You should be ashamed, Charles, ashamed!"

Charles started turning red again. I frowned at Harry mentally.

'He's mad again, isn't he? Not choking.'

'Not choking.' Harry agreed with a grin. 'Poor Charles, I think he might have some disorder or something. He turns red an awful lot.'

We sniggered, gaining some odd looks from everyone around us, but I just waved them off. We were fine. They might think we were balmy, but hey! We grew up in a library for Merlin's sake, with nobody but each other and house elves for company.

We turned a corner and gasped filled the air. Hogwarts was a beautiful sight; perched on a rocky outcrop it stood tall and proud, complete with turrets, gargoyles and statues standing in little niches.
The windows shone with flickering candlelight as we approached. It was truly stunning.

"Mind your heads!" Hagrid boomed, ducking low as we passed through a wall of ivy into a small cave inside. We docked the boats and followed Hagrid up some slippery steps to where an old oak door was set into the rock. Hagrid knocked twice and, after a few minutes, a middle-aged woman with a stern wrinkled face and her greying brown hair up in a tight bun opened the door.

"First years, Professor." Hagrid announced with a grin.

"Yes, yes. Now, follow me. Keep up and don't get lost. We are running to a schedule here, provided you wish to eat before bed!" Her voice was sharp, demanding she be heard and obeyed, but we knew that under her harsh exterior the Professor was a kind lady. She'd come over to teach Charles a couple of times and we'd watched from one of the ceiling beams in the dining room as she taught him Magical Theory. We hadn't personally talked to her, but she'd smiled at us a couple of times when she was round. I think she might have thought we were Charles, but no matter. She's still nice.

Percy. Harry poked me mentally.

"Hmm?" I forgot to reply back silently and received some weird looks as a result.

'Can I take over? You're ADHD is starting to distract even me, and I really want to see what's going on.' Harry begged, sending me an image of his puppy eyes. I pouted, but retreated. Clearly Harry wasn't expecting me to surrender so easily, causing us to trip and almost face-plant the floor.

"Percy!" Harry growled. I sniggered, before realising that our arms actually hurt.

'Sorry Harry.' I apologised; more interested in the pretty paintings than what Harry was actually doing.

We followed the Professor up to what looked like an entrance hall. To one side a set of humongous wooden doors were set into the wall. To their right stood a grand staircase leading up. Smaller wooden doors headed off in various directions, which got me curious.

Hey Harry? I asked.

Yeah Percy? Harry sighed, and I giggled.

When do we get to go exploring? I really want to find out what secrets this place has... I begged.

Harry raised his eyes to the ceiling in exasperation. I can't have any sugar can I? Why, just why do you have to get this hyper?

Draco nudged us, having noticed Harry's exasperation. "What's wrong?"

Harry sighed again. "I ate too much sugar on the train. Couple that with our dip in the lake and we get ourselves an extremely hyper ADHD Percy."

"Oh." Draco frowned. "What's ADHD?"

"It stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder." Harry explained. "In short it means that Percy is rather prone to being inattentive, hyperactive and impulsive. Unfortunately, it also rubs off on me every now and again, so yeah. I'm probably going to be extremely fidgety and take maybe..."

'Three hours.' I offered, having already worked out the math when Harry started on the sweets.

"Percy says three hours to get to sleep. What time are we expected up tomorrow?"
"Class starts at nine." Draco told us. We both groaned.

"Percy!" Harry moaned. "One day I'm going to kill you."

'Aww, I love you too Harry! Though killing me would take killing you...' I grinned. 'Besides, I'll take control this evening if you like. At least then you'll be mentally rested for the morning.'

'Hey, why do I have to do the thinking tomorrow?!' Harry complained.

I laughed. 'If you want us to get a detention on our first day...'

Harry grudgingly agreed that I would be a hazard in the class room before proceeding to ignore me.

I was fine with that however, as we where now entering the Great Hall. Hundreds of candles floated bellow the ceiling, which was spelled to reflect the clear night sky. Four long rows of tables were set out so they ran horizontally, taking up the majority of the space in the Hall. At the far end of the hall was another row of tables, were the Professors were all sitting. I grinned when I saw the stool and tatty old hat at the end of the hall. We'd been wondering how we were sorted. James had claimed we had to wrestle a troll, but Harry didn't believe him. I kind of wanted it to be real, however, if just to see if my sword-play was good enough to beat one.

"Now, gather round." The Professor that led us here ordered. "When I call your name, you will come up to the front, sit down on the stool. I will place the hat on your head, and thus you shall be sorted."

"She doesn't give much away, does she?" Draco commented with a sneer.

"No." Harry agreed. "She doesn't."

And so the names began with a "Bones, Susan."

The hat sat on her head for maybe a minute before booming, "HUFFLEPUFF!"

The names went on until finally, "Potter, Charles."

Whispers fled through the hall. "Charles Potter, the Charles Potter!"

"He's the boy who lived!"

"The chosen one."

"The defeater of the dark lord..."

Charles swaggered up to the hat, basking in all the attention. Disgusted, Harry and I acted as one, muttering a small spell under our breath. Charles' foot got caught in the front of his robes and he tripped. Blushing furiously, Charles quickly righted himself and sat on the chair. We smirked, proud of our little spell.

Draco laughed under his breath. "I saw that."

"Saw what?" Harry widened our eyes to a picture of perfect innocence.

Before Draco could reply the hat interrupted with one loud word. "GRYFFINDOR!"

Then it was our turn.
"Potter, Harry."

We growled under our breath, "It's Harry and Percy," not that anybody actually heard us.

Harry sat on the stool and the Professor placed that hat on our head.

Hmm, interesting, very interesting. Two different personalities...

We jumped.

'What-?'

'Who-?'

The voice chuckled. 'Oh, I see, a twin-soul. I haven't seen one of you in a fair few hundred years.'

'Indeed.' I commented dryly.

Harry tilted his head. 'So how will this work?'

'That depends, young one, on what house you belong in.'

'Damn.' I cursed.

We had been hoping that if Harry was in control, it would be his more Slytherin nature that would place us away from Charles.

The hat seemed to smile at that theory, and carried on sifting through our memories and thoughts, trying to come to a decision.

'Well, well, well. A Slytherin and a Gryffindor in the same body... how do you two survive?'

We sighed.

'Well-

'you see-

'-we share control-

'-and trust the other-

'-not to do anything-'

'-too stupid and reckless-'

'-or too ambitious.'

Harry and I grinned before simultaneously declaring; 'We've always wanted to do that!'

'Very well, I see no other option.' the hat muttered sullenly. 'Sorry boys, but there's no other way.'

"Slytherin for Harry Potter." The hat called out to the rest of the hall. Silence met this. "But Gryffindor for young Percy."

Shouts of outrage and confusion filled the hall. Harry and I melded together to share control. We blinked calmly at the chaos that reigned before us. A slight smile twitched at our lips for a second,
and then it was gone as a warm hand clasped over our shoulder.

Our head jerked up to see Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster, frowning down at us.

"Mr Potter..."

"Professor?" We acknowledged his presence.

His eyes met ours and a slight pressure tingled at the back of our mind. Immediately our magic responded, flying outwards to fend the attacker off. Dumbledore was flung away, and every window in the hall smashed as the magic hit it. Ops.

We ducked our head, ready for the blow that followed a use of accidental magic around adults. But it didn't come. We glanced up, and only saw hundreds of eyes gazing at us in fear and curiosity.

Unable to stand the pressure all those eyes were putting on us we fled the hall, running down between the tables of silent staring eyes and out through the oak door. Literally, through the door. We didn't pause to open the door, but luckily our magic carried us through it before we actually hit the hard wood.

What a start to school. It turned out the answer to whether magic was ready for us was a simple one. Absolutely not.
Chapter 4

Harry's Point of View

We ran for a long time, round and round the twisting stone corridors, past thousands of paintings, up numerous staircases, through hundreds of doors... It all started to look the same after a while. Eventually we collapsed in a heap on the floor sobbing. We had absolutely no idea where we were. It was very dark and cold, however, and the guttering torches did little to ease our despairing thoughts.

They'd never want us now. We'd be sent home. Back to the library. Back to the silence and loneliness that had been our 'childhood.' What was the point in even coming here? Nobody had ever cared about us, and even if they had... well, they'd left us eventually.

The cold began to seep into our bones and we began shivering uncontrollably.

'Harry.' Percy's voice was weak and childish. 'Harry I'm scared.'

'I know.' I retreated into the dark caverns of our mind to join him. I embraced my brother's consciousness in an attempt to share what little warmth I had with him. 'I'm scared too. But at least we're not there, with all those horrible stares and the teachers who distrust us.'

We lay together for a long time, sheltered in the back of our mind. Too long. Feeling was slowly leaving our limbs as the cold froze our nerves and slowed our reactions. Eventually we slipped into a deep sleep, basking in the comfort that the warm embrace of sleep brought.

When we woke it was very bright. Very bright, and very white. I mumbled incoherently and tried to move away from that painful light that was driving daggers into our eyes but a hand on our shoulder prevented me from doing so.

'Percy?' I asked for my brother, suddenly aware of the silence from him. A soft snore drifted back to me from his consciousness and a small smile twitched our lips. He was just asleep. All was well.

"I know you're awake, Mr Potter."

The voice was female, and very strict, with a note of annoyance sharpening it.

"So do I." I muttered back. "Though Percy isn't, so I guess you could say we're only half awake."

A small giggle slipped out our mouth at my joke. From the huff that came from the woman, she didn't find it amusing.

"So, I take it you're Harry, then?"

"U-huh." I opened our eyes fully now, squinting against the light. Slowly our vision came into focus. A short woman in a nurse outfit stood next to us, her lips tight with what I assumed was disapproval. "You're going to lecture us, aren't you?"

It wasn't a question, not really. I knew she was going to rant at us for one thing or another; I had seen Lily wearing that look on her face too many times not to.

"What were you thinking of, running away like that?" She burst. "You sent all the staff into a panic.
It took us hours to find you. Hours. And for what? To find you half-frozen to death in the bowels of the Dungeons. Why, if the Bloody Baron hadn't been passing by when he had... You do realise that you could have died?"

I took a deep breath. "But we damaged the hall." I stated, confused. "Shouldn't you be mad at us for damaging the hall and attacking the headmaster?"

She gave me a look of pure confusion and I frowned. "Mr Potter, are you implying that you ran away because you thought we would hurt you for a bit of broken glass? Dumbledore's fine, he’s suffered much worse than being thrown back a few feet. As for the glass... nothing a simple 'reparo' couldn't fix."

I ducked our head. "Accidental magic usually means a punishment." I admitted. The woman looked horrified.

"Why? It's in the name, accidental magic."

I blushed a deep colour. "Madam... accidental magic for us usually means something breaking."

The woman laughed. "Yes? Well, I was the same. That's no reason to physically harm a child. Especially not for an accident."

"Well," I broke off.

Before I could think of a reply the doors banged open. I jerked our head up. Severus Snape strode into the room, his robes billowing like bat wings. I smiled at the image.

"Ah, you're awake. Foolish boy, what were you thinking! I've assigned you two nights detention with me for such idiotic actions. And I thought you were the smart one!" Severus scolded us. His voice was stern and disapproving and angry, but underneath that there was something different... could it be relief?

"Sorry sir." I apologised, blushing again. "We weren't thinking. We didn't mean to worry you."

"Hump!" Our Godfather turned to the nurse-lady. "Madam Pomphrey, how are they?"

The woman, Madam Pomphrey, smiled at the Potions Master. "Mr Potter is fine. He just needed some warmth and to sleep it all off. Have you arranged sleeping arrangements with the Headmaster?"

Severus scowled. "Yes. Albus believed it would be best if he stayed in Gryffindor."

"But..." Madam Pomphrey prompted.

"I set him right. They would eat them alive! Especially with that brother of theirs... No, I'm not letting them go near the Gryffindor Common Room. They'll room with Draco, but their lessons must be split between the houses. Meddling old fool..." Severus muttered the last bit under his breath. I giggled.

"Still here, Sev." I beamed at him. "Thank you for letting us room with Draco."

"Yes well," Our Godfather gave us a small smile in return. "Hopefully he'll knock some sense into that head of yours."

"With Percy living in it? Not a chance!" I grinned.
Severus smiled. "Shouldn't he be complaining round about now?"

"Can't complain if he's asleep, can he?" I laughed merrily.

Severus shook his head in amusement. "Well, if Poppy agrees you can go, I'll take you down to the Slytherin common room to meet your classmates."

"Mr Potter may go." Madam Pomphrey agreed before I could ask who Poppy was. I bolted out of bed, nearly tripping over myself in my eagerness to escape what I presumed was the hospital wing. Snape rolled his eyes, but waited patiently for us.

I thought I recognised some of the dimly lit corridors that we walked down, but I couldn't tell for certain. Too many of them looked the same. They were all grey stone, in the dungeons, lit only by flickering torches held by brackets on the walls. Luckily, though, although you could smell the smoke some sort of magical filter kept it from clogging up the corridors or staining the walls black with soot.

We eventually came to a stop in front of a plain wall. Nothing to mark it out as different or a memorable place. However, when Severus spoke to the wall, a section of it rotated to create just enough space for one person to slip through. I grinned.

"Wow."

"Indeed." Severus turned to face me. "The password for this week is 'pureblood'. Forget it and you're locked out until someone decides to take pity on you. And remember – Slytherin remain a united front in public. Any silly feuds or arguments take place behind closed doors. You'll have enough enemies outside the common room without arguing with your own as well."

"Yes Sev." I nodded.

"One more thing – I'm Professor Snape here, Godfather or not. And you shall address me so whilst in the presence of others."

"Yes sir." I reiterated with a small smile.

We entered the common room. I stood still for a minute, taking in the beautiful matching green furniture, the woven rugs and snake wall hangings. Above the fireplace the Slytherin Crest stood proudly, the snake moving slightly as it turned to stare at me. A watery green-blue light illuminated it all. Suddenly, a shadow slid past the windows. It looked like a squid. I shivered slightly, thinking of the Giant Squid that had rescued us yesterday.

"Sir, are we beneath the lake?" I asked.

"Yes." Professor Snape answered.

I shuddered again. A snigger startled me. I glanced left in the direction it had come from. The blond sneering boy who I had grown to call a friend stood at the bottom of a small flight of stairs leading down into another passage.

"We're quite safe, Potter." Draco smirked.

I rolled my eyes at him. "I never said we weren't. I was just imagining waking up to see some strange creature from the lake peering at me through a window."

Draco burst out laughing. I just gave him a look.
Urk… Percy mumbled incoherently. Harry, where are we?

Slytherin Common Room, sleepy head. I smiled at my brother. He really was too cute in the mornings.

"Well, I'll leave you in Draco's more than capable hands then, shall I. I'll be seeing you three at lunch." Professor Snape told us before walking out the common room.

"How long till class?" I asked Draco.

"An hour." Draco informed us.

Percy moaned in our head. I laughed quietly at him.

People were slowly starting to gather, pointing and whispering at us. I groaned and rubbed our eyes.

'Yo Percy?' I asked, receiving an image of a sleeping Percy in return. I giggled slightly. 'Can I at least have some moral support here?'

I sent him an image of the whispering Slytherins and Percy snapped to attention, his wariness setting me on edge.

"Gryffindork." A loud voice cut through the incoherent whispers. Percy shoved me aside, taking control.

"You got a problem, buddy?" Percy demanded, instinctively slipping into a defensive position, ready to attack.

'Percy… careful, we're rooming with these people…'

Needless to say, Percy ignored me.

"And if I do?" A tall muscular Snake stepped forward. He looked like he was at least in fourth year.

Percy narrowed our eyes. "Well, then I say you're a discriminating –" (Here Percy added a few choice words about the older snake.)

'PERCY!'

I began to fight Percy for control, mentally throwing spells at him in an attempt to overpower him. Our mind began to look like a battle ground as Percy fended off my spells of with his own. He summoned water, manipulating it to knock me off balance, and I sent a tickling hex his way in retaliation.

Then a sharp blow to the head had us staggering backwards. We looked up in shock at the older boy who still had his hands clenched.

"I think you'll find my parents were married when I was born, mudblood."

Percy looked unimpressed. I decided to just hit Percy with my fists.

'Don't retaliate!' I snapped at him.

"WE'RE NOT MUDBLOODS YOU TWO FACED COWARD!"

I sighed sometimes I wondered why I even bothered.
"Percy, shut up." Draco said, stepping between the fourth year and us. "I know you're pissed at the moment, and I know they're threatening Harry, but you really need to stop. Snape will be back if we're not careful, and we might be late to class as it is."

'Listen to him.' I begged. I loved my brother, but sometimes he was too protective for his own good. The wall was silent as it swung open, as was Professor Snape as he stormed in.

"Exactly what is the meaning of this?" He demanded. "And why is the Slytherin table empty?"

The fourth year eyed our Head of House warily. "Sir, why is the mud-blood here?"

Professor Snape stiffened. Then he hissed, "Percy and Harry are not mud-bloods. I'm sure you're all aware of what Twin-souls are?"

The whole room nodded. Huh, seems like only Gryffindors hadn't heard of Twin-souls.

"Harry is a Slytherin, and Percy has just a much right to be here as Harry. Can you imagine what the Gryffindors would do to them?"

The fourth year paled.

"Exactly. Well, Flint," Snape faced the fourth year. "I expect you to be more courteous to my Godsons in the future. That goes for the rest of you as well. And don't get Percy angry. He is very protective of Harry, if the look on his face is anything to go by, so I wouldn't push him, for your own physical safety."

The warning was well heeded, everyone slipping round Draco, Severus and us.

We followed shortly after, walking through the now almost recognisable corridors back up the Great Hall to sit at our allocated table. Percy was still fuming silently, refusing my pleas to take control.

Breakfast should have been a quiet affair, as the Slytherins tended to stick together in public, showing a unified front to the three other houses that seemed to despise them so. Unfortunately, Professor Dumbledore hadn't got the memo that we were looking for peace and quiet.

"Ah, Harry, my boy!" Dumbledore greeted us cheerfully. "Nice to see you up and healthy once more."

'Is this guy for real? I thought he only cared about our brother.' I asked Percy, who snorted in agreement.

'Your Slytherin status is probably ripping apart Charles' Gryffindor family.'

"Professor." Percy nodded to the headmaster. A frown marred our forehead for a moment. "I'm Percy. Though Harry say's hello too."

'I do?' Percy ignored me, knowing full well that my manners compelled me to be polite toward our superiors, however annoying we might find them.

"Ah, of course, I see now." He indicated the front of our robes. With a scowl we noticed that they currently styled the Gryffindor crest and the Lion's colours decorated our tie.

Percy let out a string of curses in what sounded like a mixture of mermish and gobbledygook. I smirked.
'So you did pay attention when I was learning then.' I teased him.

Percy sent me a mental jab in retaliation. 'Shush you. It was impossible not to when you were thinking that loudly.'

"Was there something you wanted, Professor?" Draco's voice was coolly polite.

The old man nodded his head absently. "Yes, yes. I thought it would be good for Mr Potter here to meet his other house. As the majority of his lessons will be paired with Gryffindor…"

"What?!" Percy and I exclaimed.

"Yes, it was easier to give you a ready-made schedule, and since you are rooming with the Snakes, we're paired you with the Lions during the day." Dumbledore informed us, looking quite proud of this solution.

Percy cursed again in mermish. Dumbledore frowned.

"Now, now my lad, no need for that sort of language now, is there?"

Percy blinked and we were both taken aback. "You speak mermish?!

"Yes. As much as I'd like to know how you learned such a noble language, I also request to refrain from using it in such a course manner. Swearing, after all, isn't permitted." Dumbledore winked at us. Percy rolled our eyes.

"As you wish, sir." He ducked our head in acknowledgement. "However, we're prefer to get fully settled in here, before we eat with the Lions."

"But."

"Headmaster, I believe Percy has made them quite clear. Besides, it's entirely up to the students where they wish to sit." Professor Snape intervened. Percy flashed him a grateful look.

'Thank Merlin for attentive Godparents.' Percy muttered. I laughed, but agreed whole-heartedly with him.

The rest of our meal passed in peace, and we just chatted quietly to Draco, ignoring the mixture of curious and angry looks from the rest of the Slytherin House. Eventually, the food on the tables vanished, signalling the end of Breakfast. The Heads of Houses started handing out schedules.

Professor McGonagall handed ours to us last, after seeing to her Lions. We groaned.

We only shared Potions and flying lessons with the Slytherins. Percy turned to give Dumbledore a dirty look.

'Was that really necessary?' I asked, mentally scowling at him.

'Yes.' Percy send me an image of him sticking out his tongue. I laughed.

"What do you have first?" Draco asked. Percy groaned.

"Transfiguration. With Ravenclaw."

Draco frowned. "The Ravens aren't the worst house."
"No," Percy agreed, "but the Lions are."

Conceding to our point, Draco flashed us a grin. "True, true. I've got to rush. See you next lesson in potions?"

"Sure thing!" Percy agreed cheerfully.

Transfiguration was taught by Professor McGonagall. The first thing she did was lay down the rules:

Always do your best…

Don't talk while I am teaching…

No fighting in her classroom…

Don't pass notes…

The usual boring teacher rules.

Then she transfigured her desk into a pig and back, explaining that: "You won't be capable of such work until at least seventh year, as it is NEWT grade Transfiguration."

We rolled our eyes at that. 'How much do you bet I could do that?' I asked Percy.

'I'd bet a galleon that we could do that.' He replied.

I laughed. 'I'll do the research. We could 'accidentally' do it next lesson.'

'You're on!' Percy grinned mischievously, immediately catching the Professor's attention.

"Something amusing you, Mr Potter?"

Percy's grin dropped as he adopted an innocent look. "Amusing, Professor? No, not really. Harry and I were just thinking about how we could use Transfiguration in –"

I quickly shoved Percy out of control. "How we could use Transfiguration in other lessons. For example, if transfiguring potion ingredients would tamper with the potion." I quickly covered Percy's almost slip up.

A few murmurs ran round the room, having no doubt noticed the Gryffindor crest had been replaced with the Slytherin one, our tie turning green and our posture straighten to that more befitting of a Pure-Blood heir. I smiled at Professor McGonagall.

"Well, Mr Potter. If you have time to mull over questions such as that, then I suppose you won't need my demonstration to transfigure the match on your desk into a needle." She said in disapproving voice.

I smiled, taking my Holly wand out of our bag, ignoring Percy's which was already lying on the desk. More mutters sprung up from this. I tapped the match stick, reciting the spell on the board and imagining the wood melding into metal and one end sharpening to a point.

The match followed my instructions until a perfect needle lay on our desk in its place. Professor McGonagall looked surprised, 

"Yes, well. Very well done. 10 points to Gryffindor."
I stiffened, as did Percy from where he'd been sulking at the back of our mind. "I am Slytherin, Professor, as the green I am wearing should inform you." I told her in a cool, quiet voice that seemed to echo loudly in the silent classroom.

"Then 10 points to Slytherin as well. You partially belong to my House too, Mr Potter, as you should start to acknowledge."

Our brother snorted. "Don't bother, Professor. My brother is as much a slimy snake at the rest of them!"

McGonagall rounded on Charles. "Five points from Gryffindor! There is absolutely no need for such language. Mr Potter is your brother!"

"I mean no disrespect, Professor," I interrupted quietly, "but you're fighting a lost case. My brother and I don't get along. Sibling rivalry and all. Yes, I am a Slytherin. And Percy is a Gryffindor. Charles will eventually have to learn to cope with that. And until he does, no… external prompting will make him."

Professor McGonagall gave us a curious look, then continued the lesson.

'Feeling mature today?' Percy asked.

I gave him a small smile. 'Maybe a little. I don't want to get into any more fights today.'

'Can I have a go with the needle?' Percy randomly requested, changing the subject.

'Sure.'

We swapped continuously for the rest of the lesson, practising Transfiguring the needle. It took Percy a while longer as he'd never practised before, but he eventually got the hang of it too. By the time the class ended, we all but sprinted for the door to get away from the Gryffindors who really didn't seem to like us that much.

Percy and I were relieved to enter the cool dim dungeons. Home territory. We followed the sound of voices to where the Potions room was located. Outside the Slytherins were already gathered, chatting quietly among one another. Draco was at the centre, being the self-declared 'Prince of Slytherin'. We smiled at the thought, and Percy walked closer to the group.

"Draco!" He moaned in exaggerated despair. "Cousin, pray save me from all those mewling Lions!"

I sniggered as I watched Draco turn to us in surprise. "Cousin?!!"

"We'll yeah." Percy nodded. "Harry looked up our family tree. Turns out Grandma Dorea was originally a Black, and your Mother's cousin. Hence, we are cousins twice removed. But never mind that! The Gryffindors! You must rescue me from the god-forsaken Gryffindors!"

"Got a problem with us, brother." A familiar voice sneered from behind us. We groaned, and turned to face a fuming Charles.

Percy tilted his head. "Can't imagine why we would, you acting so… friendly, and all."

Draco sniggered. "Don't the Potter siblings get along? Oh, you poor things, we should call a therapist at once to solve you family issues!"

"Malfy."

Charles snarled at our god-brother. Percy immediately moved to stand in front of Draco.
"He's been more of a brother to us the last two days than you've been our entire life!" Percy declared. "Leave him alone, he's ours!"

Some part of the almost child-like innocence that Percy still had seemed to stun everyone into silence. It was such as childish thing to do, claim procession over somebody. The past two days we'd been acting more befitting of someone our age, but, deep down inside, I guess we still had those childish urges that we had supressed when we were younger…

"What is going on here?" Professor Snape demanded, taking in the situation in one glance. "Ten points from Gryffindor, Potter, for starting an unprovoked attack on Draco and Percy."

"But –"

Snape cut Charles off. "Or should I make that twenty?"

Immediately any Gryffindors that had opened their mouths to back up Charles shut them. In a sullen silence everyone filed into the room.

"Sit where you wish, I care not. But mind that whoever you sit next is your partner for today."

Professor Snape said as he strode into the room after us, his robes billowing behind him.

We sat next to Draco, in the front row. Cauldrons were already placed on the workspace, a small flame keeping them warm, ready for use.

"There will be no foolish wand-waving, or silly incantations in this class!" Snape informed us in a low drawl. "But before we get started, shall we test some general knowledge? Potter!"

As he barked our surname, Charles and us sat up straighter.

"If I were to ask you to find a bezoar, where would you look?"

"I would care to know." Charles sneered, even as Percy answered with my prompting:

"Inside a goat's stomach, sir. It's known to save you from most poisons."

"Congratulations, Percy, but let me rephrase this – Charles Potter, what is the difference between Monkshood and Wolfsbane?"

Charles didn't stop sneering as he stared blankly at Snape. "No idea, Snivellous."

Immediately it was obvious Charles had gone too far. The entire class stiffened as they waited for Snape to explode.

"Thirty points from Gryffindor, Potter, and detention with me tonight. If you don't show, I'll make it two detentions and fifty points." Snape snapped in a low voice. "Turn to page three hundred and ninety four. We're working on the basic cure for boils today."

The rest of the class passed quickly; it turned out Draco and Percy and I were the only ones capable of properly completing the potion, excluding the muggleborn Granger girl, who seemed to have something to prove, acting like a stuck up know-it-all.

"Well done boys, fifteen points to Slytherin each." Snape praised us, ignoring the downcast Gryffindor sitting on our other side.

A flicker of hope lit in our chest at our God-father's small smile.
'Hey Percy?'

'Yeah Harry?'

'Do you think that maybe, just maybe…'

'We might belong here?'

'Yeah.'

We smiled. Perhaps Hogwarts wouldn't be so bad, despite our awful start to it.
Chapter 5

Percy's Point of View

The first couple of weeks after that first day passed quickly. Charles fought with us daily, so Harry and I took to ignoring him. Logic won out over the urge to respond to our brother. That was, of course, until our first flying lesson, which took place during our second week of classes.

We were paired with the Slytherins, thank Merlin. I may have been placed in Gryffindor, but I was more of a rogue Lion than part of the Pride.

I could feel Harry buzzing with energy as we walked beside Draco. They were discussing Quidditch and the best strategies and techniques that professional players used. I tuned in and out but something about the idea of flying terrified me. Water felt safe, it felt like home, but the sky… the sky was something else entirely. If we fell….

"Percy?" Harry sounded concerned. "What's wrong?"

"The sky…" I shuddered. "I feel as if we don't belong in the sky."

"Oh. Are you ok with me flying then? I won't if you don't want to." There was no hesitation, just a small note of disappointment when Harry offered. I shook myself. I was a Gryffindor. Where was my courage?

"It's fine, Harry. I know you've been looking forward to this for ages now." I sent him a quick grin. "You go for it. I'm just being silly."

"You two ok?" Draco passed a worried glance over us. "You went silent for a minute."

Harry nodded. "We're fine, don't worry about it. We had a bad dream last night, and it was bothering Percy slightly."

Draco looked sceptical, but didn't dwell on it as we had reached the Quidditch pitch already.

Twenty or so broomsticks were lined up on the ground in the centre in two rows, the bristles facing outwards, in the centre of the pitch. Madam Hooch stood in the centre of them, her short spiky white hair looking windswept. She was dressed in traditional Quidditch referee robes, looking totally in her element. A smile slipped onto our lips at the sight.

"Right, line up all of you. Don't dally now, we don't have all day." Madam Hooch ordered happily, just a note of seriousness in her voice. Somehow I got the feeling she wasn't someone to cross.

We obediently lined up, the Slytherins taking row of brooms, the Gryffindors taking the other. We stood next to Draco, ignoring the glaring Gryffindors for now.

"You two ok?" Draco passed a worried glance over us. "You went silent for a minute."

Harry nodded. "We're fine, don't worry about it. We had a bad dream last night, and it was bothering Percy slightly."

Draco looked sceptical, but didn't dwell on it as we had reached the Quidditch pitch already.

Harry followed the instruction quickly, the broom shooting into his hand. I noticed Draco's did the same, as did Charles. Charles' best friend Ron, however, was having much more trouble, the broom hardly moving an inch. As for the Granger girl… I snorted. She was glaring at her broom, ordering it in her strictest voice, but it merely rolled over a couple of times. Eventually she gave up, and just
picked the broom up.

We shared a grin with Draco, who was smirking openly at the sight.

The next task was to mount our brooms and attempt to fly round the pitch. I burrowed as far back into our mind as I could as Harry kicked off, and did my utmost best not to flinch of whimper every time a gust of air almost knocked us off. Our movement was unsteady at first, while Harry found our balance, then we were off properly, zipping round the pitch to eventually be the first to land. Harry was laughing with a delighted joy.

'That was epic!' He shouted at me.

I gave a weak smile. 'Yeah, I guess it was.'

Immediately I felt guilt flooding from Harry's end of the bond. 'Percy… are you really ok with this? Because if you're not –'

'NO! Harry, this is something you like doing. An actual sport you enjoy.' I laughed slightly. 'If it keeps you out the library then I'm all for it. Don't mind me. It's just a stupid feeling. It'll go away. Don't let me stop you having fun.'

Harry smiled at me. 'Oh, Percy…'

"I thought you said you'd never flown before!" Draco exclaimed as he landed beside us.

Harry frowned, confused. "We haven't."

"Then how in the name of all things Magic did you manage to fly like that?! That was amazing, you've got to teach me!" Draco all but begged. Malfoy's don't beg, as he would put it. I giggled, and Harry beamed.

"We can try."

The remainder of the lesson Madam Hooch allowed us free reign to practise flying, after warning us that any reckless stunts such as complex rolls or steep dives would put us in detention till Christmas. Harry was ecstatic at that. He shot straight off.

After a while raised voices shouted at each other from the other side of the pitch, so Harry flew over to investigate.

"Give it back, Potter!"

"Make me, Malfoy!"

We sighed. It would appear our brother had stolen Draco's pocket watch, which was a family heirloom his father had given to him.

"Fine!"

Draco made a while grab for Charles, who let go of the watch in shock. I stared in horror as it fell. Harry, however, moved swiftly into action, entering a semi-steep dive and catching the watch a few meters from the ground. I whimpered quietly in fear, but made sure to hide it from Harry.

'Nice catch!' I grinned half-heartedly as we began to rise again. Madam Hooch luckily hadn't noticed us.
'Thanks.' Harry beamed back before passing Draco his watch. "Here you go Draco, all safe. As for you!"

Harry rounded on Charles. "What has Lily and James told you about stealing? It's rude and wrong. I bet the press would have a field day if they found out you were nothing but a sneaky thief!"

"Why you little –"

Whatever Charles was about to say was cut off by Madam Hooch.

"Easy boys, split it up! Brothers such as yourselves shouldn't be fighting. Off you go now!"

We flew off, Harry climbing higher and higher, moving faster and faster with sharp, controlled movements and turns.

My emotions were still a bit off. I felt uncomfortable in the air. A metallic tinge seemed to follow us, a bit like static electricity. Above our heads the clouds began to swirl as I got more and more worried. Something was wrong. Something was going to go wrong. The clouds crept lower until we were flying among them. A sharp whistle cut through the sound of whipping wind.

Harry was jolted out of the trance he was in, and lost control of our balance. Suddenly we were falling, down, down, down...

Harry shut our eyes, tensing for impact. I screamed, and I think Harry was screaming with me. But the impact we were expecting never came. Harry cracked open one eye. The clouds that had been swirling around us had solidified beneath us to form a squishy water cushion. We let out a shaky laugh.

"Mr Potter!" Madam Hooch flew us to meet us. "Are you ok?"

"Fine, Professor." Harry grinned. "Just a little bit shocked. Otherwise perfectly fine."

Madam Hooch offered us her hand, which Harry accepted only moments before our cloud-bed-thing collapsed. Madam Hooch quickly flew us to the ground. Relief was immediate, and I sighed deeply. Harry send me an image of him winking.

'You ok, bro?'

'Yeah.' I took a deep breath. 'I'm fine.'

"Attention seeker." Charles sneered. Harry and I stared at him in shock for a moment, then burst out laughing. Draco, who had also heard the comment, joined in.

Our laughter eventually stopped, and Harry wiped tears from our eyes. "By Merlin," he chuckled, "that has got to be the best thing I've ever heard you say, Charles."

"Huh?" Charles looked slightly confused as he glared at us.

Draco decided to help him out some, "You're calling them attention seekers? Potter, everything you say and do is to bring attention to yourself. It's pitiful."

The Slytherins laughed at Charles' expression. He looked both shocked and insulted. Madam Hooch decided to intervene then.

"Right now, come in closer. It's dangerous for beginners like yourselves to fly in these conditions so I'm going to call off the lesson." She explained, gesturing to the dark grumbling sky. "If the weather
has improved tomorrow I could carry on this lesson for anyone who wants to."

Grumbling, the class dispersed. I out a sign of relief, carefully blocking it from Harry, who was chatting animatedly Draco.

"That was awesome! I wish we'd learned to fly when we were younger, it's amazing!"

"Isn't is just? The adrenaline when you dive is incredible! Just wait till we start playing mini-games in flying lessons, I bet you'd make a great seeker…"

They chatted all the way back to the Common Room. I kept silent, still slightly unsettled by our near death experience from falling off the broom. I shivered.

'Percy?' Harry asked. 'You're awfully quiet.'

'I'll be fine.' I flashed him a weak smile. Harry sat us down in one of the armchairs by the fire and retreated to join me. His warm sub-conscience enveloped mine and I snuggled into him embrace.

Harry chuckled lightly. 'You really don't like height, do you?'

I shuddered. 'No, it's not that… I just… It felt wrong.'

I sent him the remaining ghost of the feeling that remained. Harry shivered. 'I… I get it now. But why would you feel like that when I felt completely at home?'

Harry sent me the feeling of joy and comfort and almost homely emotions that had filled during our flight. I smiled. 'I don't know. But next time we go flying, you'll channel those feelings to me, won't you? That way we can both enjoy it.'

'It's a deal. Is there anything we can do to put your mind at rest for now?'

I sighed. 'Something active like swimming or swordplay would be good…'

Harry grinned. 'Well, I do believe we promised the Squid another visit, didn't we?'

Harry stood up and started to head for the exit. Draco called us to a halt however.

"Where are you going?"

"Percy needs to do something energetic that's water based. We're going to go for a swim in the lake, want to join?"

"In September?!" Draco looked horrified. "You'll freeze to death!"

We laughed. "Draco, what do you think warming charms are for? Besides, we didn't get cold when we fell in on the first night. We'll be fine. See you at dinner?"

Draco looked torn. "But, it could be dangerous to go swimming in the lake…"

"If it was then it would be off bounds like the forbidden forest, wouldn't it?" Harry reasoned. "Look, we'll see you later, ok?"

With that we ran out of the Common Room and out of the castle. Once we reached the lake Harry gave me control. I grinned at him and stripped down to our underwear, storing our clothes under a root. I shivered lightly in the cold, the plunged straight into the dark waters of the black lake. As soon as I hit the water energy hit me, like I'd just taken a coffee shot. The water felt warm and comforting.
I ducked out head under and swum deeper. Soon our lungs were bursting for air and I took a deep
breath in.

'We can still breathe underwater!' I told Harry with a delighted laugh. Harry grinned back, and we
swam even deeper.

After a while a familiar ancient presence pushed at our mind. 'Lords. You have returned.'

'We did promise, didn't we?' Harry smiled. A few seconds later a dark shadow appeared in front of
us. A large eye studied us eagerly.

'You've very young.' The Giant Squid mentioned off-hand. 'Barely grown at all… I will look after
you, little lords.'

'Thank you.' I said. It would appear our friend the Giant Squid had a protective streak. Harry smiled
at me.

'So, any other friendly faces in the lake?' Harry asked.

Before the Giant Squid could reply a streak of green flashed at the edge of our vision.

:.There is menfolk in the lake!: A screeching whistle reached our ears. Harry and I grinned.

'Merfolk!' we exclaimed. When we younger we had learned the language of the Merfolk after
meeting one in the deep running river that ran alongside the Potter estate.

:.Greetings one-of-the-lake.: I called out in a calm voice.

:.You speak! And you are… you are a child.: The merfolk swam closer. There was two of them, a
female and a male. Both of their hair was long and looked a bit like seaweed, and their fingers were
webbed. Not to mention the gills adorning each side of the necks. Otherwise they were human from
the waist up. Their tales were a beautiful green-blue, made up of hundreds of sparkling scales.

:.Beautiful…: I whispered, Harry humming in agreement. Then I shook our head. :.Forgive us. We
are Percy and Harry Potter. We are delighted to make your acquaintance.:.

:.Twin soul! You are The Twin soul!: The mermaid bared her teeth at us in a smile. are very
welcome here, Percy and Harry.:.

:.Can you… can you really…: The merman started to ask, struggling to find the words

*Enough of this, Children of the Black Lake. Can't you see my little lords are young yet? Do not
bother them so, let them have fun. That can wait a while longer.* The Giant Squid intervened,
pushing the merfolk back gently with one massive tentacle.

:.What was it you were going to ask us?: I almost demanded. Being rude wouldn't get me anywhere
here, so I kept my voice polite.

:.Never you mind, young one. The Squid is right. You must grow and enjoy what you have now
before the outside world takes it away.: The mermaid gave us an adoring look. :.You will grow to do
great things.: 

With that the merfolk swam off. I frowned. 'But what do they mean? What were they talking about?'
'I suppose only time will tell.' Harry sighed.
A tentacle suddenly wrapped round our middle and started pulling us up towards the surface. 'Come, young lords. The menfolk are searching for you. You must go now, but please, lords, come back and visit again!'

The squid pleaded with us until we agreed, and refused to answer any questions concerning what they had been talking about was, just informing us that: 'You will know when the time comes.'

As our head broke the surface we became aware of a large group of teachers standing at the lake shore, sending spells into the lake. From the looks of things they were searching for something.

'Those are tracking spells.' Harry told me. 'They're searching for us.'

Silently I swum round the lake a little way to where our cloths were and climbed out of the lake. Luckily our boxers and hair were perfectly dry, so we might just be able to get way with it-

"MR POTTER!"

Too late. I turned around, flinching as I met our fuming Godfather's eyes. "Sir?"

"Please don't tell me you were actually as stupid as Mr Malfoy informs me to actually go swimming alone in the Black Lake?" He snapped.

"Ok, we weren't as stupid as Mr Malfoy informed you to actually go swimming alone in the Black Lake." I deadpanned. Then I grinned. "We went swimming with the Giant Squid."

"YOU WHAT?!"

An hour later we were still standing in Professor Dumbledore's office being lectured about the dangers of swimming in the Black Lake unsupervised, especially in the winter months. And during this time neither or Harry or I had been given the opportunity to speak. Instead we kept switching control to give each other a break from the endless lecturing, if just for ten minutes.

"What were you even thinking?!"

"Well," Harry said, finally getting a word in. "I guess we were thinking the Giant Squid had seem incredibly nice when he spoke to us when we fell into the lake on our first night at Hogwarts and should honour our promise to visit him."

"You… hold on, what?" Professor McGonagall looked lost for words.

"You see, the Giant Squid came to say hello to us when we were crossing the Lake in the boats on the night of the sorting ceremony. He – at least I think it's a he – said hello to us and put us back in our boat. Percy promised we would come back to speak with him, so we did. Besides, Percy was feeling off after our flying lesson and falling off our broom, so I suggested we go swimming because that helps to relax and calm him down. The merfolk we met were awfully nice too." Harry explained.

"You talked to the merfolk?"

Harry nodded with an enthusiastic grin. Professor McGonagall fell backwards in a dead faint. We responded automatically, pushing our hands out and flicked our wands sending out our magic to catch her. Once she was lying comfortably on the floor we turned to Professor Dumbledore.

"Does she not like the merfolk?"
Twinkling blue eyes studied us serious. "Mr Potter, I don't think you quite understand the severity of the situation here. The merfolk – especially those that live in the Black Lake – are not 'awfully nice'. If anything, they're usually extremely vicious and territorial."

"Really? I think they're just misunderstood. How can you describe them as that when you don't ever talk to them. They were perfectly polite once I talked to them." Harry explained.

Dumbledore rubbed his forehead in exasperation. I chuckled.

'You can't beat us at our own game, Dumbledore!' I crowed to Harry.

'This is our show, and I'd love to see someone better at it than us!'

"Look, young man, I have to inform your parents about this."

"Why?" Harry gave Dumbledore a wide-eyed look. "We haven't done anything wrong! You clearly said that the Forbidden Forest was out of bounds-- though with a name like that you might as well just be herding the students into it - we love the forbidden! But the Black Lake you never said was off-limits or dangerous or the like. I don't understand why we can't simply go swimming!"

"Don't you understand? I didn't say anything because nobody in their right mind ever goes swimming in winter, and those that might consider it know of the dangers that dwell in it. The Grindylows could have drowned you!"

Harry and I burst out laughing, our body shaking with hysterics.

"But Headmaster, we have the protection of the Giant Squid. He won't let anyone hurt us!" 'And breathing underwater sort of rules out any chance of drowning…' Harry sniggered.

The fireplace suddenly flared green as our parents stepped though. "I'm so sorry, we just got your message. Is Harry ok?"

Lily looked distraught, her normally neat hair a messy bush as if she'd been running her hands through it. James looked the same as always, except maybe a bit flustered.

"We're fine, Lily." Harry grinned up at mum. "We just went swimming. It's not as if we were doing anything dangerous like walking in the forbidden forest."

An audible 'thunk' rang round the room as Dumbledore's head connected with his desk. His blue eyes weren't sparkling at all as they looked pleadingly up at Lily.

"Please talk some sense into them, Harry and Percy refuse to understand that the Black Lake is dangerous."

James burst out laughing. "You went swimming in the Black Lake? How's old Squiddy? Is he still alive and kicking?"

"You bet!" We grinned up at our father. "He's just a bit lonely. Professor Dumbledore here thinks that we shouldn't go talk to him. But The Giant Squid said he'd protect us, so why is everyone kicking up a fuss? All the creatures we met were more than friendly."

The next hour was spent with James and us arguing with Lily and Dumbledore over the dangers in the Lake. It only ended because it was late and we need to go to bed.

"Bye Lily, bye James!" We pressed a light kiss to our parent's cheeks. "Bye Professor! Goodnight!"
We walked slowly out the door. We paused for a moment to shut the door, just in time to hear Lily's unset sigh.

"Do you think he'll ever call me Mum again? Our poor little boy, James. Why won't he accept that we want to help him? I know we wronged him, but…"

Anger bubbled up inside us.

'She abandoned us!'

'How are they trying to help us?'

'They hardly even know us!'

Our angry questions carried on all the way back to the dorms, by which time we were crying over our loss of our parents. No, we didn't always get along, but they were still our blood, our family. And family was everything, wasn't it?

Our tears soaked our pillow as we slowly cried ourselves to sleep. Tomorrow would be a better day.

'Night Harry.' I whispered in a small voice. 'Thank you for today'.

'Night Percy'. Harry smiled. 'I should be the one thanking you for still letting me fly. I love you, bro.'

'Love you too Harry.'

A small smile graced our lips as sleep finally claimed us, sweeping us up into its warm embrace.
Chapter 6

Harry's Point of View

The next couple of months flew by, filled with lessons, homework, my lasted potions project I was working on and Percy's bi-weekly swims in the lake. It was relatively peaceful. Professor Quirrel, our Defence teacher (despite the constant stench of garlic and his horrendous stutter) turned out to not be a bad teacher, and soon it was one of my favourite lessons. Our Godfather let us use a spare dungeon room to practice potions in, and Professor Flitwick and Professor McGonagall gave us extra-credit projects to work on.

But, all good things must come to an end, as Halloween demonstrated…

When we woke the dorm was silent, all the boys still sleeping peacefully. I groaned and rolled out of bed, casting a tempus charm. It was seven. Percy moaned.

'Why can't you ever wake at a reasonable time, Harry?'

'Because we have school?' I pointed out with a grin. I trudged over to the showers and turned in on, ignoring the icy sheets of water that pelted our body. Percy instantly snapped awake, his mind kicking into overdrive.

'Hey Harry.' Percy sent me a devilish grin. I moaned.

'Oh no, I know that look, what do you have planned?' I said in despair.

Percy smirked. 'Since the boys will need to start their morning beauty routine soon anyway, why don't we wake them up?'

'Percy!'

Too late. Percy had always had an affinity with water. He nudged it, channelling it in four neat streams to gather other the boys' heads. I snarled.

'Percy! Do you want Draco mad at us? Last time he didn't talk to us for a week! And it's always your fault too…'

Percy faltered, guilt flooding from his side of the bond, but too late. His control slipped and screams of rage sounded from the dorm.

'Hehe. Sorry?' Percy tried. I sent him the evil eye then blanked him out.

'Potter!' Draco snarled, charging into the bathroom. I groaned.

"Draco, it wasn't me I swear, I asked Percy not too…” I tried to apologise, receiving a stinging hex to the cheek. "Ow!"

Draco almost looked regretful. Almost. "Why didn't you stop him? Fight him for control or something?"

"It doesn't work like that… We have separate magic cores, right? We don't need to be in control to
tap into them.” I tried to explain. All the anger left Draco's face, leaving one of awe.

"You mean you don't need wands?"

I frowned, confused. "What do you mean? We've been using our magic for the last six years, why would we need a wand to do magic? I thought they were just to practise our control with, channelling magic down a smaller centre."

Draco laughed. He threw back his head and laughed. It was the most relaxed I'd ever seen the pureblood heir. "Oh Gods Harry. For all your wisdom, I sometimes forget how truly naive you really are. Wands allow normal wizards – those that aren't twin souls – to access their magic."

"Oh. So we could technically just not use them?"

A smirk twisted Draco's lips up. "Underestimation is the best weapon, even better than pure power. Don't tell anybody else of this, Ok?"

"Won't Dumbledore already know, I mean, we pretty much chucked him across the hall and smashed all the windows..." I asked, worried.

"Who? That old coot? Mark my words Harry, that show probably just made him underestimate you more. It was an act of accidental magic in his eyes, making you even less in control of your powers than he had thought." Draco's smirk widened. "Don't you just love the amount of excuses you have when you're a 'child'?"

I grinned.

'Harry...' Percy was whining at me.

I glowered. 'What?'

'Are you mad at me? Please don't be. I didn't mean to drop the water. I just though you could do with some livening up. Especially since James and Lily came by again yesterday...'

My annoyance instantly lifted. 'Never mind me, are you ok after yesterday? Lily and James were right nitwits, especially after our flying lessons.'

'I'm fine Harry.' Percy smiled, the small insecure boy in him appeased. 'But please don't ignore me again. I don't like it.'

'I won't.' I assured Percy, feeling guilty. 'Besides, I'd never abandon you. Who else would yell at you when you end up doing something incredibly stupid?'

As the three of us had made up again we finished getting dressed (and in Draco's case slicking back his hair with ridiculous amounts of hair gel). Theodore, Blaise, Crabbe and Goyle, who also dormed with us, gave Percy and me a dirty look as we walked past then to go to the hall.

Breakfast was... interesting to say the least. When we reached the doors, fifty students were standing outside them, and a constant din of doors opening and slamming filled the air. Draco and I fought our way to the front.

"What the...?" Draco gasped, staring at the doors that were moving on their own accord. One by students were running through the doors. I rolled my eyes.

"Hasn't anyone heard of a freezing spell?" I asked. An older Ravenclaw glared at me.
"What do you take us for, stupid? We're already tried that. Hell, Dumbledore has even tried it. Those Weasley twins sure do know their spells."

I squinted, and Percy send some of his magic to our eyes to allow us to see the spells. The hinges were glowing a faint silver. No other part of the doors appeared to be charmed. Grinning, I pointed my wand at the hinges.

"Immobulus!" I sent the spell to each of the four hinges on the left door in quick succession. Through some luck, the door ground to a halt wide open. Our head held high, I walked through the door, sending a sneer and the older Ravenclaw, who was staring at us wide-eyed. Percy laughed hysterically in our head.

'Oh Merlin, can you see his expression? Priceless!' Percy chuckled. I agreed. Pure gold.

As we entered the hall Dumbledore sent us an astonished expression, and the Weasley Twins narrowed their eyes at us. I winked at them.

"Nice spell work on the hinges. Discreet. Almost unnoticeable, but not quite."

"But how-"

"Not even the Headmaster noticed!"

Fred and George both started talking at the same time. Draco placed a hand on our shoulder. "Weasleys, this is a Potter we're talking about. When have Potters ever willingly given up their secrets?"

That was true, I mused. We Potters were renowned for our closely kept secrets, even more so than the Malfoys, or even the Blacks. Fred pouted while George chuckled.

"I think life round here just got that bit more interesting, don't you Gred?"

"Sure thing Forge." Fred agreed. "You into pranking Potter?"

I shook my head. "Nah. But James is. Between him and Charles you learn how to check for enchantments in the most unlikely places."

I rubbed my head. 'Such as the shower…'

Percy laughed. 'Harry that was me!'

'What?! Percy!'

Last lesson of the day was Charms. We were charming feathers to fly finally after learning the correct pronunciation and wand movements for the past week. Granger especially looked extremely excited, sending me smug looks. I responded with a bored stare, but she didn't stop. I narrowed our eyes.

'Granger looks like she's up to something.' Percy said.

I nodded, slipping into the seat on her left. She gave me a slightly put off look, but quickly turned her attention back to Professor Flitwick. Feeling a bit guilty, I tuned out Flitwick's squeaky voice, instead doodling on some scrap parchment. I head Percy mutter an animation charm, and the little Quidditch match I had drawn began to move.
"Off you go now. Remember, swish and flick! The incantation is Wingardium Leviosa!"

Granger was about to get started, but then she noticed Weasley on her other side doing it wrong and sighed in exasperation.

"No, no, no! You're doing it all wrong! It's winGARdium LeviOsa. Not Wingardium LevioSAR."

Ron snapped something back, and I groaned.

'Well. Get on with it then!' Percy exclaimed. 'I want a go too!'

'As his majesty commands.' I teased, flicking my wand.

I didn't say anything, having decided to attempt it silently instead. The fluffy white feather floated upwards gentle, swinging from side to side as invisible movements in the air pushed it. I smiled. It was so pretty.

I summoned the feather back, and let Percy have a go. Granger and Weasley were still arguing.

Percy, sensing I was getting a bit annoyed, turned to them. "Do you guys ever stop? Seriously. Half the class has managed to get their feathers in the air by now."

Granger, glanced up. Disappointment filled her eyes as she noticed Percy was right. Disappointment? Then I remembered her smug smile.

'She's been practicing.' I noted. 'My guess is Granger wanted to outdo us today."

'I kind of feel bad now.' Percy mumbled.

I didn't feel bad, by I could empathise with her want to be acknowledged as something more than second best all the time. 'She has to rise early if she wants to beat us!'

Percy didn't reply, he just recast the spell instead.

When charms was over we all headed down to the hall for the famous Hogwarts feast. Behind us we could hear Ron sneering something about Granger being a 'stuck up know-it-all' and how it was 'no wonder she didn't have any friends'. Someone pushed past me, sobbing loudly a few minutes later. Percy sighed.

'Stupid Gryffindors.' I muttered. 'You rarely think of the consequences. You're better than most Percy, but you still need to learn to think first.'

'I know.' Percy agreed. I gave him a worried look. Usually Percy would be at least defensive about himself.

'What's wrong? You've been really quiet.' I asked.

Percy sighed. 'I don't like bullies. You used to care too, but now you're acting more like Draco everyday.'

'I -' I shielded myself a bit more than usual, realising Percy was right. 'You're right. I just don't want to lose our friends. And... and I don't want to lose Draco. I'm scared to, Percy. I'm scared they'll leave us to be alone again if we start playing nice to Granger and the other Gryffindors. Then-'

'I understand Harry.' Percy cut in. 'But please don't act like that round me, in the one place that is
truly private to us. Because – because if you do then you'll change for good, and I don't want that.'

'No change.' I promised.

'No change.' Percy smiled.

The Great Hall was a glorious sight. Hundreds of bats flew around the rafters just below the enchanted ceiling. A full moon was swimming in and out of the clouds. Pumpkin lanterns lined the various alcoves along the walls, as well as the isles of tables. Gigantic cobwebs filled random corners and decorated the candlesticks on the tables. A large number of Halloween related foods and sweets filled up the tables, and all the ghosts were present. It was the one night of the year that the Ghosts almost looked alive, as the veil between the living and the dead was stretched impossibly thin.

Chatter and laughter filled the air as everyone celebrated. The Slytherin table had a slightly more sullen atmosphere, as they worship Samhain for those that were dead.

But the festive atmosphere came to a rather abrupt stop when Professor Quirrel came running into the hall shouting:

"Troll! Troll! In the Dungeons. Thought you ought to know."

Then the Professor fell *forwards* in a dead faint. Percy and I narrowed our eyes at this.

'He's faking isn't he?' Percy asked. 'I think his foot just twitched.'

'Obviously.' I snorted. 'People never faint forwards from standing up. They'd fall backwards.'

Screams split the silence. Dumbledore had to amplify his voice to be heard.

"Everybody stay calm! Perfects, please escort your houses back to your Common Rooms. Do not under any circumstances wander away from your group. The rest of the staff and I shall track down the troll."

Happy to have instructions to be following, the students shut up and filed one by one out of the hall like sheep. The Slytherin's were the last to leave, giving Dumbledore dirty looks. Really, how stupid was that man? The Slytherin Common room was in the Dungeons where, unless we had all misheard Quirrel, the Troll was!

Once out the hall we slipped away from the main group. Draco spotted me.

"Where in Merlin's name are you off to? Dumbledore said stick together!"

Percy grinned roguishly. "Draco, we're heading *towards* the Troll. We won't be any less safe away from the group. Besides, Harry's always wanted to see a Troll and I've always wondered if I could fight one and win. Look, we'll see you later, Ok? Please don't tell Sev. He'll skin us alive!"

"Then don't go!" Draco begged.

"Too late!" Percy laughed as he ran off.

'That conversation we had earlier about Gryffindors not thinking?' I reminded Percy.

'Come on Harry, live a little! Think of it as a learning experience. It'll be fun!'

We argued a while as we ran down the dimly lit corridors. A sudden scream from our left brought us
to a sudden stop. Horror filled us. It sounded as if somebody else had already found the Troll, and
the fight really wasn't going well, judging from the mispronounced spells and curses and loud bangs
coming from the girl's bathrooms.

We through open the door and ran it to be met by the sight of our brother and Ron throwing bits of
destroyed sinks and wood at the Troll.

The stench was what hit us first. It was almost sickly sweet, a bit like death. Then we actually saw
the troll, a massive beast, at least three times our size. It had grey-blue-green skin that had the texture
of Elephant hide and its eyes were filled with an intelligent sort of fury as it swung its club.

Curious, I joined Percy for control. 'Do you think we could try and talk to it?'

'What?! Are you mad?'

'No, I started learning how to communicate with Trolls last summer, remember? I laughed. 'Have
some faith in me Percy!'

"Greetings, Troll of the Mountains." We grunted, immediately drawing the attention of everybody
in the room.

"You speak…" The Troll grunted back. "You are awfully small, youngling."

'Why are we always called small?' Percy asked indignantly, while I laughed.

'Probably because we're only eleven and not fully grown yet?' I suggested.

"We are Percy and Harry Potter." We told the Troll. "Who are you, and how did you get into the
castle?"

"I am Urnard." The troll informed us. "The garlic man let me in. Said it would be fun. I don't like
having things thrown at me. It isn't fun at all. You smell nice, PercyandHarryPotter. Like food, but
then not food."

"Harry what in the name of all Magic are you doing?" Charles demanded. "It's trying to kill us and
you are just standing their taunting it with stupid imitating grunts!"

We shook our head at Charles. "Charles, please, we're trying to have a conversation here. Urnard,
our good Troll here, doesn't appreciate you throwing things at him, so if you could please refrain
from doing so, that would be great."

"Talking to… You can't speak Troll. It's not even a language!" Hermione snapped.

"Yes it is." We sighed. "Now, please shut up and get out, your annoying Urnard."

"Sorry about them. The one who looks like me, Charles, is my brother. He is rather stupid." We
apologised to the Troll. Percy couldn't help but ask. "Do you like wrestling matches? I've always
wanted to wrestle with a Noble Troll, such as yourself."

"Wrestling is fun." The Troll agreed. "But not here. You, little one, could get hurt on the sharp
rock. Shall we go outside? I know the perfect glade!"

"Great!" We replied, fuelled by Percy's eagerness.

Before we could take more than a few steps, however, the door swung open again and the teachers
stormed in. Dumbledore send a strong stunner at the Troll, knocking poor Urnard out. We scowled at
Dumbledore.

"What did you do that for, Headmaster? We were just about to go outside and have a friendly wrestling match. Urnard wasn't doing anything wrong! He only destroyed the bathroom because Hermione's screaming scared him, and then Charles and Ron started throwing things at him. I think it's quite understandable that he got a bit mad."

"Mr Potter," Dumbledore let out an exasperated sigh. "Don't tell me you can communicate with Trolls as well as Goblins and Merfolk."

"Of course. Languages are a very useful things to know. Not even a fifth of the knowledge in the world is written in English, so we learned other languages to learn more." We informed him.

Severus rubbed his forehead. "Harry – Percy – Trolls can't write."

"Of course they can't." We look affronted. "They share knowledge orally."

"Of course." Severus sneered. "Come on now, you misbehaving little brats. You can lose ten points each for disobeying Dumbledore's orders."

We were herded out of the toilets and escorted back to the common room. The Slytherins didn't at all look impressed when we got back at all.

"You reckless, stupid Gryffindor!" Blaise snapped at us, cuffing our ear. "I'm blaming you, Percy, for this. Harry is far too sensible…"

"Ow!" We rubbed our ear.

Draco gave us an exasperated look. "Well Percy? Did you get to wrestle the Troll in the end?"

"No." We pouted. "Dumbledore arrived and stunned him before we could. We had been just about to go outside for a match as well!"

"Hold on – WHAT? Did you actually talk to it?"

"Well. Trolls are very intelligent creatures sometimes…"

The whole Common Room started firing questions at us. At some point, Severus slipped out of the room and retreated off to his own rooms, leaving us at the mercy of the half incredulous, half furious Slytherin House.
Chapter 7

Percy's point of view

We just about survived our interrogation from the Snakes. Flint gave us a lecture on what was the proper way to act, and rebuked us for chasing after the Troll. I tried to explain that I just wanted a wrestling match, and he liked horrified! Apparently wrestling matches were for Muggles and mudbloods. We disagreed, but held our tongue. Even without Draco's foot to the shin we had worked out that no wasn't the time to start talking pro-muggle.

As for our Godfather… Severus gave us two nights detention with Filch. Or at least, it was going to be with Filch, then Hagrid asked for us instead. Something about a disturbance in the unicorn herds or something. I don't know. But yeah, so here we were, on the edge of curfew, waiting for the others with detention tonight to turn up, outside the Forbidden Forest. Seriously, Dumbledore specifically warned us not to go into the Forbidden Forest, and now we were being taken into it? What kind of backwards logic is that?

Mist curled around the thick trunks of the thick trees. It was probably due to the superstition surrounding the woods, but I could almost feel the tree's hatred for us, their branches reaching out with twig-figures to snatch us. The night time noise of the nocturnal animals filled the crisp night air. I could hear what might have been the Centaurs thundering through the woods shouting, the snuffling of what sounded like a pig-animal, and the almost silent padding footsteps of a predator, just beyond the grey bushes. I shivered.

'Hey.' Harry poked me with a smile. 'It's just like the woods at home, right? When we went searching for moonlace?'

'Yeah.' I grinned, suddenly not scared anymore. Harry and I joined control. I felt his calm fill me, and I let my excitement wash over him.

"There you are!" Hagrid exclaimed to somebody from behind us. We turned around, and groaned. Who else would it be by Charles and Ron with detention? Behind them stood a short slightly plump boy with a round face and dark hair that I recognised as Neville Longbottom.

Our brother scowled, and Ron glared.

"What are you doing here?" Ron demanded.

We sighed and rolled our eyes before answering truthfully, "We challenged a Troll to a wrestling match. Severus thought it was a risk to our health, so put us in det to 'learn our lesson'."

The Gryffindors didn't look sure whether to believe us or not. Hagrid laughed.

"They did as well. If that wasn't a Gryffindor thing to do then I don't know what is."

Neither Ron nor Charles responded, and Neville looked petrified – he didn't look like he'd be speaking any time soon. Deciding to get on with things, Hagrid picked up his large lantern and heading into the dark trees. A small whimper left Charles' lips as the half-giant beckoned us with one enormous hand.

"You can't mean that you actually expect us to go in there, do you?" Charles begged in the smallest
"Scared, Charles? My, my, and we thought you were a Gryffindor..."

Charles stiffened, straightening his back and glaring at us. He curled his lip back in a sneer, and shook his head. The movement looked a bit forced and his eyes were constantly flicking around him, as if searching for something, for anything that he could use as an excuse not to enter the trees.

Hagrid beckoned us again, a bit impatient now. Shrugging out shoulders, we moved past our brother, and entered the trees.

"Harry?" Charles spoke, his voice shaky and scared. "What are you doing? There are werewolves and vampires and all sorts of nasty creatures living in there..."

We gave in a slightly condescending look. "Charles. Haven't you even been into the library, let alone opened a book? Werewolves only change on the full moon, any other time of the month they are simply men, just like you and I. As for vampires... there are much tastier things to eat than us in that wood. Like unicorns."

We frowned. It was well known that Vampires adored human blood only second to that of the noble unicorn, but that wasn't good, even if it might possibly save our lives tonight. Unicorns were an endangered species as muggles were destroying their natural habitats. And for any creature to kill a unicorn was... well, it was heavily frowned upon and highly illegal. Not that vampires cared, the slimy little worms...

'Percy.' Harry sounded amused. 'You're doing it again, getting distracted and then getting wound up over something.'

'Huh? Oh, sorry Harry.' I blushed, tinting our cheeks pink. Harry laughed.

'Aw, Percy. You're too cute sometimes.'

I blushed harder, mumbling, 'I'm not cute. Girls are cute. Fluffy animals are cute. I'm not cute!'

Harry laughed out loud this time, gaining us strange looks from the Gryffindors. We waved them off with an angelic smile, saying, "Don't mind us, private conversations and all..."

Then we followed Hagrid into the forest. There was a moment of silence from behind us, then all the supposedly 'brave' lions came chasing after us, yelling at us to wait for them. We smiled. Nothing riled up Gryffindors more than the idea that someone was braver than them.

Despite its gloomy appearance, the forest was actually really pretty at night. My ADHD was going wild, filling us with energy and putting me in a constant state of distraction. I could feel Harry getting slightly annoyed with it, but he knew there wasn't anything he could do, so he put up a weak shield to block the worst it. I just watched in amazement at the pretty glowing moss and twinkling fireflies. There were fungi that seemed to move and dance, and the trees seemed to be welcoming us, opposed to the trees at the edge of the wood that had been warning us away.

I saw tree nymphs peering at us from their leafy homes, and saw little pixies flying round a tree. An almost idiotic smile lit up our face, but I didn't care. I was happy, and this place was beautiful.

'Can you see all this, Harry?' I asked. 'It's beautiful and gorgeous and I love it! We've got to come here again at some point, hopefully when it's daytime.'

Harry chuckled. 'We will, don't worry. I doubt Draco or Severus will approve, however, so we'll have to be stealthy.'
"We can do that!" I exclaimed, happy that Harry had agreed.

Eventually we came to a stop at a 'T' in the path. Hagrid looked us over.

"Right. We're here searching for the Unicorn Herd. They've been quiet the last couple of days, and the Headmaster and I agree that something's troubling them. Now, given we're all male, they're less likely to trust us, but if you see them just send up gold sparks with your wands. If you're in trouble, send out red sparks. Got it?"

We nodded, and Hagrid grinned. "Right. Ron, you go with Percy and Harry. I'll take Charles and Neville."

Ron scowled at this, but we all agreed, and split up. Ron and I went left; Hagrid and the other's went right. We walked in silence a while, Ron all but hiding behind us and he clutched a lantern in his hands.

"Cheer up Ron." We said cheerfully. "It could be worse. After all, Filch wanted to put us in the dungeons."

"How are the dungeons worse than this? We could die here. The dungeons are just cold and damp."

"True, but at least it's pretty here. And –"

A sharp crack cut us off before we could say anything else. We frowned. It sounded like a twig had been stepped on. We looked around, squinting into the darkness. Unfortunately the lantern impaired our vision, so we could only just make out a faint outline of a black figure running past. We turned back to look at Ron, and frowned. He was gone, the lantern forgotten on the floor as he fled back the way we'd come. Shrugging, we blew out the lantern to guarantee that it wouldn't set fire to the forest then continued on our way, the forest much clearer now it was only being lit up by the faint light from the stars and the moon. Glancing upwards we frowned. Mars was awfully bright tonight.

We carried on down the path, singing softly to ourselves as we walked, until we came across a small clearing. It took us a while to notice the poor unicorn, its legs struggling feebly as a large cloaked figure drank from its neck. I was beyond enraged, but Harry kept a clear head, trying to make sure that the thing – whatever it was – wasn't a vampire.

"Killing a unicorn is a crime worthy of a punishment worse than death, you know." Harry said conversationally as we walked slowly towards the figure. "Though I imagine you'd know this, of course. Who doesn't? Except those ignorant muggleborns obviously."

The figure turned to face us, silvery blood dripping from its mouth. The top half of its face was hidden by the cloak, leaving only its mouth and jaw uncovered. It hissed at us, a low drawn out sound.

"You know nothing, boy about this. Leave now, or face your end!" The creature snarled.

Undaunted, we stared coolly back. "We know that we aren't going to let you kill that unicorn, sir, so please stop threatening us and leave before we are forced to hurt you."

The creature laughed, it laughed and laughed until tears were streaming down its face. Slightly annoyed now, and feeling rather reckless, I flicked our wrists, summoning our wands from where they had been safely stored in holders on our forearms. The creature froze for a moment, confused that we had two wands, not just one like every other wizard.

"Looks like I'm not the only one here doing something illegal. One wand per wizard, that's the law."
The creature sneered. We smirked back, not bothering to reply.

'Expelliarmus!' I mentally shouted, even as Harry shouted, 'Incarcerous!'

The creature was flung back into a tree, ropes binding him tightly there. Convinced the creature was under control now, we turned to where the Unicorn was still struggling weakly. We moved over to it, a lone tear falling down our cheek at the sight of its ravaged neck. The salty water droplet landed on the edge of the wound, and hissed slightly as it came into contact with the blood. The poor Unicorn let out a low whine of pain.

"Shush now." We soothed, stroking its flank gently. "We're going to try and help you now."

A beautiful dark eye met our green ones, glistening with pain. Thank you Lords."

We stared at the animal in shock for a moment, then shook ourself and held one hand over the bleeding wound. We summoned all the magic we could, pushing it out through our hand and into the unicorn, imagining it undamaged and healthy once more.

After our magic had healed the Unicorn's damaged neck we felt if moving though the majestic beast, healing tiny scars and strengthening its left leg bones where they had broken a long time ago. When our magic reached its heart it paused for a moment, gently touching the Unicorn's own magic that dwelled there. Finally, it retreated back into us.

"What... what are you?" A stunned voice came from the figure tied to the tree behind us. We turned to face it.

"We are a twin-soul." We told it, before turning back to the unicorn. "Are you ok now? Will you make it back to your herd safely?"

'Yes Little Lords. That you for helping me.' The Unicorn touched its horn to our forehead, where our lightning bolt scar lay. The skin around the scar grew warm for a second, then the warm feeling of magic washed over us. We smiled, pure delight filling us. 'Would you like a ride back to the castle? It is late for you, I believe, and the Forest can be unsafe at this time.'

We smiled. "That is very kind, thank you."

The unicorn knelt down and we grasped a handful of its silvery mane lightly for balance as we swung our leg over. As we left the clearing a silent though made the bonds that bound the creature to the tree fall loose. The unicorn nickered softly in approval.

'You are kind, young Lords, and untouched by the evil of your kind. Don't ever lose that, little Lords, for it is treasure worth more than any amount of gold.'

We smiled. "Thank you."

As we rode up the path, a sudden commotion up ahead brought the Unicorn to a halt. A pair of centaurs blocked the path, their bows pointed directly at us. We tilted our head and frowned slightly, watching them and waiting for them to state their business.

"You are different." One said in a tight voice. "You aren't fully one of the Wizards, and yet you are still. And then there is that feeling of fealty, as if you are our Lord..."

"We are a Twin-soul." We offered, thoroughly confused.

The Unicorn glanced at the Centaurs. 'He is our Little Lord, and means you no harm. I am returning
the boys up to the Castle, where they'll be safe. I owe them a life-debt for saving my life tonight.'

We shook our heads in horror at the Unicorn. "No, no, no, please. You owe us nothing. We only did what we believed to be the right thing."

"And yet you saved her life." The second centaur murmured. "Not many would do that."

The second centaur glanced up at the stars. "Mars is bright tonight. I feel we shall be meeting again, young Lord. Good luck, and greet Chiron for me this summer."

"Who's Chiron?" We asked, but the centaur we gone, melding into the woods like shadows.

The rest of the ride out of the Forest was uneventful, and we simply admired the natural beauty of our surroundings. The trees grabbed at our clothes as the edge of the Forest grew near, trying to prevent us from leaving.

"We'll be back." We promised even as we broke through the last of the trees.

Immediately we were met by a worried Hagrid and annoyed Charles.

"Where do you think you've been?" Hagrid demanded. "It's almost ten o'clock, curfew began an hour ago!"

"We found a creature feeding of a Unicorn." We explained. "So we tied the creature up and healed the Unicorn. As you can see, she offered us a ride back up to the castle."

We slipped off the Unicorn's back, patting her flank in thanks. It seemed then that Hagrid noticed exactly who our steed was, and frowned.

"She actually let you ride her? How… but… Unicorns don't…"

I see you found our little run away then." The overly cheerful voice of Albus Dumbledore cut it. The old man took one look at us and the Unicorn and beamed. "Did you find out what was wrong with the Herd then?"

We nodded. "Some creature's been feeding off them. We're not sure what; it was wearing a hood. We do know it wasn't a Vampire though. No fangs."

Dumbledore nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, well, good work Mr Potter. Off to bed with the lot of you now. It's late."

We nodded again, and stroked the Unicorn's flank before reaching up to whisper in its ear, "Thank you for everything. If the creature comes back, contact us. We'll come and help, no matter what."

'Thank you little Lords. May the gods be with you.'

We smiled, then turned to follow our brother back up to the castle. A soft clatter of hooves alerted us of the Unicorn's departure. We turned to watch it go, its glowing white pelt somehow fading in with the shadows of the Forest.


We sighed. "So?"

"Even I know they don't like boys." Charles exclaimed, looking at us with a strange sense of awe, the normal hostility gone from his gaze.
"So?" We shrugged. Back at home in the woods by the river we'd been friendly with the local Herd too. And all the other beings that had lived in the woods. To us, this was normal.

"Anyway," Charles glared at us a bit, "don't do anything like that again. Mum will have my head. She believes that as you're my 'baby brothers' I should be looking after you."

Despite the slight anger in his words, we could hear that the warning wasn't just because of Lily.

'He kind of cares.' I said, surprised.

Harry smiled. 'He is our brother and our twin. Deep down, we still have that bond that links us.'

'I guess…'

We both smiled at Charles. "No promises, but we won't go out of our way to get into trouble. Who does?"

We laughed. A hand closed around our shoulder. Surprised, we jerked our head up to see Severus standing behind us, his expression a mixture of amusement and exasperation.

"If I remember correctly, boys, the actual reason that you were in the Forest on detention in the first place was because you recklessly decided it would be fun to challenge a Troll to a wrestling match. Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but surely that counts as going out of your way to get into trouble."

We blushed, and bowed our heads. "Sorry Professor Snape. It was a genuine accident this time, we promise! We were just following the path…"

Severus breathed out in a long sigh and knelt down to our level to look us in the eye. "Harry, Percy, you were along in the Forest. Why didn't you follow Ron when he ran back to Hagrid?"

"Because we always go for midnight walks in the woods back home." We said as a way of explanation. "And the Forbidden Forest is so pretty, we didn't want to leave it yet."

"Huh." Snape huffed, putting an arm round our shoulders and pulling us away down to the Dungeons. "Percy, just because something is pretty, doesn't mean it's safe. You should know that, Harry. And I doubt the woods at home were very safe either at night, were they?"

We yawned. "It was fine, the local werewolf pack were perfectly nice to us when we met them."

"What?" Severus exclaimed.

We looked at him with heavy eyes, the heavy weight of sleep starting to press down heavily on us now that I wasn't hyper.

Severus sighed, and picked us up, aware he wasn't going to get anywhere with us tonight. We drifted slowly off to sleep in his arms, falling into sweet dreams of a summer camp and a white centaur and a cute little girl, her bright blond hair and grey eyes flashing with delight as she sparred with an older boy, who had a deep scar on his left cheek. To the left lay a large field of strawberry plants, and to their left lay a deep wood, which looked similar to the Forbidden forest. Behind them lay the ocean, blue and beckoning, it felt like home. We smiled. Just before the dream ended a young satyr who hadn't yet grown his horns caught sight of us and mouthed the words, "We're coming for you soon."
When we woke I was buzzing with excitement. Today was the day I'd been waiting for Merlin knows how long! It was going to be the first Quidditch match of season; Gryffindor verses Slytherin! No homework today, just a day out at the pitch! I grinned, and Percy moaned slightly.

'Harry, I swear to Merlin, isn't it supposed to be my job to get hyper? I don't inflict you with it this early in the morning so could you please, please refrain from inflicting me with your over energetic thoughts?' Percy moaned, mentally burying his head under a pillow. I laughed.

'Oh Percy, if I could help it I would, but really, it's the first match of the season! You can't tell me you aren't excited to see if we win?' I grinned stupidly.

Percy glared at me. 'Ask me again when it's not five in the morning and I'll give you the answer you want. Seriously, not even Draco is up and starting his morning beauty routine. I think you can wait a few more hours, I mean seriously?'

I sighed, but laid back down on our bed, putting up a mental blockage to let Percy get back to his oh so precious sleep. Too awake to follow suit I picked up a book – Quidditch through the Ages – and began to read, letting the words slowly lull me back into a calmer state.

I must have fallen back to sleep because when I woke again it was light and the other boys were noisily getting ready round us. Percy had obviously been awake a short while longer, because we were already dressed and ready to go down to breakfast.

'Morning sleepy head.' Percy laughed. 'It's not often I'm awake and functioning before you, is it?'

'No.' I agreed. 'Please don't do it again, it messes with my head.'

Percy laughed out loud, and Draco gave us a frown.

"Harry's awake." Percy explained with a smile. Draco smiled back.

"Complaining, is he?"

"Apparently it defies nature that I should be functioning in the morning before him." Percy explained.

The boys all laughed, shaking their heads. Blaise even snorted.

"Harry. You can't expect to always be the first awake. I mean, I don't know how late you stayed up last night, but even Crabbe was awake before you this morning."

I gasped. 'Crabbe? But we have to pull him out of bed most mornings! We aren't late are we? I don't want to miss the match. Hurry up Percy! We're going to be late!'

"Ow!" Percy grabbed our head as I shouted at him. "Sheesh Harry, calm down. It's only eight thirty. We still have a whole hour and a half before the game actually begins. We're not going to be late!"
The boys burst into laughter again, and we all headed down to the hall in high spirits. Breakfast was a rowdy affair, shouting at the Gryffindors and boasting about our own skill. Bets were flying round the hall. Ten galleons on Gryffindor. Twenty on Slytherin. Five that they draw. Fifteen that the snitch is caught within the hour.

'Feel like placing any bets, Percy?' I joked.

'You laugh,' Percy said, 'but I actually think I might.'

I groaned.

"Hey Draco!" Percy called. "How much do you bet that Gryffindor win?"

"Really?" Draco looked disgusted. "Where's your house pride, Potter? I wouldn't bet anything on a Gryffindor success. Ten galleons that they lose?"

"You're on!" Percy grinned. Blaise, Theodore, Crabbe, Goyle and Pansy took the same bet.

'If we lose…' I warned.

Percy waved me off. 'I know, I know, but it's not as if we don't have the money. Besides, if we do win than we're sixty galleons richer. Live a little would you?'

I sighed. 'Fine…' I grumbled.

After breakfast we made our way down to the stands. None of the houses mixed together on the way down, forming four lines of red, green, yellow and blue. Percy giggled slightly and I smiled.

'Taking rivalry to the extreme…' I joked.

The stands were all coloured to represent our houses. It wasn't that the houses weren't allowed to mix, it was just that they didn't. Draco, Theo, Blaise and us sat at the front of one of the Slytherin boxes, eager for the match to begin. Across from us, a fluttering red banner caught our eye. Potter for President? We read in confusion.

"What –" Before Percy could finish our question the Teams came marching in, their brooms slung over on shoulder, and the crowd let out a roar of approval for their favoured team. There, at the very front of the Gryffindor Team, I recognised the mop of messy black hair and slight frame that made up our brother. I growled, Percy echoing the noise.

"What in the name of all things magic is our brother doing on the pitch?!" Percy growled. "That stupid stuck up idiot! Not only does he bend all the rules, he also does it in a way that will most likely get him killed! The stupid, stupid nitwit!"

"Huh?" Draco looked down at the pitch. "What?! And he's riding a Nimbus 2000! That isn't a school broom, he must have brought his own! That little blood-traitor! My father will be hearing about this…"

Draco trailed off, muttering rude things about our brother and how he was going to get onto the team next year, if just to beat him.

A sharp whistle brought us back to the present. Fifteen brooms rose up, high, high into the air. The game had begun.

"And the Quaffle is taken immediately by Angelina Johnson of Gryffindor – what an excellent
Chaser that girl is, and rather attractive too –"

"JORDAN!"

"Sorry Professor."

They do say to start as you mean to begin, I mused as Percy and I laughed at the commentator. Lee Jordan was one of the few Gryffindors that were civil with Percy and me. Well, actually it was only him and the Weasley twins that were civil too us, but that's beside the point. Jordan couldn't stop complimenting the Gryffindor female Chasers as he commented on the game.

The game had been going on for about an hour now, and all Charles had done was hover at the side of the pitch, out of everybody's way. The points were currently 80:20 in Slytherin's favour after we knocked out the other team's Keeper, Oliver Wood, but Percy wasn't too concerned.

'Look at Charles, Harry. He might be an arrogant idiot, but the skill with which he moves on his broom, the ease in which he sits… Charles has been all but trained by James since he was five. He knows his way round the Quidditch pitch. He isn't going to fail to catch the snitch.'

Sure enough, mere moments after Percy had pointed this out to me Charles dipped into a steep dive, heading for a distant glint of gold hovering near the grass. Our Seeker, Terence Higgs, had spotted it too, but Charles had the advantage of both a faster broom and a head start. Two minutes later and the game was over, the golden snitch grasped in Charles' hand as his team-mates lifted him up on their shoulders.

Percy smirked and turned to our disappointed classmates sitting beside us. "We agreed on ten galleons didn't we?"

Draco shook his head. "Pure luck, that was. Charles Potter isn't even that good of a flyer. He just has enough fame to make the team."

"Nah, he has some skill." Blaise disagreed, handing over the money. "But you're right that his catch was just pure luck."

"Oh that was. He only noticed the Snitch a couple of seconds before Higgs, and was closer, giving him a fair head-start." Percy agreed. "But sometimes that is what decides the outcome of a game – luck. It's like a duel. A dueller can have all the skill and experience in the world, but even with that they can slip up if their opponent managing to slip under their guard in the half second it takes to cast a spell."

'Huh.' I feigned surprise. 'You actually know things!'

'Oh, shove off!' Percy laughed, mentally shoving me.

As we walked back to the castle we passed the party of celebrating Gryffindors. Percy flashed them a grin on our way. "Nice catch, Charles. And, as for you Fred and George – you two are brilliant! You have got to teach us batting at some point!" He begged.

The ginger haired twins grinned. "I take is us means you and Harry, not your Snake-friends."

"Obviously. As if you'd ever help 'the enemy'. Besides, I don't think they'd what to." Percy laughed. Draco huffed, pretending to be offended. "Percy, I thought we were you're friends!"

"You are." Percy frowned. "But I still can't see you or Theo or Blaise even being interested in
Beating for Quidditch. You strike me more as Chasers.”

"True.” Theodore cut it. "You can deny it all you want, Draco, but we all know what you really want to do.”

Draco pouted, but didn't deny it.

"See you on Monday, then?” Percy grinned at the Weasley twins. "Oh, and don't let Filch catch you with those fireworks you ordered yesterday. He'd have your guts!”

"How did you.”

We didn't wait to hear the rest of the twin's question as we turned to carry on walking up to the castle.

Later that night a party was in full swing in the Common Room. The room was lit up with multi-coloured fairy lights and someone had smuggled food and drink up from the kitchens. Music was blaring from speakers placed round the room. The comfy chairs were pushed against the walls and everyone was dancing. Some of the older years were dressed up in outfits that didn't all too appropriate for a school party, but hey, what do we know? Percy and I just avoided them, sitting with Draco at the edge of the room watching our house party.

"Is it always like this after a match?” I asked Draco.

"Yeah,” Draco nodded his head. "According to my father is always has been like this too. Doesn't matter whether we win or lose, we celebrate the effort that our team put into trying to win. Even Severus turns a blind eye and lets us party, it's brilliant.”

Before much more could be said, Higgs strolled up to us, a scowl distorting his face.

"Potter!” He growled. "You never told us your brother was playing on the Lions team as Seeker!”

We scowled. "If you haven't noticed, Charles and we are really on the best terms. Besides, he wouldn't give away any information to us that could possibly threaten the success of his team.”

"I heard you bet ten galleons on Gryffindor's win six separate times.”

I threw up our arms in exasperation. "That was just a bit of fun! Besides, I've been flying with the Weasley twins a couple of times. I know that they're good. You can't get much better than them. And if that's just the Beaters of a team, they you can very well expect the rest of the team to be brilliant as well.”

Unfortunately, that just wound up Higgs even more. "You need to decide where your loyalties lie, Potter, because I swear on my Magic, if there's something you're not telling us… we will act.”

Higgs turned and stumbled off, a bit unsteady after drinking a bit. Flint came up after him, frowning after his tipsy Seeker.

"Sorry about Terence,” Flint apologised, "he's just annoyed he missed the Snitch. Don't take it personally, it's just him trying to vent his frustration.”

"That's ok.” I shuffled our feet a little, both Percy and me feeling a bit guilty. "Sorry we didn't bet on you winning. It's just... well, the Weasley's are friends of my family, so I've seen them play plenty of times, and I though a bit of friendly competition might make the game a little more interesting.
Flint smiled. "It's fine, Potter. You showed us within the first week that you belong with us. Those Gryffindor's don't know what they're missing. And I expect you to be trying out for the team next year. You too Malfoy. I've watched you two play in the evenings. You're fair flyers, the pair of you. Add in a bit of training... you'll go far."

"Thanks." I beamed at the older Slytherin.

Draco laughed and thanked Flint too. Once the fourth year had disappeared off to go find Higgs again Draco dragged me out to where the rest of our group was dancing.

"But Draco, we don't have anybody else to dance with!" Percy and I groaned. Dancing was horrible. We just couldn't grasp how on earth you were supposed to move. Structured dancing made sense, you had rules and an order to when you moved and how you moved. This though, this was just mayhem.

"Relax!" Draco laughed. "We don't need partners. We're dancing as a group, it'll be fun!"

It took of good half hour, tonnes of sugar and Percy to take over before Draco properly got us dancing. And then it was just a hyperactive Percy attempting to mimic whatever everybody else was doing. I just hid away and didn't watch. Have you ever watched someone who really can't dance, trying to and thinking that they're really good at it? Yeah, that's what it was like with Percy. I saw at least ten older students giggling at us.

At eleven Severus came in to round us off to bed. The fourth years and older were allowed another hour, but us younger years were sent straight up to our dorms.

"Never," Percy giggled, "never, ever make me do this ever again!"

"Oh, don't worry," Blaise teased. "I don't think our poor eyes could bear to see the sight of you dancing again. Merlin, you'd think you'd never danced before."

Percy sobered quickly, his sugar rush gone within moments. "We haven't. The only music we're ever heard was at Charles' birthday parties, and even then we never went outside to join in."

Silence filled the dorm. Draco moved forward to sling an arm over our shoulder, clearing his throat. "We should get ready for bed. Severus might come up to check on us, and I for one don't want a detention for not getting ready for bed as he told us to."

The boys hurried through the bathroom and quickly slipped into their nightwear. As soon as we had all just jumped into bed and settled down the door slammed open and our Godfather slipped into the room, a half-smile twitching at his lips.

"Night boys, sleep well." He said, flicking his wand to turn out our light as he retreated from the room.

"Night, Professor!" We all called back, giggling slightly.

"Night guys!" Theo stage whispered when Severus had gone.

"Night!"

"Sleep well!"
"See you in the morning!"

'Goodnight Harry.' Percy murmured. 'Today was good.'

'It was, wasn't it?' I agreed with a small smile. 'Sleep well and don't get any nightmares!'

It didn't take long for us to slip into Hypnos' sweet embrace. We dreamed of the same girl as before. Her blond hair was pulled up in a ponytail and she was dressed in armour, similar to that that the ancient Greeks had worn in battle. A helmet with blue plumbs was cradled under her left arm. She looked kind of cute, brandishing her dagger like it was a small sword.

Then the scene changed, and we were in this dark, dark room. The walls were rough and cold, like we were in a cave, but there was no cool drafts of fresh air or light. There was just cold and dark. Then the voice began to speak. It was soft and convincing as it swept through the dark air.

"Come to me, little demigod, favourite of Hecate. Come find me, help me rise! We could do great things, you and I. Imagine the revenge you could get on those that abandoned you. And your father! Don't you want to get back on your father for abandoning your mother so soon after she conceived you?"

Percy and I frowned.

"Dude, I don't know who the hell you are, but I'm pretty sure that, even if we did want revenge, we wouldn't need help. And what are you saying about James? He didn't abandon Lily. If anything, he's been the perfect husband to her. Just… Leave my brother and me alone!" Percy all but shouted back.

"Wrong answer, little Demigod. I will rise, whether you help me or not, and you better be on the right side when I do, or not even your precious Olympian Gods will be able to save you from my wrath…"

The threat hung in the air, before the dream faded into blissful darkness, leaving just a ghost of unease. But, it was only a dream, wasn't it? Stupid voices in dreams couldn't hurt us in real life. They were just figment of our overactive imagination. It was probably just unease left over from being threatened by Higgs that caused the strange dream. Nothing to worry about, right?
Chapter 9

Percy's Point of View

We were standing in a field of strawberries, the sea stretching far out to our left and a dense forest to our right. Laughter and loud voices filled the air, accompanied by the splashing of paddles in water, the clash of steel on steel and occasionally the solid thud of what might have been arrows hitting a target. The sky above our heads was clear of clouds, but luckily the heat was at that perfect temperature; not too hot, but still warm.

Spotting a path curving away through the forest, we followed it, the sounds of laughter growing louder. We passed an obstacle course that was a mixture of ground level and way up in the trees. The children using it all had similar features; dark hair and serious faces. I wouldn't call any of them particularly pretty, but then again they didn't look like the kind of kids you'd tell that to their face. These kids looked as if they knew their way round a fight. Luckily, they didn't pay us any attention, as they were all fully concentrated on making their way through the obstacle course or cheering on their friends.

As we walked along the path we could see figures dancing round the trees. They had green skin and pretty faces, and appeared to be coming out of the trees. We frowned. That wasn't normal.

'Tree nymphs?' Harry suggested. I shrugged.

'Could be.'

Other beings made their way through the trees too; Satyrs chatted with the nymphs as they danced, their furry legs and hooves standing out as odd amongst the pretty nymphs. They didn't notice us either, too busy chatting and dancing to pay attention to a random stranger walking down the path.

The path ended in a sandy clearing. Dummies made of straw and wooden poles and dressed in Greek armour, were being hacked at by a group of children, all aged eight to nineteen, with swords. We immediately recognised a tall blond boy, with a scar running down his left cheek. He'd been in our first dream of this place. The boy's blue eyes were alight with a fierce passion as he instructed the younger children in swordplay. We moved a little close, used to the other children ignoring us by now, and listened in on his demonstration.

He called on a kid, who was obviously new to sword-fighting, by the uncomfortable way he held his unbalanced blade, and the horror in his expression.

"Good luck," one of the other kids muttered, "Luke's the best swordsman in the last three hundred years."

The kid called upon blanched, but still joined the blond boy, Luke, up in front of everybody. Luke showed the kid some thrusts and parries and shield blocks the hard way, bruising the poor kid a little more with each swipe. We sighed, wanting more than anything to take the place of battered boy, and show the group what a real fight looked like, but we knew we couldn't. We weren't actually here, after all.

"Keep you guard up, Ethan," Luke would say, whacking the boy in the ribs with the flat of his blade. "No, not that far up." Whap! "Lunge!" Whap! "Now back!" Whap!
We frowned. This boy, Luke, he may have been 'the best swordsman in the last three hundred years', but his technique wasn't perfect. There were slips in his guard and times when he left himself open to a seasoned fighter. Despite being older than us by at least 8 years, I was confident we could probably take him in a fight. Then we shook our head. What were we thinking of? This was a dream, not real life!

Before Ethan could collapse under the weight of blows hitting him, a young female voice cut into Luke's instructions.

"Alright, Luke. Surely that's enough. Can't you see the poor kid's beat?"

Her voice was light and dreamy, but with a confidence behind it that made us look again. Her blond hair was pulled up in a ponytail, but that didn't make the uncut ends any less noticeable. It still fell to just below her rib cage. Various shades stretching from naturally bleach blond to a dirty blond melded together perfectly. Her eyes where strange too. At a first glance they were dreamy, unfocused and appearing to look straight through you. Look again and they were sharp and clear, piercing through every mental shield you could possibly have to view your secrets and discover your weaknesses. We shivered. This girl seemed almost too familiar to be comfortable. She reminded us of somebody, but we just couldn't quite work out who...

"Annabeth!" Luke smiled and the younger girl, pausing in his demonstration. "What are you doing here?"

"Apart from making sure you're doing your job properly?" The girl smiled. Then her expression faded out of focus. "There's a dreaming spirit floating round here. They seemed… disturbed by something."

Her eyes met ours and we fell back with a cry.

Instead of hitting the hard dirt as we'd expected, we fell out of bed, and our fall was softened by the heaps of covers wrapped around our body.

"Percy! Harry!" Draco stood over us, concerned. "Are you alright? You've been writhing on your bed for the past five minutes, mumbling about one thing or another."

"We're… we're good, thanks." Harry said. "Just a bad dream."

'Just a bad dream.' I echoed, still unnerved by the girl's eyes. They seemed to actually see us. Not just one of us, both of us, as if she knew we were there. It was unnerving and positively creepy to be honest. But then, why it was creepy was another mystery. That place wasn't real. It was just one of those weird dreams we'd been having the last couple of months. But still, it was the same place in every dream. Surely that had to account for something.

'And we have a name to put to their faces now as well.' Harry said, following my train of thoughts.

I smiled. 'Annabeth… It's a kind of cute name, don't you think? Do you think she'd answer to the nickname Annie?'

'Percy? You're rambling. Are you ok?'

'I'm fine. Just… just a little sleepy.' I yawned. Harry laughed.

'Well, you know what they say. No peace for the wicked. We have a Transfiguration exam today, and you aren't getting out of it that easily.'
I groaned, and Harry, who had walked into the bathroom, splashed water on our face. He quickly showered and dressed before following the rest of the boys out of the dorms to begin the day.

The Transfiguration exam was actually fairly easy. Putting together the combined knowledge of what both Harry and I had absorbed and revised over the year, along with the tonnes of extra reading Harry had memorised and forced me to memorize made us finish the paper within the first half hour. Seeing we had finished, McGonagall handed us a separate hand out sheet, with instructions to write a thirty mark essay on Animaguses, including how to become one with all the dangers when becoming one, how your animal side affected you when you were human, the benefits and disadvantages of being an Animagus… Somehow, we weren't lacking in information to write.

'Pro – nasty werewolves don't want to eat you in Animagus form.' I sniggered. Harry wrote it down.

'Con – habits from your Animagus form can affect the way you normally act. For example, being over possessive or baring your teeth at those that threaten you.'

'Isn't that something Lupin does?' I asked. 'I thought it was part of his little furry problem.'

'Nah,' Harry disagreed, 'Sirius does it all the time as well.'

'We're judging Black as a normal Animagus?! He's a grim for a start, and has that little bit of mental instability that seems to run in the Black family.' I pointed out.

'It's a point, and besides, the text-book backs me up!'

'Fine! I concede to your superior knowledge, oh great one.' I joked, making Harry smile.

"Times up!" Professor McGonagall called out in a sharp voice. Please put your quills down and stop writing."

We dropped our quill in relief, looking at the ten inch essay with pride. 'I think we just about covered it all.'

'That we did, Percy, that we did.'

Our Professor raised her eyebrows when she looked at the work we had done. "Please could you stay behind, Mr Potter. I wish to speak to you concerning you exam."

"Yes Professor." Harry nodded.

'Are we in trouble?' I pondered.

Harry shrugged. 'She didn't look mad…'

Draco shot us a sympathetic look as he grabbed his bag and left the classroom. When everyone had left the room, Professor McGonagall turned to face us, our test paper in hand.

"This is far above the standards of your average first year, Mr Potter." She told us. I tilted our head to one side.

"So…"

"Mr Potter, this was the exam I gave to my Third year class last week. As for your essay, that is a NEWT level subject. The knowledge which I can see in your answers, not to mention your own theories that you contribute in… How is your extra credit project coming along?"
"Huh?"

Harry rolled his eyes and took over speaking. "Well we're been experimenting with casting multiply spells onto an object, combining Transfiguration with Charms. At the moment we're trying to Transfigure an ordinary Muggle chess set to a much larger scale, charm it to move and think for itself, and then transfigure real weapons for the pieces to use. It's currently in one of the abandoned old Charms rooms. We've got it to the scale that we want, and transfigured the weapons. It's just the charming it to move and think that we're working on now. Want to have a look?"

Genuine pride and enthusiasm all but leaked from Harry as he explained our project. We'd combined it with our Charms extra credit project, and were just smoothing out some problems before we showed it to Professor Flitwick.

"Yes, this evening after classes would be good. A rather interesting project don't you think? What inspired it?"

Harry laughed. "Oh, I was playing a game of chess with Draco and Percy decided it would be more fun if it was both life sized and interactive. Hence, a life-sized chess board that you can play against if you're on your own.

McGonagall was suitably impressed with our chosen project, and so we ran to our next lesson; Defence Against the Dark Arts. I let Harry do all the work, answering questions and helping our classmates. I watched Professor Quirrel instead. His stutter seemed too fake, it was a miracle nobody else could see that. And his turban… Why did he even wear that thing? It stunk of garlic, and looked stifling hot.

The lesson itself was actually rather interesting, talking about the risk that Vampires and other such parasites were to magical beings. For example, if they drank too much of your blood on a regular basis then they could eventually absorb your magic as their own. Furthermore, if a parasite didn't get this magic on a yearly basis then they would wither away and eventually die. Huh, and we had always thought it was all about the blood.

When lessons were over we headed down to the lake, Draco trailing reluctantly after us. It was a beautifully clear day, and the weak winter sun was emitting just about enough heat to make it was cool day. The air smelled of bitter frost, and our breath hung in the air in great clouds. The Lake was yet to freeze over, but it would soon, when the snow began fall.

We sat at the water's edge, watching the waves ripple in silence for a while. A lazy tentacle waved in the air, beckoning to us. Harry turned to Draco, who smiled indulgently at us.

"Go on then, you reckless Gryffindor."

"Thanks Draco." We beamed at him, and dived straight into the lake. Almost immediately the tentacle wrapped around us, pulling us deeper into the depths of the lake. We laughed and spread our arms out, feeling the water tug at them as we sped into the dark water.

'Little Lords!' The Squid greeted us, ruffling our hair.

'Hello!' we grinned back at our friend, meeting his massive eye.

'The Merfolk have requested your presence in their city, Lords. It is a great honour, and you were invited by the King of the Lake himself!'

Harry and I swapped looks. 'Oh. My. Magic!'
'Is this really happening?'

'Mer-central here we come!'

The Squid laughed, and let us go, before directing us through the slimy weed to the Merfolk's city. As we swam we spotted octopus-like grindylows hovering around us, and many brightly coloured fish floated just behind the lake-plants. The water became richer in oxygen the further we swam, and soon we spotted actual Merfolk at the edge of our vision.

::..Is it them?:: We heard one mutter. ::..Is it our Lord's sons?::

::..Shush!: Another scolded. ::It's not time for them to know…::

::..They carry the scar. They carry the King of the Sky's symbol…::

::Blessed by Pan, if I heard correctly…:: Yet another whispered.

'What are they talking about?' I asked Harry, slightly scared.

Harry frowned. 'I don't know. Pan… I think that was a Greek God, Lord of the Wild. As for their Lord… Well, we can't be his sons can we? Our father is a wizard! As for the King of the Sky's… Your guess is as good as mine there.'

::Little Lords!: A familiar face seemed to appear before us. We grinned, recognising the female Mermaid that had found us before.

::..Hello again! I apologise, I don't think we quite caught your name last time.: We blushed in slight embarrassment.

The mermaid laughed, her sharp teeth glinting in the half-light. ::I am Nerissa, King Irvin's daughter.: Our mouth dropped open. ::You are the Princess of the Lake?:

::Well… Yes, I suppose you could call me that.: She tilted her head. ::..Does it matter though?:

::..No, not really.: Harry said.

::..However, it does mean you shouldn't be calling us Lords.: I added.

Nerissa pouted. ::..But you are our Lords. And as you are still small, so you are our Little Lords.: We sighed, but relented.

Nerissa guided us safely into her city. It was beautiful, full of crystal arches and pearl-lined caves and shell paved paths. It wasn't exactly that the paths were needed, given that Merfolk swim, but they did help you know where not to swim, something that Harry and I found more than useful.

The actual palace was made of the same rock a Hogwarts, decorated with mother-of-pearl, shells and crystals. It was truly a sight to see. The sun must have been low, far above our heads, but it didn't take much to imagine the palace shining with watery light in the height of summer…

At the gate to the castle waited a tall merman, his green scales polished to the point that they gleamed, and a gold crown resting regally upon his brow. Recognising him immediately as the king, we kneeled on the floor before him and bowed our head.

::..King Irvin.: We greeted the Lord of the Lake.
His hands touched our shoulders, raising us up off the floor. ::...Nay, Little Lords. You bow to no-one in this Lake. You are the Little Lords! We all owe allegiance to your Father, and so, we owe allegiance to you::

I opened our mouth to speak, then shut it again, not knowing what to say. I didn't understand, as Harry said, James was no Lord. So why...

::...You don't understand, do you?: He asked with a half-smile. are a rare being, a twin soul! Even rarer, you have two fathers. In time, your father will discover and claim you. But, until that day comes, we shall watch over and guard you while he can't. You are nice boys, Harry and Percy. It is our honour to serve you::

I'm pretty sure our face was bright red by now. As in, redder than Rudolph's nose on Christmas eve, red. I felt embarrassed, unsure how I could possibly reply to Irvin's oath of Loyalty. Harry, on the other hand, felt embarrassed and confused, pondering on the King's words.

'But it isn't possible to have two Fathers! And why would we have two fathers when Charles clearly doesn't? Nothing makes sense, Percy! And how would our other father even find our we were his to claim us?'

::...You are understandably confused.: Irvin commented. ::...But you must go now, or the Headmaster will notice you are missing. Do come back soon, and I will try to help answer your questions::

I nodded our head, pulling a complaining Harry away, and swum swiftly back up to the surface, direct the water to speed up our journey. I had discovered that little trick within the first week of swimming in the lake. The water seemed to buzz around us, awaiting our commands. It gave me an almost terrifying sense of power, one that Harry couldn't feel. Harry could direct the water, but he couldn't feel it like I can, understand its desperate need to obey...

Draco was looking stressed when our head broke the surface. We spotted a dark robed figure behind him and immediately understood why. Our Godfather was certainly not somebody to try and hide secrets from, whether they were your own or somebody else's.

Both Slytherin's immediately turned to face us as they heard the rush of water that signalled us leaving the lake. Draco's grey eyes were filled with relief and guilt as they met ours. The black-brown eyes that sort our eyes moments later were alight with orange flames.

"Harry-Percy James Potter!" Severus Snape barked. "What in Merlin's name have a told you about swimming in the lake?!"

"That it's not one hundred percent safe?" I offered, and Harry averted our eyes and toed the ground guiltily.

Severus raised an eyebrow, and we squirmed.

"King Irvin summoned us!" We protested. "It would have been even more unwise to ignore the King of the Lake!"

"Hump!" Severus glared at us suspiciously, as if pondering whether or not to trust us. I widened our eyes innocently begging him to believe us. It was the half-truth after all, so he couldn't really complain… He sighed. "Off to the Great Hall then. And twenty points of Gryffindor, Percy, as I'd bet you had the most influence in this reckless behaviour. It is one of your House's traits, after all."

We grinned. "Thanks, Professor!"
Draco and us ran inside, not quite the last to enter the Hall, but far from the first. We sat down hurriedly, and immediately began to fill our plates with much desired food.

"Where were you?" Pansy hissed. "You better of not lost us any points!"

"Nah, it's fine." I waved her off with a cheeky grin. "We just lost Gryffindor twenty points!"

"Potter you scoundrel!" Blaise laughed. "No wonder the Lion’s don't particularly like you. What were you doing, anyway?"

"Oh, the Merfolk king summoned me to talk about my heritage. Is it possible to have more than one father?"

"Theoretically," Theo began, "It's perfectly possible. If a woman sleeps with two magical beings on the same night, then their seed can mix together. It's not very common, but it is possible."

"Huh." Harry frowned. "I'm going to have to do some research on that."

'Not tonight though.' I warned him. 'Tonight we're going to have fun. We're showing off our Chess board to Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick, remember?'

'Oh yeah!' Harry grinned.

We had just finished our last mouthful when the two Professors came to find us. We smiled at them, bade farewell to our friends, and led our teachers to the abandoned classroom we had commandeered.

Our Transfiguration Professor gasped. Each square on the board was three meters by three meters. The pieces were life-sized, and each carried sparkling sharp weapons. They were truly magnificent, almost lifelike as they watched their opposition with calculating stares.

"Do they," Flitwick swallowed. "Do they move?"

"Oh yes." Harry replied. "Pawn to C3!"

A lone white pawn moved forward to the position mentioned. The tiny Professor grinned and clapped his hands.

"It's not complete yet. We're working on charming the black piece into having separate personalities, and into being able to combat our moves on their own, so give us a couple more weeks…"

"Oh, no, my boys, this is amazing! The quality of the spell work going into this… Well, I'd expect it off my Fifth years, as least, but…"

The Professors continued to complement our work while we just stood there awkwardly, unused to such praise. Usually our work was just graded, if that, and then given back to us as acceptable or useless. We had no idea how to react to this.

It felt sort of… nice in a way. Almost how we'd imagined our Parent's approval would feel like. Harry and I beamed. It was nice to fit in somewhere. Now, maybe that place wasn't at home in the mansion, but we certainly were at home here in Hogwarts.
Chapter 10

Harry's Point of View

The cold North winds drove snow down from the mountains, quickly smothering the castle in a soft white blanket as November melded into December and our first term came to an end. The majority of students were packing up to go home for the festive holiday, but Percy and I were still stalling, unsure whether or not we wanted to go home. On one hand, Draco, Theo and Blaise were all going back to their families for Yuletide, but on the other hand, if we did go home, we'd have to put up with our family, and we weren't sure whether we could handle that just yet.

The Common Room was warmer than usual, a cheery fire burning in the fire-place. A large tree stood in one corner, glowing with pretty fairy lights, and green baubles reflecting the flickering firelight. Even the Slytherin's themselves weren't as icy as normal, chatting and laughing as they said their goodbyes.

We sat silently, watching the flames slowly consume the wood in the grate. I let out a long sigh and rubbed our eyes, unsure of what we wanted to do.

"Stop being so gloomy."

We flinched and spun to see Flint standing behind us, his normally hard face softened with concern. Percy tilted our head, and frowned at the older boy.

"What do you mean?"

A small smile tilted up the sides of Flint's lips. "Oh, come on. Everyone here can see your cut up over your decision whether or not to go home. I get it if you don't want any advice, but take it from me, there are lots of kids here in Slytherin who don't have very good families. At least you're parents realise how they treated you was wrong. Give them another chance. Who knows, you might be surprised where it gets you."

We smiled at the Quidditch captain. "That makes sense, it's just… we aren't sure whether or not we can forget what they did to us to give them another opportunity."

"Then don't."

'Huh?' Percy tilted his head to one side. I frowned.

"Never forget what people have done to you. If they've done it once, then they might do the same thing again. But they're your family. Blood is blood. Some is purer than other, but it still binds us together. You're parents want to make it up to. Let them, but don't forget, in case they do a repeat act. Make sense?"

"That… that makes sense I guess." I agreed, nodding our head.

'He sounds experienced here…' I commented to Percy.

'He does,' Percy agreed, 'I wonder who hurt him.'

'Who knows…?'
"Thanks. You've been a great help." We grinned at the older Snake before running back up to our dorm to pack.

Blaise, Theo and Draco were just shutting their trunks as we came breezing in, packing up our stuff with a couple of sure flicks of our wands. The other Slytherin's gave us a surprised look. Percy giggled at their expressions.

"What, can't a guy make up his mind?" Percy laughed.

Draco rolled his eyes. "Percy, you and Harry are so indecisive that it's a miracle you even make it out of bed in the morning. Merlin, at a time like this I'm almost grateful that your brother is our supposed 'saviour'."

Percy couldn't help but laugh harder at that, and I joined in too, the idea so hilarious it was unreal. "Draco, this is Charles Potter we're talking about. You know, the guy who picks fights like it's his job, and fails to follow even a simple instruction without blowing anything up. Are you sure you mean that?"

Draco pulled a face, sending the other boys into gales of laughter as well. "No…"

As we were all packed and ready to leave we decided to move down to the Common Room instead. As the last to leave the room, we turned back to glance round. The dorm seemed colder, somehow, without the clothes discarded on the floor, the emerald bed curtains neatly pulled back and the bed sheets unruffled. The walls appeared dark and imposing as they loomed down on us. Shuddering, we quickly left the room, the door shutting behind us with a loud creak.

Flint winked at us as we walked past to our normal hang-out spot near the hearth. Percy send him a small smile back, something that Draco picked up on.

"So, Marcus Flint did actually talk to you then."

"What?"

Three pairs of incredulous eyes trained on us, confusion filling their depths. "You mean to tell us that you don't know about his home life?"

"What is there to know?" Percy asked, curious.

Blaise and Theo shared a look. "Well, his mother died when he was born. His dad isn't the nicest guy even if he likes you, but he did love Flint's mother… He blamed Marcus for her death and well, let's say being ignored would be bliss to him."

We frowned, trying to imagine what life must have been like for the older Snake before he came to Hogwarts. "That's horrible! No wonder he knew how we were feeling…"

"Many of us have similar stories. I mean, I don't," Theo told us, "but Blaise has to put up with his mother, and Draco has his father… Not of bad, of course, but not the ideal home either."

I flashed Blaise a questioning look, and he sighed. "My mama has a habit of getting rich husbands then… getting rid of them permanently. I was the result of Husband number two. Not that she doesn't love me, mama does, however coming home to a new step-father every couple of months gets rather strenuous after a while."

Oh. "Our problem doesn't seem quite as bad now. Why are the majority of this kids with 'bad' homes
in Slytherin?"

"It's part of what makes us who we are, I guess."

The topic was quickly dropped when we saw Draco's expression. He looked troubled, not meeting our eyes as he stared at the Slytherin Crest above the mantel piece. Something about that didn't seem like Draco... It showed more emotion that when we had seen him laughing, somehow, and that troubled us.

Conversation moved on, picking up happy subjects such as what presents we were expecting, or Quidditch and the House Cup. The Common Room grew more and more crowded as everyone met up for their last day before the train left in the morning.

Dinner was an equally energetic affair. The smell that we distinctively associated with Christmas hung in the air, a mixture of pine-needles and spice. Dozens of Christmas trees lined the hall, decorated with shining silver and gold decorations. The grotesques on the wall held flickering bowls of fire hanging from chains held in their mouths. Mistletoe hung down from the ceiling in random points, resulting in several students pausing beneath it to kiss. We pulled a face. Yuck!

'If I ever get like that, kick me.' Percy begged, eying a couple with horror.

'Only if you return the favour.' I bartered.

Percy shut our eyes and turned away, back to the table. 'Done!'

A small laugh from across from us snapped our head up. Pansy Parkinson was giggling as she took in our flushed cheeks and horrified expression. Personally, she didn't seem at all bothered by the overly affectionate displays of affection going on around her.

"Lay off, Pansy." Draco grinned. "Harry and Percy grew up in a library remember. They haven't seen this kind of stuff before."

We blushed a deep crimson, Draco's words bringing back unwanted memories. I mean seriously, who would ever want to walk into a room to see their parents making out? Gross! Percy moaned, shutting out all of my thoughts as he fought to wash his brain of the memory.

"Have you?"

"N-n-no!" I stuttered out, maybe a little too quickly. Blaise and Theo grinned maleficently.

"Aw! Tell, tell, come on Harry!"

"WHAT? No! I am not telling you about Lily and Jame-" We narrowed our eyes at the two pure-bloods. "If you repeat a single word I just uttered..."

In our defence, both boys looked terrified at the unspoken threat. It hadn't taken Percy and me long to find out that the unspoken threats worked the best in Slytherin. While Gryffindor's normally required a graphic description of what would befall them should they carry on, the Snake had a better imagination for threats, and often filled it in for you.

Draco, having spotted the looks on our friends' faces, patted us on the back. "You learn quickly, Potter, you learn quickly."

"Back to surnames are we, Malfoy?" Percy teased.
We bantered back and forth for the rest of the evening, relentlessly teasing someone until we found better ammunition to use against somebody else. Charles and his gang attempted to 'put us in our place', but ended up running away in fast retreat when Percy and I brought up the topic of Charles' baby photos. That might have been the one good thing about being ignored during our 'baby' years: there were no humiliating pictures of us in ridiculous clothes or doing stupid things or just looking adorably cute.

As the feast due to a close we followed the flow of Slytherin's back to our Common Room, where the end of term party was starting off. We carefully avoided the spiked punch, having made that mistake once before – alcohol is disgusting people, don't drink it!

The music was loud, practically vibrating through the air and rattling our chests and shaking the floor. The older years were singing terribly, slurring the words and just generally sounding like dying whales as the danced. We laughed and joined in, figuring it couldn't hurt our eardrums more than they already were and besides, we were too hyped up on sugar to care about our atrocious dancing skills. It was fun to let go and have fun without having to worry about school or what adults might think or what our House-mates might think… To act our own age for once, not having to live up to the high standards Pure-blood tradition demanded.

I woke with a stunning headache, the early dawn light stabbing our eyes like glinting silver knives. I groaned, and hid underneath our blankets. Laughter rang in our ears, loud and consistent, murdering our head.

"Shuttup!" Percy groaned into our pillow, as moody as ever in the morning.

"But Harry, Percy, breakfast starts in ten minutes. We have an hour before the train leaves!"

"What!"

We were out of bed within seconds, hastily throwing on clothes and sloppily brushing our teeth. More laughter erupted and we turned to face our dorm-mates with narrowed eyes.

"I swear on our magic, if this was a joke…"

Draco shook his head, tears of mirth streaming down his ice-white cheeks. "N-no joke!" He giggled. "Just nothing gets you out of bed quicker than the threat of being late."

Percy grinned wearily. 'It's true, you know.'

"There is nothing wrong with being punctual." I sniffed at everyone. "Just because you lot don't understand the fine social rules concerning when to be on time, and when to be late…"

The boys burst into hysterics again. Smirking slightly, I thrust our nose in the air and huffed. "Are you coming? We're going to be late!"

I mock stormed out of the dorm, three giggling boys following. Pansy and her friend Daphne gave us condescending looks.

"Why is it that they few times you aren't acting like stuck up rich brats you decide to act like bumbling idiots instead?" They wanted to know.

We just shrugged and ran off, racing each other out of the dungeons. Once out of the dungeons we were in enemy territory, and had to conduct ourselves as 'proper pure-blood heirs'… If only they knew what we were really like, and just what we were actually capable of. Then the Gryffindors
wouldn't be so quick to attempt to place us below them on the food chain…

I shook our head, and Percy sniggered. 'Feeling evil today, Harry?'

'Shushy, Lion. Feeling reckless today?'

'Aw, come on, that's different and you know it!’

'I do. Feeling evil is fun, feeling reckless ends up with us getting hurt!’ I laughed.

Percy mock glared at me. 'Oh, eat my underwear, Snake! Where did you even hear of fun, anyway?'

Before I could reply Draco nudged us. We had reached the Great Hall already. Blinking in slight surprise, we stopped our little mock argument and set into breakfast, piling up our plate with bacon and egg and toast and sausages. Draco poured us a glass of pumpkin juice, and so we dished him up some eggs. We grinned at each other.

"Write to me?" We both requested simultaneously. Draco giggled. Percy smirked slightly.

"It's meant to be! Expect daily letters, cousin!" I grinned.

"Oh, you're on! Do you want me to send your present too?"

"Sounds good! I'll send all of yours off on Christmas Eve. At least then you might actually receive them on time…"

Plans set for the holidays, we finished our meal and headed down to the station. Snow was littering the ground, and Hogsmead looked like something straight out of a fairy tale. Wooden builds were blanketed in snow, and Christmas decorations of holly wreaths and tinsel and nuts decorated the doors and windows. It was so beautiful!

The train journey whizzed by in a flurry of card games, chocolate and sweets, conversation, and reading. Time seemed to slow right down as we approached the station though. Fear flashed through us. What if Lily and James didn't want us home for Christmas? What if we spent the whole holiday as a ghost, unnoticed and unseen for our entire stay? What if…

"Harry, Percy, stop worrying. Everything's going to be fine. And if it's not, then I'm sure mother would love another boy to fuss over for the holidays." Draco offered, touching our shoulder. "I'm just a letter away, don't hesitate to Owl me, ok?"

"Ok, thanks Draco!" We hugged our friend tightly. We'd come to see him as a brother over the past term, and his offer meant more to us than words could convey.

The brakes screeched as the train pulled to a stop. Draco grabbed our hand, and pulled us out the train. Theo and Blaise followed, scanning the crowd with a practised ease to try and spot their parents. The Malfoys, Zambinis and Notts were all standing together. Draco tugged us along to meet them.

"Mother! Father!" Draco called.

Blaise grinned. "Mama!"

Theo didn't say anything, but he did enclose his mother in a big hug. Percy grinned at the sight, a little sadness tinting the happy scene.

'They look like such perfect families…'
"Mama, meet Harry!"

"Ah, yes, Harry. Blaise has told me all about you, correcting the papers ten times over!" Mrs Zambini smiled at us, and for a moment, we could imagine that she was our mother, and actually wanted us around, actually cared for us. Then it was over, and we remembered that that was just a dream. A stupid wish that would never come true.

"Hello Mrs Zambini." I greeted her politely, kissing the back of one of her hands.

The Malfoy's greeted me warmly – or, at least, as warmly as they could in the middle of a teeming crowd. Emotions are a weakness when openly public, as Draco often said. We smiled at that memory. Draco had first told us that after refusing to acknowledge our begging of him to actually ask Pansy on a date! It was blatantly obvious he had a crush on her anyway!

Eventually we slipped away from our friends, and walked toward where the Gryffindor carriages were positioned to try and find our parents. We stopped short when we saw Lily and James crying as they hugged an equally emotional Charles. They embraced him several times, kissing our brother's forehead and telling him how much they missed him. We moved quietly around them, and sat on our trunk a few meters away, watching them. We sighed, wanting more than anything to join in, but knowing we no longer fitted into this happy family scene. We hadn't for ten years, so why would that change now?

Percy directed our gaze at the floor. We retreated back into our mind sitting next to each-other, just to assure one another that we weren't alone. We still had each other, no matter what.

"Harry? Harry? Percy!"

Somebody was calling our names, I realised, moving forwards to see what was going on. Lily was standing in front of us, looking at us expectantly.

"Yes Lily?" I asked, stubbornly ignoring the hurt that flashed in her eyes. We might dream for a loving family, but they had to prove themselves trustworthy before we even let ourselves wish for that dream to come true.

"Are you coming? Dinner will be ready soon, and-"

I stood up, picking up our trunk and walking to the barrier. I ignored Percy's screams at me to be nice, reminding me that we were here to give them a chance, not push them away…

When we got home I ate dinner in silence, only chipping into conversation when directly asked. The anger I had felt at the train station was gone, leaving me shy. We discussed classed and grades. Lily wasn't impressed by Charles' track record for bad grades and detentions, begging us to tutor him. Our eyes went wide with fear at that suggestion. We were not about to give Charles move of our time to be bullied by him. James thankfully waved Lily off, saying Charles was like him, and would grow out of it eventually.

After dinner Percy directed our footsteps to the gym, and picked up a sword. A quick flick of his wand animated the training dummies, then he was away, stashing, stabbing, parrying… I had missed how well Percy would work our muscles when training with a blade. By the time he was done we were covered in sweat and our muscles ached, but it felt nice.

"I didn't know you could fight with a sword."

Percy glanced up to see James standing in the doorway. He shrugged, putting the blade back on the
rack. "I was interested, so Harry looked it up and we learnt."

James smiled sadly. "My father – your grandfather – had the same interest in combat. He tried to teach me, but I could never really get into it. Sword-fighting seemed like an old-fashioned sport, and duelling was the 'cool' thing to do, so I just gave up."

We stood there in awkward silence, not really sure what to say to that confession.

"Ah, it's late. Shower and head up to bed. You look dead on your feet!" James laughed shakily and ruffled our hair, staring nostalgically at the blades lining the wall.

The next week trailed by slowly. It was awkward, remembering to attend meals with the rest of our family, and not spending all our day in the library or gym. Charles eventually came down off his pedestal far enough to ask us for a Quidditch match once or twice. It was fun, and a good challenge, especially when James joined in. We spent a good three hours chasing and catching the Snitch before Lily yelled at us to:

"Get off those stupid sticks and eat your lunch!"

But finally, after a long, slow week of waiting, it was Christmas Eve. A solid knock from the front door echoed through the house, and, without much thought to the matter, Percy opened it.

Sirius Black stood there in all his regal glory, his long hair stylishly messy, and his clothes simple but fitting of his status. His grey, grey eyes wide with surprise.

"Who – Oh Merlin. Harry!"

He pulled us into a tight hug. Our brother's Godfather didn't seem to notice when we failed to hug him back. He just seemed to want to hold us, for whatever reason. Percy frowned.

"I'm Percy, not Harry."

Sirius pulled back, as if stung. We flinched slightly. "What?"

Luckily James and Charles decided to come see who was at the door at this point, and James quickly explained things to him.

"Harry's a twin soul. His other half is Percy."

Sirius narrowed his eyes in thought. "Twin-soul… Now where have I heard that term before?"

"Tradition." Percy grinned at him. "Pure-blood tradition and folk law. For some reason they don't like printing our kind in books."

A faint light of recognition flashed in the grey pools of Sirius' eyes. "I thought 'your kind' was extinct. Mother never said Twin-souls still exist. The last one recorded was centuries ago!"

When Remus Lupin arrived a few minutes later a similar story was repeated, with a bit more detail about what a twin-soul was. It hurt, a little bit, knowing that our parents hadn't talked to their best friends about us, about who and what we were… Ok, that hurt more than just a little bit. It hurt a lot. Suddenly all the steps that Lily and James had made to set things right the past week didn't seem to matter as much as they had. They seemed… insincere almost.

We ran away, back to the library. Back to our hide away. Back to our old existence. Back to the silence. Back to the loneliness.
Chapter 11

Harry's Point of View

We curled up in a small alcove in the library, as far from the door as was physically possible on the second level. Tears dripped slowly down our cheeks as the sound of laughter drifted up from downstairs.

'Why aren't we ever good enough?' Percy asked.

I shrugged, retreating with him to the very back of our consciousness to hold him tight. 'I don't know, Percy. But we don't need them. We have each other, and Draco, and Blaise and Theo and Severus and the entire Slytherin House. We don't need them.'

No matter how many times I repeated the words I couldn't get either of us to believe them. We did need them. No matter how old we got, the childish desire to be loved and looked after never quite left. Maybe it never would.

A light touch to our shoulder snapped us back to the present. To our shock, it was Charles that crouched in front of us. We angrily swiped at the tears on our cheeks and attempted to glare at him. I say attempted because… we failed. We utterly failed at summoning any anger or ill will towards our brother, and collapsed into his waiting arms instead, sobbing our heart out. He held us close, murmurering random nonsense in our ears. We must have sat like that for a good hour before the tears finally dried up.

"Why?" Percy asked in a broken voice. "Why do they always notice and talk about you, but fail to as much as see us?"

Charles sighed. "I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm the boy who lived. Maybe it's because you're so quiet and so good a hiding when you don't want to be seen. I don't know, Harry… Percy."

There was no menace behind our brother's words. He was just stating facts. Normally those words would have bitten deep into us, hurting like a dagger to the heart, but strangely they weren't today. They seemed comforting in some twisted way.

"I used to hate you, you know." Percy told him in that same broken voice. "Harry did to. We've always envied you. You have the love of Lily and James, you get all the tutoring ever, all the training in duelling and spell casting… all we've ever had is books and dreams."

"Strange." Charles gave us a small smile. "I was envious of you too. You were like a shadow drifting round the manor for years. I saw you so many times, hiding in the rafters during my lessons, watching from the window when I played Quidditch, watching and listening from behind the door during family dinner… I thought that you had decided you were above coming and playing with me. Then you got your letter, and came back into my life. You have this amazing control over magic, and earned the respect of the Goblins, and no matter how much I tried to prove myself worthy of your attention and friendship you always pushed me down."

Our eyes widened at the misunderstanding and admitted: "We through you were just being a spoiled brat. You were flaunting your fame and tutoring… We thought you were trying to push us down…"

We laughed. It's strange. Neither Percy nor I had ever seen Charles in this view before. He had
always been so bitter to us at Hogwarts, so angry at us and our House. We'd assumed it was just James' old rivalries affecting his attitude, but it kind of made sense now. He was bitter to Slytherin because we were there and not in Gryffindor. A faint trace of guilt washed through us.

"I'll make deal with you." I offered, my voice ringing stronger than Percy's had. "We'll help you with work at school, and go over anything you don't understand if we can sit in your holiday tutor sessions."

Charles looked at us in shock. "Really. You would trade your spare time at school for more work over the summer?"

I laughed. "Priorities, Charles. Knowledge is power."

Our brother shook his head in exasperation. "You remind me of Mum. She says that too."

We stiffened, not sure what to feel about the comparison between Lily and us. One half was delighted to know we were like her in more than just looks and blood. The other half was disgusted and didn't want to be compared to the witch that had taken a part in the destruction of our childhood. "Huh. I guess Lily does make some good choices then…"

"Harry… Percy… they didn't mean it, you know. Mum and Dad never tell Sirius and Remus all my news because they know that I love telling them first-hand myself. They probably assumed that you were of the same mind." Charles offered. It sounded like he was trying to persuade himself to, but the words still felt comforting.

"Boys! Charles! Percy! Harry! Where are you hiding now? Dinner's ready!" Lily called as she walked past the library. Percy put a finger to his lips.

"Don't tell her about our hiding place?" He begged in a whisper. "Sometimes we need to get away, and…"

"I get it." Charles flashed us grin, and we snuck out the library. "Come on, Mum always cooks Yorkshire Puddings on Christmas Eve. Her Yorkshire Puddings are amazing!"

Percy laughed at our brother's enthusiasm, and followed him downstairs to the dining room. To our shock Severus was sitting at the table next to Remus. He was watching James and Sirius warily, looking a bit uncomfortable. Percy beamed, and flung us at our godfather. "Severus!"

Battle instincts shot our godfather out of his chair to catch us, spinning us round as he hugged us. "Hello, Percy, and you Harry. How's your holiday been so far? No matter how many letters you send Draco, he still refuses to tell me anything you've written in them."

I grinned. "That's because they're mainly just idle conversation. We have a bet going to see if we can send a letter every day during the holidays. We're saving all the important news for going back to school."

Our godfather shook his head in amusement. "The things you boys come up with these days…"

"I bet you did it too in school." Percy said cheekily. Severus laughed, but he didn't deny it.

Dinner was a rather happy affair, full of jokes and old school tales. Pranks pulled by the infamous marauders, detentions served, tales about summer afternoons by the lake, adventures into the forest…

There was a lull as Lily and James disappeared into the kitchen to check on pudding. We caught Remus staring at us curiously, and I raised an eyebrow quizzically.
"What's is like?" Remus blurted out. "Sharing your mind and body with somebody else, I mean."

Percy laughed, and I joined in. "What's it like not? It's just normal. We each have our own thoughts and opinions, we just express them as one. Or... sometimes not. Arguments get a little... painful."

"I can imagine." Sirius grinned. Then he frowned. "Actually no, I can't. Is it anything like a migraine?"

"We haven't actually had a migraine to compare it to." I pointed out with a wry smile. "Imagine your body being pulled in two different directions, trying to obey two commands at once. Imagine your mindscapes a battlefield... That's sort of what it's like."

"Mindscapes?" Severus looked surprised. "I didn't know you were skilled in Occlumency."

Percy and I grinned mischievously, "Oh we had access to our mindscapes before we learned Occlumency. They're the only possible way for either of us to get any privacy. Or, at least, they were before we learned to block out each other's thoughts..."

Charles' attention snapped to us at the mention of Occlumency. He looked really interested by the idea. "Occlumency is mind magic, isn't it? Can you teach me? Please!"

Lily returned at this point, and gave Charles an indulgent smile. "Come now, Charles. Shouldn't you work on your school grades first?"

Charles pouted, but wisely didn't complain. Percy nudged him with a grin, whispering in his ear. "Don't look some glum, bro. Harry and I would love to teach you. I mean, we're tutoring you anyway."

"Thanks Percy!" Charles beamed back. Lily rolled her eyes, giving us a what-did-you-just-agree-to kind of look. We through her a smirk back. Sirius shivered.

"You two really are a Slytherin-Gryffindor hybrid, aren't you?"

"And proud." We agreed, our smirk widening. Severus cuffed our ear lightly.

"Be nice, boys." He scolded us. "Don't play with the little Lions. How often have I had to remind Draco in front of you?"

We narrowed our eyes, counting them. "I believe our last count was fifty-nine, but we may have missed some."

Lupin laughed, shaking his head. "Rhetorical question, Harry and Percy, rhetorical question."

"Really?" I asked sarcastically. "We thought he genuinely wanted to know."

Lily barked out a complaint at us being rude, then dinner continued as before. After dinner was over, we tried to sneak off up to our room, but Charles cut us off.

"Harry? Percy? Where are you going? It's Christmas Eve. We're supposed to stay up and play games; wait till midnight..."

We shook our head slightly. Even if we weren't already exhausted, the constant company was a little over-whelming. Even at school we managed to sneak away for a couple of hours when it got too much, or close our bed curtains. And Percy, the more sociable of the two of us, was finding it hard by this time in the evening. Severus seemed to understand.
"Let them go Charles. You must understand that your brothers aren't used to long hours of being round people."

"But it's Christmas!" Charles complained.

"And it's tradition. The Potter's have followed this tradition for generations –" James started to protest.

I scowled at him. "Is it tradition to ignore your youngest child for years as well? To leave them out of your traditions?"

Lily gasped. "Harry and Percy! We have been doing our utmost best to try to make it up to you, and yet every time we do something nice you push us away!"

"What? That's it? You think six years of being completely forgotten and four years before that of being neglected can be forgiven and forgotten in a mere week?! Seriously?" I demanded, Percy's pain fresh on the surface, fuelling my anger. "Just forget it!"

I turned on our heel and ran out the room, hot tears of anger and pain dripping from our cheeks. I heard voices screaming for us to come back, to apologise. I ignored them and carried on running till we reached our room. Percy made sure I buried us under our blanket. We cried until we were drowsy with sleep.

I heard the door open feigned sleep, not wanting to deal with anyone, not even our godfather. It would all wait until morning…

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Percy's Point of View

I woke before Harry for once. Harry had been even more tired than me yesterday, taking longer to fall asleep than me and had done far more emotional and taken more part in the political and educational conversation at dinner the night before, so it was hardly surprising.

Wary of facing everybody else, but still hungry I made my way down to the kitchen, ignoring the sad looks the portraits on the wall gave me. By now it was hard to tell if they were upset for us, or because we existed. But by now, I had also given up caring.

I was vaguely surprised to see Lily standing in the kitchen, cooking up a stack of pancakes. Then I remembered it was another tradition. We woke every year to the tempting smell of pancakes, but never could join in eating them. We were never invited to. Never wanted.

Lily must have heard my footsteps or sensed my presence because she turned around sharply. At first she looked furious, then she caught sight of our red-rimmed, blood-shot eyes and sighed. "Percy, Harry… Oh, come here!"

She held out her arms to embrace us and I slipped willingly into them, feeling slightly guilty about Harry. I wanted this. I craved this. But then I was a Gryffindor; we lived off family relationships and friends and love. Harry was a Slytherin. He put survival first, wary of anything that could hurt and manipulative enough to get his way.

"Sorry about last night." I apologised. "I was upset, and that made Harry even more upset and angry and then we ended up saying things we didn't really mean."

Or at least things I didn't mean. Some little part of Harry agreed fully with those statements, and resented our parents for hurting us. And indeed, a tiny part of me agreed that maybe he was right,
and maybe we shouldn't forgive our parents.

"Oh, honey." Lily sighed again. "You're father gets like that as well. The hot-headed Potters, huh? Besides, it's Christmas. And I'm going to do my utmost best from now on to see that you never feel lonely or sad on Christmas ever again."

Her smile made me feel warm and happy inside. Feel loved even. "Can I help with the pancakes?"

When Harry woke up I was chatting with Lily about school as we made pancakes.

'What are we… Percy?' Harry mumbled drowsily. I smiled at him.

'I'm making pancakes with Lily! She said not to worry about the argument yesterday. It's Christmas, and so we should be happy.'

'Buts Percy. What about all those other years?' Harry reminded me. I frowned.

'I haven't forgotten. But with the promise of a better future, I have forgiven. Like Flint said, right? Forgive, but don't forget. I want a family Harry!'

Harry smiled. 'Then a family we shall get you.'

"Morning Lily." Harry slurred slightly, his brain still heavy with sleep.

At first Lily looked confused, then something clicked and she smiled, replying teasingly, "Finally come to join the party, huh, Harry?"

"Yeah." Harry yawned. "Sorry. Percy said about better Christmases? We won't forget, Lily. We can't. But Percy's already forgiven you, so you're in the right direction."

I blushed, scowling at Harry. 'Harry! Stop playing the over protective big brother. I can look after myself!'

'I know Percy. But I don't want you hurt.'

I blushed a deeper red, the colour tinting our cheeks.

Lily smiled, though uncertainty dimmed her eyes. "Well… Thanks Harry."

Before the atmosphere could thicken into an awkward silence Charles came thundering into the kitchen, shortly followed by James, Remus and Sirius.

"Mum, mum, mum!" Charles yelled. "It's Christmas! It's Christmas."

Harry laughed at our brother's excited expression. "Really Charles? We thought it was Easter."

"Oh hardy-har-har." Charles scowled at us, then his grin returned. "But we get presents! And cake! And pudding! And-"

"OK, little Prongslet." Sirius chuckled, covering Charles' mouth with one hand. "Why don't you sit up while we wait for Severus to come down?"

In an instant Charles was in a chair, pulling us to sit beside him. "Happy Christmas Harry and Percy! What did you get in your Stocking?"

"Stocking?" I frowned. "What Stocking?"
Charles looked horrified. "Didn't you check the stocking at the end of your bed?"

"We didn't know there was one."

James laughed. "We put it there last night after you fell asleep. Do you want to go run up and get it?"

I nodded shyly. Charles grabbed my hand. "Let's go!"

As soon as we reached the hall though, Charles came to a halt, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly. "Where's your room again?"

Harry gave an over-exaggerated sigh, then grinned, taking the lead. Charles followed us more slowly, taking in the paintings on the walls in surprise.

"I've never been here. James told me this wing of the manor had been shut off years ago, because it was for the second heir, and there hasn't been a second child in the family for centuries."

A faint smile twitched at our lips, and I sighed. "But we are the second heir, Charles. Lily and James moved us into this wing when we were three."

When we came to our room, I smiled at the sight of the door, trying to see it as Charles would. It was plain white, with Harry's name painted on it in clear, neat letters half way up, at an adult's eye-height. Slightly lower down, my name was painted in our wobbly writing from when we were six. Harry's name was in a soft baby blue, while mine was sea-green. Various little stars and shapes were also painted on the door, including a couple of snakes and various sea animals. When we were eight we had accidentally charmed them to move, and a little snake was hissing curiously at our brother now.

"You did this?" Charles asked, stroking the paint.

We grinned. "We got a little bored."

Harry pushed the door open to enter our room. It was neat and tidy, our trunk lying on the floor under the window, and all our clothes hung in the wardrobe. Our desk had piles of books and neat stacks of parchment carefully arranged on it. The walls, once a bright white, were covered in more moving animals, the skill of the drawing ranging from nearly unrecognisable to almost life-like. The floor was cold wood, with splashes of paint littering it in various different places.

Charles grinned, then pointed to the bag tied to the end of our bed. "It's not a traditional stocking, but mum decided that a bag worked much better, and didn't let dad have a say in the matter."

Harry laughed. "We remember that argument."

"Me too." Charles grinned.

Grabbing the bag we ran quickly back to the kitchen. Severus was down by now, and everyone was sat at the table waiting for us. I put the bag on the floor by my chair and sat down, Charles slipping into the seat behind me.

We chatted happily as we ate, more stories about past Christmases coming up. Apparently when Charles, Harry and I were two we fell asleep in a box, curled up together under the tree. Lily had even found pictures of it.

Present giving promptly followed breakfast. We opened our stocking presents, receiving boxes of Chocolate Frogs, Bertie Box Every Flavour Bean, Liquorice Wands, Fizzing Whizzbees and Pepper Imps. Smiling, we hugged our parents in thanks. As the children, Charles and Harry and I passed our
presents, then we went round in a circle opening them.

Harry and I had gotten Lily a new cook-book of baking recipes, and James a dragon-leather wand holster. For Charles we had brought a box of sugar quills for class. Severus had somehow been the hardest to buy for, as we had had to search countless apothecaries to track down the potions ingredients we had been looking for. Basilisk scales, Dragon whiskers and Selkie hair were hard to come by now-days. Sirius and Remus were given Honeydukes chocolate, as we had no idea what they liked.

We received a new cloak from our parents, which a clasp custom-made of a snake and lion battling each other. The cloak itself was dragon hide, and resistant to just about anything. Charles had given us a new writing set, with notebooks and different coloured inks to use. Severus had brought us a potions book that was NEWT level. Lily had complained at that one, but soon shut up after we hugged and thanked our godfather multiple times. Remus and Sirius had brought us a twin set of wand holsters, so we had both our wands easily accessible. They claimed James had suggested it to them, but they hadn't quite understood why until they had met us.

Draco, Blaise and Theo's owls arrived a little while later. Typically they had all brought us books, their topics ranging from Defence to Spell Casting, Transfiguration to Herbology. We excused ourselves to send thank you letters before re-joining everybody in the Living room.

"In our first Transfiguration Lesson Professor McGonagall transfigured her desk into a pig and back, then told us it was NEWT level, and we weren't expected to be capable of doing it till our seventh year. I think Harry took that as a challenge, because he and Percy 'accidentally' transfigured their desk the following lesson. Professor McGonagall's expression was hilarious, she looked as if she might faint!" Charles was explaining avidly as we arrived. I laughed.

"She should have expected it from us, especially after she tried to give all our points to Gryffindor and none Slytherin. We had to get back somehow." I joked.

Severus chuckled. "Yes, Minerva told me that one in the staff room. She fully believed it was some kind of prank, and that you had brought a charmed object to transfigure the desk."

Sirius and James were in gales of laughter, while Lily and Remus looked impressed.

"My, my, who knew that Slytherin and Gryffindor could create such a brilliant opponent when combined?" James chortled.

"A true Marauder, this one, a true Marauder." Sirius agreed. Lily groaned, and Severus paled.

"Don't you give them any idea's, you hear me? I don't need my own snakes turning against me. The lions are trouble enough!"

That only made the two immature adults laugh harder, promising to owl us some good prank idea's in the New Year.

The rest of the day went well, and it was gone midnight by the time we had stopped eating chocolate, playing card games and run out of stories to tell.

'That was amazing, wasn't it?' I whispered to Harry as we got into bed.

He smiled. 'It was. I do believe we actually enjoyed spending time with our family.'

'I can't wait till next Christmas.' I yawned, slowly slipping into Morpheus' domain.
It was the same blond girl we dreamed of, but she was no-longer at Camp. Annabeth I think her name was. She stood next to Luke, and various other kids we recognised from our dreams of that camp were standing around them. They were in a large hall, which looked like it was built for Giants. Twelve large thrones stood in the centre, each seeming to match the giant who sat in it. One of them, who was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and shorts was sitting a fisherman's chair, his trident placed where the fisherman's rod should. Another of them was sitting in a throne of grape vines, sipping from a wine glass.

"Greetings, my children. Welcome to Olympus."

We turned our gaze to a stern blond-haired giant, his blue eyes flashing with lightning. He held a large lightning bolt in one hand. His gaze scanned the room, eventually falling on us. He stiffened, and we froze, terrified for one eternal moment. Then the man's gaze moved on, the time reset itself.

We watched as the Giants conversed among each other, fights occasionally breaking out between the fisherman-guy, the regal blond and a dark brooding giant, only to be resolved as a motherly looking giantess wacked them other the head and reminded them of their manors. We laughed at that a little.

Time skipped after a while, and then the Fisherman and the blond were screaming at each other.

"Give it back! You know the laws, you can't steal my weapon of power!"

"I didn't steal it!"

"No, not personally. You obviously got you're demigod spawn to steal it!"

"What? I don't have any demigod children!" The Fisherman denied.

The blond smirked. "Don't deny it. I felt his presence earlier. In fact I still feel it now. A child of the sea is here."

"Don't test me, brother. I have neither stolen your bolt nor bore any demigod children."

"Lies! Why should I trust you? You have till the summer solstice to return my bolt, or you will be facing war."

We woke up in cold sweat, disturbed by this dream. It felt so real and the power surrounding those giants… we shuddered. Whatever that 'bolt' was, it must be powerful to start a war over…
Chapter 12

Percy's Point of View

Going back at Hogwarts felt a bit like coming home. A bit. Because, I realised, Slytherin had become our family. Agreed a rather large and messy family, full of feuds and threats, but a family all the same. I had to admit I was delighted to see Draco again. While we were now on better terms with our brother, fights still broke out over the most random of things. Looks like neither of us were quite over that jealousy of each other.

The station was teeming with students, yelling and calling out to each other. Steam shrouded half our vision, and filling our lungs with the bitter vapour. I did like the smell though, that I'll admit. It reminded me of a time when we accidentally apparated to the Coast early one morning, and the salt sea mists were rolling in…

Anyway, we boarded the train quickly, eager to get away from Lily and James' hugs and kisses (can I say 'eww'?) and our moody brother. It took a good fifteen minutes, but we eventually found the Compartment where Draco, Blaise and Theo were sitting, accompanied by Pansy and Daphne. Kissing the girls' hands in greeting, Harry turned to the boys. Draco shook hand civilly, but Blaise and Theo threw themselves at us, tackling us to the floor as they hugged us.

"Hey! Careful!" Harry laughed, ruffling Blaise's hair. "That's our legs you're sitting on!"

"But… but we missed you." Theo said in a small voice, giving us the puppy-dog eyes. Harry rolled ours, and pulled him into a hug.

"Aw, I missed you too Theo-kins."

Immediately Theo pulled away, running to Draco.

"Ah! Draco, he's gone Gryffindor! Save me, it could be contagious!" He squealed dramatically. Blaise let out a girly scream too and leapt for Draco as well.

We laughed, tears of mirth streaming down our face while Blaise and Theo chuckled. After a moment, Draco joined in too, full out laughing. Daphne shook her head, muttering about boys. Pansy simply stared at Draco, longing and interest glinting in her eyes.

Harry sat down next to Pansy and whispered in her ear: "He likes you too, you know. How about we plot together to get him to ask you out?"

Pansy gave us a scandalised look at first, which then turned into a mischievous grin, which Harry copied perfectly. In one well time motion, we both turned to look at Draco, who paled dramatically.

"Whatever it is you too are plotting, I want no part in it, you understand? My father will here if I am…” He said, but the threat was a weak one; Draco used it far too much.

We spent the rest of the journey catching up on news and comparing Christmas presents. When Harry explained about Charles and our shift in relationship, Draco congratulated us, much to our surprise.

"Well done mate, it's good to know you have a sibling who actually cares about you. Just so long as
we don't have to be civil though…"

We laughed at that, and the conversation carried on to discuss our godfather, and what presents we
had gotten for him. Draco had brought him a rare old book, supposedly written my Slytherin himself!
I groaned at hearing that, knowing that the next half hour would be spent quizzing Draco on how he
tracked down such a rare book.

It was evening when we arrived at school. We feasted in the Great Hall, then were sent straight off to
bed.

The first three days were spend getting back into the school routine before classes started. In other
words, they were a mess of students failing to settle down, meaning the school was over-run by
prank wars, Quidditch matches, hyper children and big explosions.

Oh so it was only one explosion. And it may have kindofmaybepossiblebeenmyfault. I blushed as I
remembered it.

We were in the Gryffindor Common Room, because Professor McGonagall had demanded that we
sorted out our arguments with Charles. See, we'd had a duel before we left for school, over-seen by
James, and one of our spells (with was supposed to be a distraction) and blown up one of Charles'
broomsticks. I swear, in all honesty, it was an accident. Really!

Anyway, we were in the Gryffindor Common Room, and Harry and Charles were yelling at each
other. I had gotten bored of the feud after the first day, but those two were as stubborn as mules! In
the end, Charles challenged us to another duel, to be refereed by the local Duelling Champion;
Professor Flitwick.


'Harry, please don't!' I begged, but Harry only sneered.

"Done. Be sure to bring an Over-seer. You're going to need one."

Exasperated, but knowing there was nothing she could do, Professor McGonagall recruited Flitwick.

'Just so you know, I'm not going to have any part in this.' I warned. 'It's your mess now.'

'Fine.' Harry snapped, wound up from the argument. 'Just don't distract me!"

It was getting dark by the time dinner was over, but we headed down to the lake anyway, refusing to
lose face. Half the school followed us down, excited to see the Potter brother's duel. Harry scowled
at the audience once, but otherwise ignored them.

"You know the rules. This is a junior duel. That means no blood shed, no killing and definitely no
dark spells." Professor Flitwick squeaked. "On my count now. One… Two… Three!"

As he counted we bowed and walked away from each other, turning sharply on the count of three.
Harry quickly flicked his wand, sending a Jelly-legs jinx at Charles. He dodged, sending back a bat-
boggie curse, which Harry dodged.

The fight carried on like this for several minutes, and I started to get bored. I had spotted so many
openings in Charles' style that Harry just wasn't taking advantage of. To try and resolve my
boredom, I started manipulating the water, creating little horses to dance among the waves. Nobody
noticed, of course, too busy watching the duel.
As my attention slipped away a rogue spell from Charles clipped the side of our head. We fell back stunned, and Harry didn't catch us in time.

'Harry?' I scowled. 'That hurt you idiot!'

We hadn't grazed ourself but our arm stung from impact. Harry didn't reply. I became aware of a dull silence from his side of the bond. It wasn't like when he was asleep. I could still sense his dreams and thoughts them. It was just like he wasn't there at all. Scared and angry at this, I took control, standing up. I sheathed Harry's wand and flicked our left wrist, summoning my own wand.

"What did you do to Harry?" I asked, my voice void of emotion. "Why can't I feel him anymore?"

Gasps flew round the circle of spectators, and Flitwick cursed under his breath, setting up shields round the spectators.

Charles paled, and looked around desperately, his eyes wide and terrified. "I didn't do anything Percy. It was a spell designed to knock you out."

"Then why can't I even feel him?" I demanded, a tugging sensation pulling at my gut as my anger grew. More gasps sounded around me but I ignored them, advancing towards Charles with slow deliberate steps.

"M-Mr Potter… You need to calm down." Professor Flitwick said shakily, but again, I ignored him, focusing only on Charles.

"I don't know!" Charles begged. "I didn't mean to do anything to hurt Harry, I swear!"

"But he's still not here!" I screamed, tears beginning to fall down my cheeks.

"Percy," Draco was calling for me now. "Percy calm down, everything's Ok, you just need to calm down."

"NO!" I yelled. Water from the lake which, unknown to me, had been rising out of the Lake in a growing wall of water plunged down on Charles, knocking him to the floor and soaking everyone else watching.

Then a sudden wave of exhaustion hit me, and I fell backwards. Our head hit the floor hard, then darkness descended and I knew no more.

I woke in the Hospital Wing the next day, Harry holding me and murmuring softly to me. I smiled, and slipped back into sleep.

As it turned out, I had completely obliterated the beach with the water wall, causing many students to thrown back. Nobody was badly hurt – except us (with a fractured skull) and Charles (who had broken his arm as the water knocked him down. Needless to say, we weren't on very good terms after that.

Days melding together, becoming a blur of work, detentions and fights with our brother. No physical fights, not yet. But that's not to say I wasn't tempted. Draco however, being the speaker of wisdom, pointed out a muggle brawl wasn't very Slytherin, and was therefore unacceptable.

For some reason Draco became obsessed with getting Charles into trouble. He challenged him to a midnight duel, then set them up to be caught by Filch. Needless to say, when he heard about the dragon there was no stopping him.
"Percy! Harry!" Draco called, sounded ecstatic about something. Curious, Harry turned to see what it was, raising an eyebrow in curiosity. "Come on, Hagrid's got a dragon – I've seen it!"

"Oh! Can we go see it? Can we, can we?" I begged, taking over our mouth for a few moments. Harry and Draco laughed.

"If you want. But your brother is getting rid of it tonight, so..." Draco trailed off.

Our eyes widened. "Tonight! But that's only... it's already seven o'clock!"

I moaned. I loved dragons. They didn't like me very much, constantly trying to attack and eat me, but I thought they were adorable! They had control over fire, and had a protective layer of scales that could withstand up to 1000°C and would shatter a steel blade if it hit them. Their heart-strings were commonly used in wands, and their liver was an important potions ingredient. Unfortunately, their eggs were first-class non tradable goods and I really wanted one as a pet. Or at least I had when I was seven.

"We can catch them!" Draco said. "But we'd have to report it to a teacher..."

Harry nodded. 'Sorry Percy about the dragon, but if their sneaking it out then a teacher should know.'

'I know. But could we at least try and get a glimpse of the Dragon?' I begged, sending Harry my puppy eyes.

Harry huffed. 'Those aren't puppy eyes, you look like a baby seal who needs help!'

'Please.'

Eventually Harry agreed, giving me a disgruntled look as he did, promising, 'We can try but no promise we'll actually be able to.'

'Yes!'

I grinned, letting my happiness flow over Harry until he started grinning too.

Having decided on what we were going to do the three of us sat down and started to plot how we were going to achieve it. Harry and I agreed that we should go tell Professor McGonagall now, as we'd just get in trouble if we told her after curfew. Draco begrudgingly agreed, but it didn't take much to make us agree to go and check that they were definitely caught.

Harry and Draco struck up a conversation about the first Quidditch match that was set to happen on the 9th of November. Apparently everyone would turn up, cheering on their team or just getting in the spirit. If you didn't like Quidditch then you'd just bring along some homework or reading to get done. While attendance wasn't obligatory, those that didn't turn up were all but shunned for a while afterwards, discouraging anyone from trying.

When we reached McGonagall's office they were in a heated debate about who had the most likelihood of winning – Slytherin or Gryffindor. Draco was firmly sticking up for Slytherin, but Harry was arguing that some of the Lion's weren't bad in the air either.

I coughed, startling Harry out of his debate. Harry blinked, then knocked on the door.

"Enter." McGonagall didn't sound happy to have visitors. We sighed, but our fate was sealed. We walked in.
"Ah, Mr Potter, Mr Malfoy. Now why might you two – forgive me – three want from me that your godfather couldn't help you with?" She asked, sounding slightly annoyed.

Harry cleared his throat. "Well, you see Professor, Draco overheard my brother and Weasley talking about a Dragon that Hagrid hatched, and they're planning on giving it to Charley Weasley tonight, at midnight, at the top of the astronomy tower."

McGonagall raised an eyebrow. "That's rather detailed, Mr Malfoy, are you sure you weren't eavesdropping?"

"Professor, there is no need to eavesdrop when they were all but shouting it as they walked up from Hagrid's." Draco defended himself. "And the dragon's true – I've seen it!"

"Indeed? Well, you three run back to your dorms now before curfew. I'll check out these… accusations, myself. And Mr Potter."

"Yes Professor?" Harry nodded. "If these accusations prove to just be an attempt to get your brother in trouble then I shall be seeing you in Detention for the next month"

Fuming inwardly, Harry and I nodded, then turned to leave, following Draco out.

"Argh!" Harry groaned. "That woman doesn't see any of our good points does she? Ever since Christmas it's been a constant stream of detention threats and points lost for the most stupid of things!"

As Harry ranted we walked slowly down to the Dungeons. A moment before be collided with solid air, I heard the muffled pad of feet on stone. We fell over, and I head a large thump as whatever we had walked into fell over as well. Draco looked down at us in amusement, but I ignored him, grabbing at a small shimmer in the air. Whatever we had walked into fell over as well. Draco looked down at us in amusement, but I ignored him, grabbing at a small shimmer in the air. Our hand met cool material, and I yanked, revealing our brother, along with Ron and the Granger-girl. I scowled at them, then noticed the smoking box.

"Well, well, well. What do you know?" Draco drawled. "Potter has an invisibility cloak."

Draco picked up the shimmering material. Charles snarled.

"Give that back, ferret-face! That's a family heirloom!"

I flinched at that. If it was a family heirloom then how come James or Lily hadn't ever told us about it? Or was it another of those stupid 'traditions' that the youngest wasn't allowed to take part in? Then the box shuddered, a tongue of flame flickering through a hole.

Ignoring the other's squabbling, I removed the lid. Large black eyes stared at me curiously.

"Hello little one." I greeted the little dragon, rubbing it's chin. It purred happily, and bared its sharp little teeth in a grin.

"Percy how can I understand your hissing?" Harry asked. I shrugged.

'Parseltongue?'

'Don't joke about that!' Harry snapped.

I shook my head. 'Think about it. You understand me hissing. It is the language of snakes and, by extension, dragons.'

'I… guess?"
Happy that was sorted out, I returned my attention to the little baby dragon in the box. $Pretty little girl, aren't you?$

'Girl? Percy that has got to be a guy. Look at it. It's all spikey and mean.' Harry huffed.

I shook my head. 'Typical. The one time I read a book you don't pay attention. The spines along her back indicate she is female, not male. See how they turn down slightly and the tips are black? All typical features of a female Norwegian Ridgeback.'

Harry grinned, sticking his tongue out at me. 'All right, no it all!'

$Ssspeaker?$ The hiss was awkward and lisped, but understandable.

I smiled. $Hello little lady.$

$Mummy? Speaker Mummy.$

Harry and I groaned. $Sweetie, we aren't your Mummy. We're guys for one thing, and-$

$I will find you again.$ The little dragon insisted, ignoring our corrections.

"Why-"

Draco yanked our shoulder, pulling us away.

"Hey! I was talking to the Dragon!" I complained.

"No, you were hissing non-sense at it." Draco corrected. I rolled our eyes.

"Parseltongue? Language of Snake and Dragons? Ringing any bells?"

Draco opened and shut his mouth a few times. "What?"

"Seems we inherited it from somewhere." Harry frowned. 'But where…?'

Draco shook his head. "Ok, not now, we've got to run, ok? McGonagall's on the prowl remember? And we have…” Draco cast a 'tempus' charm. "Two minutes to be in the common room."

Cursing under our breath, we took off at a sprint, just making it to the common room in time. As we entered, we noticed with some amusement that someone (my money was on the Weasley twins) had painted large green letters over the entrance to the Common Room.

'WARNING: SNAKE PIT. DO NOT ENTER ON PAIN OF DEATH!'

Flint gave us a curious stare as we ran in out of breath, but didn't question us, merely shoving us in the direction of our dorms.

"I don't want to know. Run off to bed. There's a Quidditch match tomorrow, and you sure as Morgana better be cheering us on against the Hufflepuffs."

"We will!" We chorused, running on up, glad to be let off the hook by the large Quidditch Captain.

It didn't take long to fall asleep that night, but I did have one last though; Dragons are awesome!

I floated through dreams that night. I dreamt of flying on a Dragon high up in the sky, not at all struck by that nauseating feeling flying on a broom gave me. Then we swooped low, and broke
through the clouds to hover over a beach where a Horse and Eagle were fighting, intent to tear each-
other apart. I screamed for them to stop, but the wind just kept on howling louder and louder,
blocking out my pleas…

Then suddenly I was falling, down into a dark cavern, where a deep voice called to me to help him
rise, to lead his army into war and take down the gods once and for all! I refused, and was suddenly
standing on a familiar beach, watching Annabeth playing in the water with other children, some of
which looked like her siblings, with grey eyes and blond hair.

No longer scared by the dark voice or fighting animals I grinned, and pulled at the waves, sending
them crashing softly down on the laughing children, and soaking them even more. I ran closer to join
in, and smiled this time as Annabeth's eyes met our own. Her grey orbs were alight with laughter,
and she beckoned us with one finger to join in with the fun and laughter.

When I woke the next morning, both Harry and I were filled with a strange sense of loss, as if
something was missing. We just couldn't quite put our finger on what exactly.

But those happy grey eyes stalked us that day, distracting us in class and pulling us into daydreams
of that camp we had been dreaming of…
Chapter 13

Harry's Point of View

The next morning the whole house woke early to get ready for the Quidditch match. Three-quarters of the stands were flooded with yellow and black colours, with the occasional splash of green and silver here and there. Across from where we were sitting there was some discord among the Gryffindors. Charles, Weasley and Granger had a ring of empty seats around them. Not many, of course, as the stands were practically stuffed full, but a noticeable amount. Percy frowned at that.

'What's up with the lions?'

'I don't know. Maybe there was an argument or something?'

'But wouldn't more people be siding with their Golden Boy if there was an argument?'

'Hum.'

Draco noticed our worried glances to the Lions and pocked us. "What's wrong?"

"The Lions are shunning some of their own. My brother, in particular. Something is wrong."

"Harry, Percy, Charles has been making your live miserable ever since Christmas. Why do you care?" Draco pointed out.

Percy bristled at that. "He's still our brother. And I care for him."

"Well then. Looks like we're visiting the local Golden Boy after the match." Draco flashed us a smile, his white teeth glinting in the morning light. I laughed, thanking him.

It was another hour before the match finished. By the time we had made our way out of the stands Charles was gone. Percy and I sighed.

"We'll go check the Gryffindor common room. See you at dinner?"

"See you."

We stood and watched for a minute and Blaise, Theo and Draco wandered off. A smile touched our lips as Percy pointed out how funny they looked from the back, each with their green and silver scarfs waving in the breeze behind them. Shaking ourself, I turned and headed up to the Gryffindor common room.

We weren't greeted very friendlily. For a start Slytherin had won the match, setting them even more at odds with us, but there was something else. A murmur of annoyance at our presence. Finally one of the first year boys, Seamus, snapped at us.

"Finally considering us worthy of your presence, Potter?"

"Excuse me?" Percy coughed. "Did you just say what I thought you said?"

"It's true, though, isn't it? You refused to come even near here for the first term." Dean backed up Seamus.
I sighed and Percy snapped back. "Well, it's not as if you went out of your way to make sure we knew we were welcome here, did you? Every other word out your mouth was some slander against Slytherins, or a comment on how we didn't fit in here. Maybe you should make up your minds, and decide whether or not you actually like us or not!"

"Like you?" A new voice spoke up from the corner. We turned to see Charles glaring daggers at us. "Who would like you? You just set people up to get into trouble when they're trying to help other people. You destroy other people's property under the pretence of a duel. Is there anything decent about you?"

Whispers and shocked gasps ran round the room at Charles' cruel words. Percy and I fought against the tears angrily. "We actually came to see if you were alright. You had been left alone at the match and wanted to know if everything was Ok. But clearly we aren't capable of such feelings are we, brother?"

With those winged words Percy turned us on our heel and fled the room. We ran and ran until we eventually reached a bathroom. We collapsed next to the sinks crying. The tears only fuelled my anger though. Why couldn't we ever just do things normally?

"You're a boy." A slightly whiny voice sounded from above our head. We looked up. A ghost of a girl who couldn't have been older than fourteen was hovering above our head.

"So?"

"This is a girl's bathroom. My bathroom."

"Sorry, we didn't mean to intrude. Um, I don't think we've met before." I said. "We are Percy and Harry Potter."

"Myrtle. Most call me Moaning Myrtle. Miserable, moaning, moping Myrtle."

I frowned. "That's not very nice. Do you cry a lot?"

The ghost girl nodded. "I was bullied when I attended here. Then I died in this bathroom. It was glorious. The last thing I remember was seeing a pair of yellow eyes, over by that sink."

She pointed to the sink behind me. Frowning, I turned to look at the sink. Before anything else could be said our brother came charging into the bathroom.

"You stupid brat!" Charles shouted at us. "What right do you have to embarrass me like that in front of my entire house? You think you're so much better than me, but newsflash! I was the one who killed Voldemort. I was the one who saved the Wizarding world as we know it. You're just a nobody. So keep your stupid nose out of my business!"

Percy had long since gotten bored of the way Charles was constantly changing his mind about whether or not he actually liked us. "Shut up! We've had enough of you've selfish mood swings. One minute you treat us like you're supposed to, like a brother, then the next you are treating us like we're Voldemort incarnate. Make up your mind whether or not you want us in your life, then come and find us when you do because I can't deal with you anymore. Bye Myrtle. We'll come back again soon."

For the second time that day, we pushed past our brother and left the room. We felt much calmer this time, however, not worried anymore about what Charles thought of us. That was his decision, not ours, and we could face that now.
Draco took one look at our face when we entered the common room and sighed. He didn't say anything, just indicated the chair opposite him by the fire. Our on-going chess match was placed in front of us, and we played a few moves.

It was almost dinner when a scream split the content atmosphere in the common room. Percy snapped our head up, immediately flicking to the girl next to the window. She was staring out the window in horror, as was everybody else. The Giant Squid had attached its tentacles to the side of the building and was peering into the common room. Our shaky laugh cut into the silence of the room. Immediately all the silent staring eyes all turned to us as we stood and walked over to the window, gently moving the girl out the way.

'Lords! I found you!' The Squid exclaimed.

'Are you Ok? What's wrong? You've never done this before. I think you scared the life out of my housemates.' Percy giggled.

'I come on behalf of the Men-Horses. They asked me to give you a message.'

We frowned. 'Are they alright? The centaurs I mean.'

'Oh, the Men-Horses are fine. They asked me to inform you however that the unicorns are in trouble again. One of their number is dying. They didn't know who else to turn to. Normal medicines aren't working. They need your magic.'

"Merlin's Staff." I whispered. "This is bad."

We skipped dinner then and there, sprinting out of the common room like there was a pack of hell hounds at our heels. Draco shouted at us, asking where we were going, but we didn't acknowledge him, too busy running for the Forbidden Forest. Luckily no teacher's caught us running in the corridors. We almost ran into Dumbledore outside the main doors, but didn't pause for longer than to mumble a few apologies before sprinting off again.

A centaur was waiting for us at the edge of the forest.

"You came, Little Lords, thank you. We must be quick though, she fades quickly." The centaur said as he grabbed our fore arm and hefted us onto his back. Percy clung on tightly to the centaur's torso as we rode. I hovered behind Percy, trying to remember all the healing spells we had learned last summer. Understanding I was distracted, Percy was firmly in control, quickly slipping off the centaur's back as we reached a clearing.

The entire herd of Unicorns stood around a white form on the ground. Troubled, Percy quickly wove his way through the majestic beasts and fell to the ground in front of the wounded unicorn.

'Harry! What do we do?'

'Ok, just concentrate.' I recited the incantation I thought we would need to him. Percy nodded.

'I remember it.'

We said the incantation together, constantly repeating the words in a continuous chant until our hand light up with a silvery light. Then we pressed our hand to the deep wound in the unicorn's flank. The beast's weak heart-beat fluttered beneath our healing touch as we poured as much power into the spell as we could.
When we finally ended the spell a wave of exhaustion ran over us. We watched as the now healed unicorn raised its head and met its gentle black eyes.

"Please don't… please don't die." Percy slurred, then the darkness that had been slowly claiming our vision consumed us, and we blacked out.

As it turned out, Charles, Weasley and Granger had detention in the Forbidden Forest again that night. They were with Hagrid, searching for the Unicorn Herd to check up on them, after the sudden drop in numbers last term. Apparently the strange figure had heeded our warning, as no more unicorns had been attacked. The one we had healed had been wounded by a falling tree branch that had fallen after a vicious storm had cracked it two day's previously.

Anyway, rumours had it that Charles and Hagrid found us unconscious in the middle of the herd, leaning over one of them. Our hands had been sticky with silvery unicorn blood, and our shirt wet with it also, from where we had soaked up the blood from the unicorn's pelt. Normally this would have an extremely suspicious situation to be in, but since the herd didn't seem to mind us we weren't accused of anything drastic such as hurting a unicorn.

It was four days before we woke up again. The first thing that we became aware of was the harsh bright light of midday reflected off the white walls straight into our eyes. We moaned and turned over, hiding under our pillow to escape the painful sunlight.

Footsteps echoed as Madam Pomphrey left her office, and a small chuckle left her lips. "So, you have finally woken. Care to explain what left the two of you with practically empty cores?"

"Healing a unicorn." I mumbled, as Percy refused to acknowledge he was awake.

"Pardon?" Disbelief sharpened the Medi-witch's voice.

"Well, the unicorn herd asked the centaurs to fetch help because one of their own was dying. The centaur messenger in turn asked the Giant Squid to find us. You can ask any of our housemates. It was quite the shock having the Giant Squid peering into the common room. Anyway, we were asked to heal a unicorn. She was close to death when we arrived however, so it took a lot to bring her back. We just didn't realise how much."

Yawning, I moved out from under the pillow and rubbed our eyes with our hands. I froze when I pulled our hands away however. I blinked then stared again. "Madam, why are our hands stained silver?"

Madam Pomphrey frowned at us. "You had unicorn blood all over your hands when you arrived here. It had dried and no matter how many times I washed your hands the colour wouldn't come off."

"Oh."

I frowned. I felt an overbearing sense of doziness coming from Percy's side of the bond and yawned again, struggling to keep our eyes open. Noticing this, Madam Pomphrey smiled. "Go back to sleep. You need more time for your magical core to refill completely."

Slowly sleep claimed us, but it was far from peaceful. Our dreams were full of terrible monsters such as Cerberuses, Basilisks, Furies, Minotaurs, weird snake-ladies, vampire-people, hellhounds… We were trapped in an endless battle, fighting to get out. And all the while a cold voice was laughing in the background, calling us to him…

I had a sudden nostalgia for the dreams of that summer camp, or even the giants. They were strange
dreams, true, but they didn't leave us this shaken when we woke. They didn't leave us sticky with cold-sweat or jumpy about the tiniest noise…

The infirmary doors slammed open. We jumped, our gaze drawn to the source of the sound like a moth to a flame. Charles stood in the doorway, his eyes blood-shot and underlined by dark shadows, as if he hadn't slept well in days. His pale face lit us at the sight of us awake and staring at him.

"Harry! Percy! Oh thank Merlin you're alright! For a moment I thought you weren't going to survive." Charles ran over to our bed and collapsed on the floor, tears trailing down his cheeks. "Forgive me for the mean words I said? I didn't mean them, I swear! I was just jealous again."

"Hey," Percy smiled at our older brother, "we never said we didn't want you. We thought you didn't want us."

"What? No! By Merlin, no!" Charles gasped. "We're brothers. We may have our arguments, but I'm never going to turn my back on you. If I ever do then I expect you to hit some sense back into me, understand? Family is blood, and blood is life, yes?"

"Yes." I smiled at our brother.

A flicker of movement behind our brother alerted us to somebody else's presence in the room. Professor Dumbledore stood in the doorway, smiling at the scene before him. I nodded in his direction.

"Professor."

"Ah, Mr Potter. You are well, I trust?"

Charles turned to look at the Headmaster, the squeezed our hand in farewell. We sent a smile in return then turned back to the Headmaster.

"Just a little tired from being on bed rest." I assured him. "Percy isn't in a very talkative mood. It's rare if he ever is after waking up."

The Headmaster nodded, walking over to sit down on our bed as Charles shut the infirmary doors behind him. "Now, Mr Potter, as I'm sure you must understand, this is a very serious matter that needs to be handled very carefully. You went into the Forbidden Forest, which, unless you missed the end of year feast, you know is against school rules. Madam Pomphrey informed me that you told her you were summoned into the forest to heal a unicorn. This is a very unlikely story, you must understand. Why would the creatures of the forest come running to you for help? I understand that you are a twin-soul of incredible power, but still…"

"I can show you my memories if you require proof." I offered, tiring of Dumbledore beating round the bush.

"What? I'm sure that won't be necessary…"

I rolled our eyes, reaching for our wand, which should have been on our night stand, but it wasn't there. Nor was Percy's. I frowned, then turned to Dumbledore. "Might I borrow your wand?"

"What-ever for, my boy?" Dumbledore looked confused, passing his wand over. I flashed him a small grin, then concentrated and pulled out my memories using his wand. I then grasped them with my hands, shaping them into a screen and mentally playing the play button. All of our thoughts were included in the memory, making it a bit too personal for my tastes, but I didn't really have many other options.
'Harry!' Percy poked him hard. Memories are personal.'

'Would you prefer a detention?' I retorted. Percy pouted, but didn't reply.

When the memory had finished Dumbledore gave a bemused look. "My, my, Mr Potter, what are we to do with you?"

Percy tilted our head in confusion. "What do you mean?"

"You healed a unicorn. You brought it back from the edge of death, nearly emptying your core to do so. However, you broke school rules. Under any other circumstances I would scold you for not talking to me first, but I see that that could have cost your unicorn friend its life. So, what do we do with you; praise you or punish you?"

We shrugged. "We don't require praise. We just helped out where we were needed."

Dumbledore's frown deepened. "That's not a very Slytherin view."

"No, but we aren't both Slytherin. I am, but Percy is Gryffindor. Therefore, we display as mix views."

"Indeed. Well, Madam Pomphrey said she would release you today. You aren't expected back in lessons until tomorrow, so I suggest you spend some time catching up. I'll confer with the other teachers and get back to you tomorrow morning."

"Yes sir." I nodded.

The Slytherin common room was full of questions when we finally escaped Madam Pomphrey later that evening. Everyone wanted to know what had happened to us. What was with the Squid? Could we actually talk to it? Why did we run off? Where did we go? Was it true our brother found us with the unicorns? Why were our hands silver? The rumour mill had been running wild the past five days, it would appear.

We did finally manage to escape the questions and get up to our dorm where Blaise and Theo were waiting for us.

"You're back!"

"Harry, Percy!"

We were tackled on to our bed by the two boys and encased in two warm embraces.

"Don't ever do that again!" Theo scolded suddenly, hitting us hard on the head.

"Ever!" Blaise agreed, hitting us on the head again. "Draco was beside himself with worry when you didn't return."

Draco… We blanched. We hadn't thought about our blond friend. We had come to see each other as brothers, so Merlin only knew what he was feeling…

Speaking of the devil, Draco flew the door open and practically jumped on top of us, abandoning all dignity. His arms clasped me in a hard hug. Then the hits began, as Draco tried to slap every body part he could reach.

"You stupid, stupid idiot!"
We took it all, fully believing we deserved every single slap. Eventually Draco hugged us again, a few rogue tears dampening our shirt.

Once everyone had calmed down we quickly explained what had happened, and apologised for our reckless behaviour. It took a while, and all three of them had questions, but we did eventually make it down to dinner.

'Will we even get a normal term this year?' Percy asked late last night, as we lay awake thinking about the unicorn herd.

I smiled. 'The majority says no. I guess it's good that we're good at adapting.'

'Sometimes I wonder if that will be enough.' Percy confessed. 'If one day we will face a challenge we can't adapt to, and we fall.'

'Well,' I thought about it, 'if that does happen then we'll just have to fall in a way that makes us memorable.'

'Huh, as if anyone could forget us.' Percy said cheekily, 'I mean, I make up half of us!'

We laughed quietly, so not to disturb our dorm-mates. 'I don't doubt that, Percy, but will they remember us for your good ideas or your bad ones?'

'Hey!'
Chapter 14

Percy's Point of View

I woke up much later than Harry the morning after we had returned to the Slytherin dorms. It was nice to be able to lie in without being woken by blinding sunlight piercing our eyelids. The dim, flickering dungeon torches felt much more homely too. I smiled, then started paying attention to what Harry was doing. He had already showered and dressed, if our damp hair was anything to go by. Currently, though, he was scrabbling around on the floor, searching for something.

"Where are they? Come on, come on, they must be here somewhere!" Harry kept muttering. I frowned, giving Harry a concerned look.

'Are you ok? What have we lost this time?' I yawned.

Harry let out a snarl of anger when he came up empty handed. 'Our wands! I can't find them!'

'Tried asking anybody? Draco might know.' I pointed out helpfully, not too bothered about our missing wands. 'And if the worst comes to the worst, we could summon them.'

Nudging Harry to one side momentarily, I stuck out our left hand. 'Accio wands!'

Our hand lit up with a shimmering silver light as our wands came flying out of Draco's school bag towards us. A low gasp sounded behind us, and I spun around, wand held at the ready. Then I relaxed, knowing Draco didn't mean any harm to us. He knew about our wandless magic anyway, so there was no harm in him seeing us perform it in person.

"By Merlin and Morgana, you didn't tell me you could do silent magic too!" Draco whined. I laughed, letting Harry take control once more.

"To be fair mate," Harry said, "you told us underestimation would be a great advantage and not to spill all our secrets… And why did you have our wands anyway?"

Draco didn't so much as flinch as he met our gaze. "You left your wands on our Chess table. I picked them up for you, so they wouldn't just be left lying around. Then when the rumours of you healing the unicorn started up, I hide them so that nobody would find out that you could do wandless magic. Talking about wandless magic, did your hand just glow silver?"

Harry frowned. "Yeah. It's never done that before… Must be the unicorn blood that stained our hands."

Draco looked intrigued and stepped closer to us, taking one hand and expecting it. The stain no longer covered our entire hand, but had formed patterns on our palm in the shape of curving waves, almost like it had exploded out from near our wrist. For a moment we all just stared at the patterns in shock, then Draco pulled out his wand, and traced the silver pattern. It tingled slightly under the touch, as if responding to the magic that flowed through the wand from Draco.

"It reacts to magic." Harry said in surprise. Curious, I decided to test out this new theory of Harry's. He was almost always right, but a little extra evidence never harmed anyone. Besides, I had noticed that my wandless 'accio' spell had been slightly easier than normal.
'Lumos!' The result was immediate, the silver markings lighting up like starlight, momentarily blinding us before our eyes adjusted to the light. I grinned. This was so awesome! The markings didn't just react to magic, they *channelled* it. Similar to a wand, but better. Harry couldn't help but smile as my delight spread across our bond.

'It's amazing! You try a spell Harry!' Shaking his head slightly, but indulging me all the same, Harry also cast the Lumos spell after I extinguished mine. Rather than our left hand lighting up this time, however, it was our right. It made sense, I figured. I tended to favour our left hand and Harry preferred using our right, so we subconsciously channelled our magic slightly differently based on our preferences.

We ended up spending the next half hour messing around with spells rather than getting ready for breakfast, and ended up having to rush up to the Great Hall. The Great Hall was buzzing when we eventually arrived, full of people shouting for our attention, to find out what had happened that night, wanting confirmation about the whispers about our stained hands and the rumours about the unicorn. We successfully ignored them all with the help of Draco, Blaise and Theodore, who held off the annoying hovering students. Eventually Professor Dumbledore had to dismiss everyone for class, because we almost couldn't get out of the hall at all.

Charles met us outside the large doors of the hall, pulling us aside with a shy grin. "Hey! Enjoying your minutes of fame?"

Harry pulled a face. "No. How do you deal with them, day in day out? It's horrible!"

We shuddered and Charles' grin widened. "Well, I've grown up dealing with them. I can't really imagine not, to be honest."

Shaking our head, we followed Charles to class. We received a lot of stares during Transfiguration. The Gryffindor's didn't seem to know how to treat us. Bored with the lesson, I tried to figure out what they might be feeling. Curiosity for a start – Gryffindor's loved gossip just as much as Hufflepuffs. Discomfort perhaps? They did pretty much disown us as one of their own, just before we did something so recklessly Gryffindor. Hum…

"Mr Potter!" Professor McGonagall was giving us her disapproving stare. "I understand you've just come back from the hospital wing, but could you please at least *pretend* to pay attention? Care to demonstrate the spell we are practising today?"

Harry frowned, glancing up at the board. We were working on changing rats into teacups today. The spell was remarkably simple, one we had been using for years, ever since Harry discovered Lily's old school books when we were seven. Harry waved his wand in the correct spell pattern, muttering the incantation under our breath. I almost groaned as our right hand shone silver around his wand. It was faint, and almost unnoticeable, but that didn't mean that everybody succeeded at failing to spot it. We both groaned when the Granger girl, who was sitting on our right, took in a sharp breath. Dam! She'd spotted it. Let the interrogation commence…

"Your hand!" She hissed once McGonagall had moved on. "It glowed."

"Well done. May we get on with our work now?" Harry asked with a large yawn. We'd spend the last week dreaming about monsters and fighting, waking up only to feel more tired than when we had drifted off to sleep. Needless to say, we weren't in the mood for a Granger interrogation. Granger sniffed.
"You do know that we aren't actually expected to successfully perform that spell until next lesson, right? All you did was prove to Professor McGonagall that you weren't listening to anything that she said this lesson. And why did your hand glow? It never has before." The bushy haired girl was in full flow, speaking also too fast to be understood. From our left, I heard Charles chuckle.

"Calm down Hermione. For a start, it's not exactly as if Harry and Percy needed to pay attention, given they can already cast the spell. And what's this non-sense about his hand glowing? Nobody else saw anything." Charles reasoned, sensing our annoyance at his know-it-all friend.

Hermione gave me a sharp look, narrowing her eyes. She grabbed our right hand, causing Harry to drop his wand in shock. Hermione gasped at the silver marking's on our hand. They were moving slightly, rippling over our palm like real waves. Charles lend in to see and let out a low whistle.

"What is that?" Hermione demanded. Harry sighed, and I restrained my urge to snap at her to shut up and leave us alone. But when Charles also gave us an expectant look we sighed, and Harry tried to explain a bit of what we knew.

"You know how when you found us we had unicorn blood coating our hands?" He started, directing the question at Charles. Charles nodded. "Yeah, well it didn't wash off. Now it forms these weird patterns on our skin that light up when we use magic. Right hand for me, left hand for Percy."

"Quiet over there!" McGonagall barked. "You're supposed to be working, not talking!"

"Yes Professor!" The three of us chorused.

Not wanting to answer any more questions, Harry and I tuned out Granger and Charles for a while, working on our charms for our Chess-board. We'd just about got the animation charm working. Our only problem now was trying to get the opposition to not kill you if you were playing on the board (for some reason our chess pieces were rather violent, something Harry liked to joke came from me for some reason… Just because I like fighting doesn't mean I'm violent!)

"Mr Potter. Mr Potter!"

We were startled out of our thoughts a while later by Professor McGonagall. The parchment we had been working on was a mess of the different spells we could use. Harry had been looking into spell creation for a while now, but the subject was vast, and we'd need several years before we could actually create a spell that both worked and wasn't dangerous. Shaking our head to clear our thoughts, Harry turned to our Transfiguration teacher.

"Sorry Professor, we were lost in our thoughts, how can we help you?"

A smile twitched at McGonagall's lips, almost ruining her strict teacher act she put on. "I was wondering how your Chess Board was coming along. I imagine you've almost completed it by now."

"Almost." Harry agreed, showing her our parchment. "There's just a slight complication with making it safe to play, as it can be a little too… enthusiastic sometimes…"

Professor McGonagall smiled and pointed to one of the spells we'd written down. "I'd suggest this one, though you may wish to double check that with Professor Flitwick. Oh! I've been meaning to tell you, Professor Dumbledore was wondering if you'd let him borrow it, once you've finished. He wanted to mark it himself, after hearing Professor Flitwick and me talk about it."

We shrugged. "Sure. Do you think we'll be able to get it back for the summer though? I was hoping to have a chess tournament with Charles using it."
Charles poked our side questioningly, and Harry shot him a look to tell him we'd talk to him later. Charles nodded, and we turned back to Professor McGonagall.

"I don't see why you wouldn't be able to do. Good luck."

As soon as McGonagall had moved away Charles pounced on us, wanted to know what that was about.

"Peace!" Harry laughed. "We were given extra credit projects in Transfiguration and Charms. Since the product wasn't specified we decided to combine them and create a life-size chess board. It's going to be brilliant, just as soon as we can get the little kinks smoothed out. It's going to be amazing!"

The bell rang then, signalling the end of class. We all but ran out, excited about this new development with our project. It was lunch, so we started our hunt for Professor Flitwick. He was, rather predictably, in his classroom, preparing for the Seventh year class he had next. And by 'getting ready' I mean he was spelling chalk to write on the board (as he was too short) while he marked their essays. His head only just cleared the top of his desk. I sniggered quietly in our head, earning me a disapproving glare from Harry.

'Don't be rude Percy! It's not his fault he's part goblin…'

'I know, but still! I wasn't trying to be mean. It's just a funny image…' I pouted.

"Professor Flitwick?" Harry said, alerting the short Charms professor to our presence. He looked up with a warm smile, excitement lighting up his eyes.

"Ah! Mr Potter. Now, what is it I can be helping you with? Is your project coming along smoothly?"

The half-goblin eagerly asked as he stood and moved round his desk to talk to us.

"Oh, yes, our project is coming along very well actually. We just had a slight problem to sort out…"

Harry proceeded to explain our problem to our professor, and then inquire about the spell McGonagall had picked up on as a possibility. This started a long debate about the affects using this charm might have if it reacted with the other charms we had used, but in the end we agreed that it shouldn't affect the command sequence we had charmed the pieces with.

Half of our lunch break had gone by the time we made it up to the Great Hall to eat. We skilfully avoided the never-ending questions from our peers by casting a 'notice-me-not' charm round ourselves. Draco, Blaise and Theo gave us hell in potions next, of course, for 'avoiding them' but Harry and I considered it worth it for the half hour of peace it gave us.

Potions was pretty normal. Our Godfather took great pleasure in deducting points from Gryffindor, and granting Slytherin's as many as possible. This was fun to watch, of course, but did lead to a greater rift between the two houses. Blaise and Theo loved to throw random potion ingredients into the cauldrons of unsuspecting Lions, which lead to them attempting to retaliate and then getting caught and loosing points… It was an on going cycle that never seemed to end.

Usually Harry rather enjoyed this banter between the two houses, but today Harry and I just kept our heads down, preferring to just make our potion. I'm positive that Draco noticed this shift from our normal behaviour, but he didn't comment on it. Our thoughts were solely based on what McGonagall had told us earlier. It hadn't been anything particularly noteworthy at the time, but the more we thought on it, the more it troubled us.

Why would the Headmaster want to see our project? It would make sense for him to be interested in some of the older year's projects, when the students had a better idea of what they were doing, and
had put more planning into their work, but ours? We were just first years, our project had been a mere idea that struck us quite randomly, and the product itself wasn't exactly anything spectacular.

Or cauldron suddenly started fizzing, drawing our attention back to the present. We frowned. None of the ingredients we were using today should have this affect. It would require... something like boomslang skin, and no way, no matter how distracted we were, I know we didn't pick any of that up. I quickly quenched the flames with a water spell while Harry tried cast a shield round the soon-to-be-exploding cauldron. Then we ducked under the desk, pulling Draco down with us, only moments before it exploded.

A loud boom shook the room as the gloopy substance shot high up, coating ceiling a sickly green. Apparently Harry hadn't managed to complete his shield. Luckily the potion went straight up, and so avoided straying the rest of our classmates with the now acidic substance. Draco was safely shielded under the table, but a large glob landed on the back of our hand, making it sting something horrible. I hissed, pulling the hand close to our chest after flicking off the mixture. A large section of skin had been eaten away, leaving a raw bloody mess open to the air. For anyone considering messing around with potions – don't. When things go wrong, they go very badly wrong. As demonstrated, courtesy of moi.

Professor Snape stormed over, looking stressed after having to deal with our brother's exploding potion. "Harry and Percy! What on earth have you two managed to do now? And I thought you two were the only Potters that I didn't have to worry about in here..." He grumbled, inspecting the ruined potion. I blushed, staining our cheeks red and Draco let out a little amused snort.

"Sorry sir," I apologised. "We've been a bit distracted today. I think someone must have thrown something into our potion. For the cough potion to explode then it would have to take something such as boomslang skin. That isn't something we would have easily mixed up!"

Severus' face cleared. "Well then. It would appear one of your classmates has done something extremely dangerous."

I tilted our head to one side as Severus turned to the rest of the class sharply, his face thunderous.

"Who threw potion ingredients into Mr Potter's cauldron? Because whoever it was better own up right now!" He said. The scariest part was that he didn't yell, he didn't shout. He merely spoke the words, and the quiet fury was so unlike him that it scared the lights out of all of us.

There was a moment of silence, during which our godfather's wrath only grew. Just as he opened his mouth to say something else, Goyle raised his hand. The rest of the Slytherin's stared at the boy in shock and surprise. Severus pressed his lips together into a tight line for a moment as he glowered at the poor boy.

"I... I didn't mean to sir." Goyle offered. "It was an accident. I found it in my pile of ingredients and knew it wasn't part of the potion so... so I threw it behind me..."

Anyone who had met any member of the Goyle family knew that they weren't known for their brains. They made good followers, being made up of muscle and strength, and were good a following orders. Ask them to come up with a scheme by themselves and you'd get a completely blank look from them. That meant either somebody else had given Goyle the idea, or he had just acted without thinking. Given he was one of Draco's friends, and asked to protect him by Draco's father, my guess was that it had just been a thoughtless action.

Severus seemed to think this too and some of the fury on his face subsided. "My office, at the end of class."
Just as Professor Snape turned to walk away he caught sight of our hand. His eyes softened slightly. It wasn't something anybody would really notice, not if you didn't know him really well, but it was there. Shaking his head, our godfather gently reached for our hand.

"I suppose that you weren't planning on mentioning this were you?" He scolded, wincing as he inspected it. "Come with me, I'll get you a paste to put on it."

He led us to his office (a small room just off from classroom) and directed us to run our hand under cold water while he fetched the paste. Following his instructions, I turned on the tap in the little sink that stood in a corner of the room.

'Ready?' I asked Harry, trying to ready myself for the sting of pain I was knew this would cause.

'Ready as ever.' Harry replied, taking a deep breath and hardening his resolution. 'Do it.'

Closing our eyes, I cautiously put our hand under the stream of water. But the pain we were expecting never came. Instead the cool liquid seemed to soothe our wound, numbing the pain. I opened our eyes and we watched in amazement as the water rinsed the potion and other dirt out of the wound before the skin slowly began to regrow, and the damaged muscle knitted itself back together.

"I've got the –" Our godfather trailed off as he stared at our hand. "How are you doing that?"

We glanced up at him. "Doing what? We just did as you said, running it under the water, and it just started to heal. It's odd. Water hasn't ever had that affect before…"

A thoughtful expression passed over Severus' face. For a moment he didn't move and just stood there thinking. Then he shook himself. "Well, clearly you don't need this anymore, do you? And boys – don't mention this to anybody else, ok? It would be wise to keep such strange matters to yourself. If anything else happens, come tell me, but… just me? Just for now, until I can figure out what it is."

'But why?' I asked silently, knowing that speaking the words out loud wouldn't get us anywhere.

'It sounds reasonable…' Harry said. 'Just as Draco always says – we shouldn't advertise our strengths.'

We nodded at our godfather, who smiled at us. "Go on, go help Draco. If you have time this weekend, you can redo that potion."

"Thank you!" We grinned up at the tall greasy haired man we had come to love and admire. He gave us a small smile in return and waved his hand to dismiss us.

We returned to where Draco was working. His potion had survived ours exploding, purely due to the repelling charms he had placed round his cauldron. We usually did the same thing, but we'd forgotten. I showed Draco our newly healed hand and he smiled, easily moving over to let us help him.

We chatted for the remaining twenty minutes of the lesson on the most random of subjects. Quidditch was a popular theme, but so was school subjects and our extra curricula projects. Draco was working on a book of the spells we had learned in charms this year, and researching ways in which they could be enhanced or tiny alterations to change say, the colour of the result, to the power behind the spell. It took a bit of persuading, but he eventually agreed to allow Harry to read it when he was finished.

The lesson ended without any more problems, and we all rushed to get out. Well, the Gryffindors all but sprinted to get away from Professor Snape. We Snakes exited at a better pace, but were still eager
to get back to our common room. We said goodbye to Draco, Theo and Blaise outside the classroom, eager to get to our project and finish it.

The spell that we had found to solve our problem turned out to be more complicated than we had first anticipated. It took a good hour to get the spell correctly cast a worker to the right standard. First it was too strong, and then the pieces refused to play properly. Then we had to counter it and cast again. That time we didn't put enough power into the spell, and we were back to square one. Still, six recast spells and a lot of cursing later, we had our finished master piece.

Seemingly coincidently, Professor Dumbledore poked his head round the door a few minutes after we had finished, when we were having a mini game by ourselves. We spun around as the door creaked open, and beamed at the old man.

"We did it!" Harry exclaimed happily. " Took us a while, but we did it!"

"So you did, my boys, so you did." The headmaster smiled back at us, his eyes twinkling merrily. " Can I see how it works?"

"Of course!" Harry said. For the first time in our life, we had made something we could show off, so why shouldn't we? "Chessboard, reset!"

The pieces that had been destroyed during our game quickly repaired themselves and moved to their original positions on the board.

I watched as Dumbledore played. He was good. He had a set strategy that he kept to. Harry laughed as the old man pulled a face as the opposition moved in a way that he hadn't quite expected. He sent us a fake disapproving look, but it quickly melded into a smile when he saw the excitement in our eyes.

"You've done some beautiful spell work on this, Mr Potter." Dumbledore commented. " Is there any way to override the spells put into it?"

Harry laughed. "Why would that matter? It's a bit like muggle programming, I guess. To override our spells you have to first be able to spot what you want to change, and then know the language required to change it. So if you have the knowledge then I guess, yeah, there is a way of manipulating the spells, but why anyone would want to is a different matter."

"Indeed." Dumbledore's smile never faltered, but I did spot his eyes tighten just a little as Harry spoke. I don't think Harry noticed, too busy explaining our work to the headmaster, but I did. I couldn't tell you why I noticed, or why I even thought it was important, but I did.

Quickly moving on, Professor Dumbledore summoned Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick to see our finished master piece. I think they were suitably impressed by it, and marvelled at the spells woven into its making.

By the time we made it down to dinner we were both elated with the satisfaction of finally finishing our project. Draco noticed of course, and congratulated us before requesting help for his book. Harry didn't even hesitate to agree. I scowled jokingly at him.

'You know Harry, I'm starting to think that you're overloading us with school work to get out of my exercise routine.' I pouted.

'Darn, you're on to me!' He joked, before asking very seriously, ' You don't mind the work do you? Because we can cut down on reading time if there's anything you'd prefer to do.'
'It's fine!' I laughed. 'But I get more time in the holidays.'

'Ok…' It was Harry pouting this time.

Draco nudged us, breaking us out of our thoughts. "Come on, you've been distant all day. Talk a little!"

We laughed, but plunged into the ongoing conversation, placing our bets on the next Quidditch match and sharing gossip we'd picked up on during the day. It was nice to just relax without worrying about anything. We pushed all the thoughts that had been troubling us aside and just did what we did best: joked and offered our contributions to the discussion.

And for tonight, just for one night, we didn't think about homework or the problems going on in the Forbidden Forest, or about our nightmares or Dumbledore. We ignore all of that and just messed around with our year-mates, dancing to music (extremely badly), cracking jokes and teasing each other. And, for this one night, we let loose and had a good time because we could feel the storm building. And when it broke, something told us we weren't going to have a break for a good long while. Because this didn't just feel like a storm. It felt like a hurricane. A hurricane fast approaching.
Easter was slow in coming, but I don't think Percy or I had ever been so glad for its arrival. School hadn't exactly been difficult, but the couple weeks had seemed to drag, and we were in desperate need for a break. On the plus side, Charles had been spending more time with us recently, and we'd become closer during the tutoring sessions Percy and I were giving him. Draco and the others had eventually come around to see the un-stuck-up side of our brother, and had relaxed enough to be on a first name basis with him.

I contemplated all of this as we sat in the library, enjoying the hushed silence of the place. The tall bookshelves towered high above our heads, and books flew around as they resorted themselves back into their rightful places on the selves. We were hiding in the furthest corner of the library, surrounded by forgotten, dusty books. For some reason the house elves hadn't been dusting in this area of the library in a while. For whatever the reason was, I was glad. It made it feel more homely, like the library back at Potter Manor.

As I took in our surroundings something caught Percy's attention, and he quickly pointed it out to me.

'Look – over there!' Percy pointed to a shelf to our right. There was a line in the dust, where a book had been taken out. Given the wood was gleaming slightly in the sunlight, I reckoned it had been rather recently. Curious now, I stood up and moved closer to the shelf. Sure enough, one of the books was also cleaner, as if someone had wiped the dust off its spin. I picked up the book.

One page in the book had been dog eared, marking it out. Annoyed that anyone would treat a book like this, I scowled. Percy laughed.

'Dude, it's just an inanimate object. Really, it's not such a big deal!'

I rolled my eyes mentally. 'Percy, this is an extremely old book. Merlin only knows how many copies exist. This is ruining the book for others!'

'It was useful though.' Percy said randomly, having read the page. 'Look at this – somebody's been trying to look up the Philosopher's Stone.'

'What?' I focused on the page.

*The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with the making of the Philosopher's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The Stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal.*

'The Philosopher's Stone…' I pondered. 'Why would someone be researching that old relic? Do you think it was for some sort of project.'

'Maybe…' Percy frowned. 'But wouldn't they just take the book out the library if that was the case? Why leave it here?'

'Good point.' I agreed. 'Which is why I suggest we take it out and see who comes looking for it.'
Percy chuckled. 'You really do belong with the snakes, don't you?'

Just as we were gathering up our stuff to leave, we heard voices moving closer. Percy made me pause, listening into the conversation. To our surprise, the voices were very familiar.

"Don't you see? That dog must be protecting the Philosopher's Stone! I bet it was because Dumbledore and Flamel were close, so he asked him to guard it for him..." The Granger girl was whispering loudly. "He must have known someone was after it so he had to have it removed from Gringotts."

"A Stone that can create gold and make you immortal... no wonder Snape wants it!" Charles replied. I frowned. Why would they expect Snape to want the Philosopher's Stone? And if they were talking about Dumbledore protecting it that would imply... of course! The 3rd Floor was put out of bounds this year.

Granger and Charles rounded the corner, accompanied by their ginger haired companion, who was currently speaking; "Huh, no wonder Flamel wasn't in Study of Recent Developments in Wizardry – he's hardly recent at six hundred and sixty-five is he?"

They had been huddled together as they talked, keeping their heads down. Charles was the first to look up, and blinked when he saw us. He came to an abrupt halt, causing Granger and Weasley to stop to. Percy grinned at them.

"Up to no good? I hope it's against the rules, Charles, or you'll have James to answer to." He joked. Granger glared at us.

"Keep your nose out of other people's business, Potter!" Granger snapped. "Besides, we most certainly are not doing anything against the rules!"

"Oh." I raised an eyebrow. "Does that mean you wouldn't mind if I went straight to my godfather to inform him that you suspect him of wanting to steal the Philosopher's Stone?"

"You're godfather..." Weasley gave us a questioning look.

"Professor Snape." I clarified with a smile.

Weasley narrowed his eyes. "So that's how you get such good grades, huh? I knew that greasy git played favourites, even among his own snakes!"

Percy glared, his fury building with each word our brother's friend uttered. "You dare accuse us of using our godfather to get good grades? We wouldn't do that! It's immoral and won't help us at all during our OWLs. I mean, Merlin forbid we actually have any pure talent, right? Because Harry's a slimy snake and I'm a traitor to Gryffindor."

"Stop!" Charles interrupted. "It's not like that, you don't--"

Ron looked at Charles in amazement. "Charles, he's a snake. What do you expect of him? The sorting hat even said it – these cunning folk use any means to achieve their ends. They're lying little creeps, all of them! I mean, he was obviously eavesdropping on us!"

Charles turned on Ron with a snarl. "Ron, they're my brothers, and I trust them with my life. If Harry and Percy say that they didn't use Snape to get good grades, then they didn't. Besides, you've seen how much Harry loves spending time in the library. He doesn't need anybody's help to get him good grades – he has entire text-books memorised."
I smiled warmly at our brother. I knew we had been on good terms for a while now, but I still couldn't help but keep on expecting him to side with his friends over us. That small trickle of doubt refused to be blocked, putting us constantly on edge when we placed our trust in him or our parents. Charles returned the smile. He winked at us as if to reassure us that he wasn't going to turn his back on us.

"It's gone!" Granger cursed. "The book! I couldn't sworn it was here somewhere…"

"Let me see!" Weasley began searching the bookshelf hurriedly. "But it can't have just disappeared…"

Charles laughed quietly, before turning to smirk at us. "Come on, you two. You're the only other person I've ever seen in this part of the library."

"Us?" I put a hand to our chest and widened our eyes innocently. Percy chuckled at me. "Who said we knew anything? There are many books in this area of the library."

Charles was giving us an 'I-know-exactly-what-you're-doing' look. I couldn't help but let out a quiet sound of amusement at his expression.

"You know what, I'll make you a deal." Charles offered. "I'll tell you about what we're researching, and why, if you hand over the book."

Granger and Weasley were looking at us in confusion. I smirked at Charles. "I'll take that deal, just as long as you tell us that information now and not after you've gone and done something ridiculously stupid."

"Done" Charles held out his hand for the book. I handed it over.

"So… The Philosopher's Stone, huh?"

Charles and his two complaining minions sat down at the table we had been working at and beckoned for us to join them. Percy sat us down and motioned for Charles to start talking. It was a bit of a long story.

Charles started his tale with the time Draco had challenged him to a midnight duel, then arranged for Filch to catch them. They had fled from the caretaker and his evil cat, accidentally ending up on the third floor. And, of course, what other door would they open other than the locked one. They ended up bumping into a three-headed dog, which Granger somehow managed to notice was standing on a trap door. A small slip from Hagrid informed them that the dog's name was Fluffy and he was guarding something. Hagrid refused to tell them what, having noticed his slip, but then slipped up again and mentioned the name Nicolas Flamel. Charles recognised the name from the back of Dumbledore's chocolate frog card, and Granger had remembered this book with his name in it next to the Philosopher's Stone.

When we asked why they thought Professor Snape was after the stone, the trio gave us a blank stare, as if wondering why we thought he wasn't. Weasley mentioned Severus' faint limp after Halloween, and how his leg had been bleeding that night. They had somehow come to the conclusion he had been bitten trying to get past Fluffy. Charles then explained about how when his broom had malfunctioned at a previous Quidditch match, and how Hermione had caught Snape muttering an incantation. She'd set fire to his robes and the spell had broken, saving Charles from him imminent death.

Percy and I laughed at that. We remembered that Quidditch match when Charles had lost control of
his broom. Afterwards we'd caught Professor Snape mumbling about stupid cursed brooms and having to save bumbling idiotic Gryffindor's from their own reckless actions. We tried to explain this to them, but again, the three of them gave us blank looks, so we gave up persuading them that our godfather was really a nice guy.

Just after all the explanations were finished, a stray thought struck me.

"How long ago did you read this book Gr – sorry, Hermione?" I asked. She frowned at the start of her surname, then bit her lip in thought.

"Sometime before Christmas, why?"

Percy, realising my train of thought, answered for me. "Because, if the marks in the dust imply anything, this book was read in the last week or two, and who-ever it was marked the page they were reading."

Picking up the book, I indicated the marked page. Granger scowled in indignation, an echo of my previous emotions upon having found the book.

'See, you shouldn't mark books like that!' I commented to Percy. 'Even the muggleborn agrees.'

'Yeah, yeah, whatever. You little book worshippers. I have an idea – you two should start your own little group concerning book rights and –'

'Percy, you know you'd have to sit through our group meetings to.' I said in complete seriousness. Percy paled.

'Never mind!'

"Come on, everybody out! Lunch is in ten minutes, and then you have an hour until the train leaves. Go on – out, out! The library is closing for Lunch today!" Madam Pince, the librarian, called, her voice loud in the silence of the library.

We all trailed out, one after other. Before following his friends when we parted ways, Charles grabbed out wrist.

"Don't tell anybody about this, yeah? We don't want anybody finding out." He warned. We nodded in understanding, miming zipping our lips. He smiled, then turned away to follow his friends.

We took a more direct route to the Great Hall, using some old passageways that we had discovered during some restless late nights. I had a fleeting idea that we should create a map of the school at some point, but pushed it away for another time. We had a new, more important project that required our full attention at the moment; someone was trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone, and we were going to find out who and why.
sludge. My shield held round us, though, and instead a green puddle formed round our feet.

Percy turned to mock glare at Sirius and James. The two supposedly 'mature' adults were pouting at us, disappointment dulling their eyes. Then they turned to Charles, and giggled hysterically as he fumbled around blindly, trying to get free of the green gunge.

A soft cough from Lily made everybody freeze. Percy and I laughed when we saw Sirius flinch and James stiffen. As one, the mischievous duo turned to face the annoyed red-head. Lily pointed her wand at Charles.

"Scourgify."

Immediately the mess disappeared, leaving Charles as clean as he had been before he walked through the door. The goo on the floor disappeared as well, revealing the clear green marble floor. Having taken care of the mess Lily glowered at her husband and his best friend before grasping their ears and dragging them away, yelling at them about messy pranks and how inappropriate they were to use after we'd been travelling all day.

I grinned at Charles. "Feel up to a game of Seekers?"

"You're on!"

We ran our trunks up to our rooms, grabbed broomsticks and ran out the back. At the edge of my consciousness I felt Percy retreat to the farthest depths of our mind as I kicked off. I felt a twinge of guilt. I knew he didn't like flying, but it was such a marvellous feeling to be accelerating through the air, diving and chasing the snitch… Percy send me a quick smile.

'Don't mind me. I'm just going to go daydream for the next hour or so. Have fun!'

I chuckled, and sent him a grin in return before returning all my attention to the game at hand. Charles released the snitch and counted to thirty before we shot off in search of the glittering golden ball. I caught the snitch during the first round. Charles won the second. We kept on having rematches, our scores almost perfectly matched. When Lily finally yelled for us to "Get off those infernal brooms and come eat dinner!" the score was 14:16 in my favour.

Percy re-joined the land of the real world as our feet hit the ground, and we eagerly took part in the dinner conversation, joking about recent events at school and generally informing our parents about the most recent gossip. Percy mentioned the little dragon Charles had helped 'escape', which turned out to be a rather popular topic.

"Hagrid somehow came across a dragon egg." Percy said. "He hatched it and Charles and his friends eventually managed to persuade him that a wooden hut wasn't the place for a fire breathing dragon to grow up so one of the Weasley's – Charlie – sent some friends to come and collect her."

"Her?" Charles gave us a weird look. "Don't you mean Norbert? The dragon was a boy."

Percy burst out laughing, and I joined in. "Really? Between the four of you, you all failed to notice that she was a girl?"

Charles gave us a startled look. "But… but… it was dragon! How did you tell?"

We rolled our eyes at our brother. "We talked to her, duh! Norwegian Ridgebacks are closely related to snake, and so speak a form a Parseltongue."

Now we had four incredulous adult staring at us. James looked just about ready to faint.
"Oh dear Merlin…" James murmured. "Percy, Harry, you are aware of the superstition surrounding Parseltongue, right? There wasn't a witch or wizard who could speak it who didn't turn out evil."

I frowned, feeling rather hurt at the implication. "Just because I was sorted into Slytherin and we can speak to Snakes does not mean that we are going to turn out evil! Really, James. Superstition is fed by anger and lies. Agreed it is born from seeds of truth, but a lot of it is just a ton of rubbish!"

Lily nodded her agreement with us. "Well said, boys. But don't go spreading this information round school, ok? It isn't the kind of skill you want to advertise. We know that the rumours surrounding Parselmouths are a load of dragon dung, but many people don't follow the same line of thought. So just be careful, Ok, honey?"

We nodded. "Ok, Lily. We'll do our best to keep it a secret. But onto a more important matter – can we visit the Romanian Dragon Sanctuary and visit the little dragon? Please! She was so cute and she didn't attack us when we talked to her!"

Percy begged the most, and eventually we managed to get Lily and James agree to arrange a visit if possible. They warned that it might not be possible for a while, and it might have to be a Birthday or Christmas present, but we didn't mind too much. We were going to see our little dragon again!

When Easter day dawned we were woken up by an energetic Charles bouncy on our bed, yelling for us to get up and throwing open our curtains to make the light stream in. Percy groaned and let out a low snarl, pushing Charles off our bed. Our poor brother landed rather heavily on the floor, groaning as he rubbed his sore limbs.

"Get up, get up, get up!" He yelled. "It's Easter! We get chocolate and egg hunts and a barbeque and –"

Sensing Percy was reaching the end of his tether I hit Charles with a silencing spell.

'You awake, Percy?' I asked Percy in a teasing tone. 'I couldn't quite tell if our new alarm clock was competent enough at rousing you from sleep.'

'Shove off Harry!' Percy moaned. 'The sun is hardly up!'

I smirked, and quoted a muggle film Charles had got us to watch a while back. 'The sky's awake, so I'm awake, so we have to play!'

Percy grunted at that and glowered at me. 'It's too early to be quoting films!'

'Well, we could spend this time doing something productive, like waking up James at this ungodly hour of the morning…'

Percy's interest instantly spiked. He was always eager to get back at James. He shot out of bed, past a silently pouting Charles, and all but sprinted to Lily and James' bedroom. Spotting the on-suit bathroom's door was open, Percy smirked. I felt a familiar tug in our gut, and then water began to form a small stream in the air, forming a puddle over James' head. I cast a shield over Lily to prevent her from getting wet. Then, just as Charles burst into the room behind us, Percy let the water fall, straight onto James' face.

"Ahh!" James screaming, bolting upright, as the icy liquid hit his face. "Charles!"

Charles, who was still trapped under my silencing spell, widened his eyes in shocked innocence, pointing at us. Percy smirked, not denying the accusation. James narrowed his eyes at us.
"You… you…"

"Son of a Marauder?" Lily offered dryly, watching the scene unravel with amusement as she lay on her dry, warm side of the bed.

"Exactly!" James exclaimed, before realising what she had said. "Well… actually I mean little sneak, but…"

"Aw, come on James," Sirius said from where he stood in the doorway. "It's all the same thing, isn't it squirt? Besides, fair's fair. We tried to prank him, so he gets to retaliate."

"Huh!" James pouted.

We grinned. What an excellent start to what should be an excellent day!
Percy's Point of View

Breakfast was far from a quiet affair after the wakeup call we had all had. Lily and Sirius were in good moods, talking about random things as they ate. Lily had previously spent a good hour cooking up bacon, eggs and pancakes for us all to eat. Charles was still sulking from the silencing charm I had eventually removed, and James was silently plotting revenge for his unexpected shower. As for Harry and I, we were joining in the conversation.

"Easter's a muggle festival, isn't it?" Sirius asked Lily, a curious note to his voice.

"Easter was originally, yes, but it has Pagan origins about celebrating the Spring Equinox, similar to more traditional wizards. To Christians it's about the rebirth of Jesus – the son of their God – after he sacrificed himself so our sins can be redeemed. As it's the start of spring, people share chocolate eggs and rabbits as signs of new life and fertility." Lily explained. Sirius looked interested, but I could tell a lot of it was going over his head.

Harry chuckled a little. "There's a muggle Bible in our library I can lend you, if you want the full unabbreviated story."

We turned to Charles as he poked us in the ribs with a finger. "I still can't believe you put a silencing charm on me! That's at least third year magic! And you did it outside school!"

By now Charles' whining had brought the attention of the rest of the table to us.

"That's a good point, actually, Charles." Lily glanced at us. "How did you get round the age restrictions?"

We squirmed for a moment before Sirius let out a booming laugh. "My, Lily, surely you worked out how those restrictions work? The trace picks up on the magic being cast around an underage witch or wizard, not the magic they specifically cast themselves. As Harry and Percy are currently residing in a magical household, the trace is picking up so much magic that whatever spells they may or may not cast are recorded as being cast by an adult. All pure-blood children get around it with that reasoning."

Charles brightened dramatically at this. "Does that mean I can hex him back?"

"You'll have to catch us first!"

We stood up from the table and shot off, Charles a few seconds behind us. Vaguely we heard Lily yelling at us in the background, but we ignored her for now, too absorbed in fleeing. A few flashes of light from Charles hit the floor behind us as we dodged.

'He's really upset isn't he?' I commented cheerfully as a red spell flew over our shoulder.

Harry hummed in amusement. 'Who – Charles? Nah, he's just having a bit of fun… Ouch! Was that a stinging hex?'

The orange stinging hex hit a portrait on our left, causing the occupant to start cursing Charles, mumbling something about children these days, and stuck up heirs. I giggled, taking a sharp left into
the gym. We made straight for the swords on the walls. I grabbed one, getting into the 'ready' stance. Charles came tumbling through the door a moment later, shooting another stinging hex at us. I deflected it with the sword, using the blade as a mirror. Charles pouted.

"No fair!"

I grinned tauntingly. "Pick up a blade then – come and get us the traditional way!"

Charles grumbled as he grabbed a sword of the wall. "Traditional? More like medieval…"

"Hogwarts is believed to be founded during the medieval times." Harry commented off-hand as I began to twirl my sword with calculated movements. I noticed that Charles' balance was slightly off centre due to the fact he had picked up a sword that was a little too heavy for him. Smiling in anticipation of the fight, I began to circle our brother.

Now, I'd first like to put it out there that Charles had little experience fighting with swords. He knew what was expected of him as a pureblood heir, but little to none otherwise. It wasn't a bad fight, but that doesn't mean it lasted very long. But, realising the odds hadn't been exactly fair, Harry and I let him hex us afterwards.

That was about the time when James found us, declaring that our guests where arriving for the egg hunt. All the Weasleys turned up, of course. As did the Longbottoms and the Grangers. Harry and I were delighted to find out that Lily had gone and invited the Malfoys, Zambinis and Notts. I caught James mumbling something about the horrors of inviting Death Eaters into our home, but he quickly shut up after a sharp look from Lily.

The idea of the day was that we, as the children, would go searching for the chocolate eggs hidden all-round the house and gardens while the adults mingled and chatted. Afterwards, there would be a barbeque before everyone went home. Sounds fun, right?

Draco gave us a strange look when we explained the game to him.

"And this is considered 'dignified'?” He asked with an incredulous look. "Besides, why would you hide the chocolate eggs?"

I laughed. "Lighten up, Draco. It's called fun. Besides, you get to keep the eggs you find. The more you find and collect, the more chocolate you get to eat at the end."

After advertising this in a slightly more… Slytherin light, Theo and Blaise grinned evilly. "So if we used summoning charms…"

Harry shook our head. "Sorry, but we live in a household with James and Sirius. Not to mention the Weasley twins are here. Lily would have spelled them against that."

Unperturbed, the two boys began plotting their technique. I groaned.

'This is supposed to be fun, not a dam mission!' I complained to Harry.

'Aw, come on, let them have their plotting session. They don't get them often enough at school.’ Harry laughed.

"So. Any idea's where they might be?” Draco asked with a tiny smile.

"Kitchens… flowerbeds, library, round the fountains… all over really. I've never taken part before, of course, but I did find a couple in the rafters one year. The house elves hide them, so they could be
just about anywhere."

Draco frowned, but James interrupted before he could reply.

"Off you go! You lot have an hour to find as many as possible."

Charles and the Weasleys shot off, Granger and Neville following at a slower pace. Blaise and Theo disappeared, leaving Draco and us standing on the patio. I flashed him a grin before following everybody else. Out the corner of our eye we saw our blonde haired friend walk out into the garden. He picked up a blue foil wrapped egg. We paused for a moment to watch as he grinned, pocketing the egg, and moving on.

'A child at heart.' Harry grinned.

I grinned back. 'Aren't we all? I mean, we still are children, but if you look at James and Sirius then I bet we still will be in twenty or so years' time."

'Ah, to be a wizard…' Harry laughed. 'We just don't know when to grow up inside.'

Deciding to push aside all deep thoughts, we concentrated on the egg hunt. First place we checked was the Library, where we discovered three eggs hiding round the shelves. Then I had the plan to search where few others would; the rafters. With skilled ease we pulled ourself up one of the bookshelves and onto the central beam. From there we had access to most of the house. Small doors were built into the ceilings, just big enough for a full grown adult to crawl through. Merlin only knows why they were made. Perhaps as a safety precaution should the house ever been over taken by enemies. I don't know what crazy thoughts my ancestors had. Anyway, we were glad they had been made. It made getting round the house much easier when we were younger and didn't want to be seen.

We walked via the rafters down to the dining hall, where all the adults were talking. There was a definite split between the Slytherin parents and the Gryffindor ones, but I did notice Lily talking to Mrs Zambini, which was nice. Moving our gaze away from the chatting adults below Harry noticed a small basket of eggs tied to the main support beam. We frowned. The basket was just a little bit too far out of our reach. We'd have to jump.

Now, first let me say that this isn't something to try at home, skilled wizard or not because when we did decide to jump we missed the beam coming down. As I'm sure you can imagine, a child falling from the ceiling isn't an everyday occurrence, not even in the Wizarding World. Harry managed to cast a cushioning charm before we hit the ground. I may have been a little bit preoccupied counting the four eggs in the basket to worry about hitting the floor.

Lily, James, Sirius and the other parents stared at us in silent shock as we sent them a small smile and walked out the room. Or, at least, we tried to walk out the room. Lily managed to overcome her shock a moment before we could escape through the door.

"Stop right there, young man!" Lily barked, her voice loud in the silent hall. We turned to her and I tilted my head.

"Yes Lily?" I smiled innocently, holding our basket of eggs to our chest. Before Lily could break into her rant about 'reckless behaviour' that I knew was coming Sirius burst into laughter, grinning at us.

"That was brilliant! How did you get into the hall and up into the rafters without any of us noticing you?" Sirius wanted to know.
Realising that giving away our little secret about the rafters would seriously restrict our movements around the house and spoil any pranks we had planned, Harry just gave our brother's godfather a secret smile.

"Notice-me-not charms go a long way provided you have the concentration to keep them up."

Leaving everyone to ponder on that line, we snuck out the door and broke into a sprint heading for the gardens. Once out there it didn't take us long to hear the shouts coming from the old oak tree that stood by the little pond. Fred and George were already up the tree, with Charles and Ron trying desperately to get past the anti-climbing wards the two prankster twins had placed round the trunk. Laughing at the pair's failed attempts, I ran at Charles, using him as a ladder to reach the fork in the tree. Charles fell to the floor of course, but I managed to get into the tree and keep all our eggs safe. Charles gave me a dirty look, and I grinned at him, offering a hand. After getting Charles into the tree I quickly clambered up to where dozens of eggs were tied to branches. Fred tried to cast a ward to keep us out, but Harry brushed it aside. Winking at the pair, I started collecting eggs.

"So," I started conversationally. "How many have you two got so far?"

"Six each." George replied with a grin. "Plus what we can get from here, you?"

"Before we got into the tree we had seven. The House Elves always put a few in the library and rafters, just in case we want to join in." Harry explained after their incredulous looks. We took three from the tree before jumping down. I bent our knees to absorb the force of the impact, winked up at the twins again, and then set off to find Draco.

When we found Draco he was with Blaise and Theo. They were rummaging through the flowerbeds for the chocolaty treats. Judging from the six eggs between them, I figured they weren't doing so well.

"Hey!" I grinned at our friends. "How's it going?"

"Not great." Draco admitted glumly. "Two eggs each. You?"

I winced, feeling bad. "Ten. We'll share though. Ten is a bit much for us to eat on our own…"

Draco nodded, but didn't verbally accept the offer, not yet. Blaise and Theo didn't either. I got it though. They wanted to find the eggs themselves. Given at home pretty much everything was handed to them on a silver platter, this was a prize they could work towards, and it would be all the better because of it.

Harry smiled slyly at them. "Have you checked inside yet?"

Five minutes later we were down in the kitchens, where several small pans had been filled with the chocolaty treasure we were hunting for.

Happy that our friends were back in the game, we lead the way back to the gardens, reaching them just in time for James to declare the hunt over.

I grinned at Draco and the others as we waited for the others to arrive. The Weasley twins definitely had been the most successful, but they almost always were (I mean, they weren't exactly above stealing from Ron and Charles). Lily, upon catching sight of us, gave Harry and me a 'you're-in-for-a-lecture-later' look. We paled, and ducked behind Draco.

"Harry, Percy? What have you done now?" Draco laughed. Harry gave him a pleading look.
"Well… We may have jumped to get some eggs when we were in the rafters in the hall and then missed the beam on landing…" Harry explained.

Theo and Blaise laughed. "If Lily's as overprotective as my parents you are in for quite a scolding."

"Help me?" I begged. Draco just chuckled. Then he stiffened as Lucius approached. The tall blond aristocrat nodded at Draco.

"Are you ready to leave soon?"

Draco and we exchanged looks. We didn't want him to leave just yet! Harry, thinking quickly, addressed Lucius as politely as possible.

"Mr Malfoy, aren't you staying for the barbeque?"

James, who had seen what was going on, wandered over, his usually grinning face slightly serious. He stood behind us, putting a hand on our shoulder.

"Lucius, let the kids have some fun. I understand if you and your wife need to be somewhere, but we would be delighted if Draco could stay a little while longer. Also, some of Charles' friends are sleeping over tonight. We'd love it if Draco could stay a little while longer. Also, some of Charles' friends are sleeping over tonight. We'd love it if Draco would as well." James said and we could hear the tightness in his voice as he tried to stay civil and not break into an argument with the blond pureblood.

Draco and Harry and I gave Lucius a pleading look. The older man sighed, but smiled a little. "Very well. But I expect you back before midday, Draco. Don't stay up all night and get up at a respectable time, understood? Sloth is an admirable characteristic, and isn't befitting of a Malfoy."

"Yes Father." Draco beamed.

When Lucius and Draco's mother Narcissa had left, James turned to Theo and Blaise with a wink. "That offer goes for you boys as well; any friend of Harry and Percy's will always be welcome in this household."

Harry and I smiled at James. A genuine happy smile. That's not to say that we haven't every genuinely smiled at him before, but it's one of the few times. "Thank you… Father."

James looked at us in shock for a moment or two, then he grinned. "Well then, run along Son. I'm sure you've more than enough chocolate to eat."

That we did. We hoarded all the chocolate we had collected together, coming up with a good thirty Easter eggs between us. Charles approached us as we sat on the steps eating it, a broad smile on his face. There was mischief in his eyes, something that immediately set Harry and I on edge.

"Ok, what are you planning?" We asked, worried for a moment.

"Do you want to prank James and Sirius again?" Charles offered. "Because they just stole all my chocolate and I want to get back at them."

Charles pouted, and we all laughed. We looked at each other and nodded. "We're in, what do you need us to do?"

"Well…" Charles smirked. "Fred, George, Ron and I are causing a distraction. Given you four are the best at spell work in the year, we want you to…"
Charles outlined his plan. We all grinned maliciously. Slytherin's did like pranks, contrary to most beliefs. We just didn't like them being used against us. A mere minute after Charles finished explaining his plan a loud BANG sounded from within the manor. It would appear the plan was put into motion without us. Charles ran off to go help the Weasleys, and we followed at a slower pace, searching for our targets. As we walked we discussed the best spells to get the desired effect. Luckily we had just decided upon which spells to use when we rounded a corner and was faced with James and Sirius trying to put out a waterproof fire that the Weasley twins had conjured. It was contained not to spread, but the two men were trying desperately to put it out. I guessed it was a spell the ginger twins had invented, as neither James nor Sirius knew the counter to it.

Grinning at the distraction, we got to work layering spells on the two men. They were all timed, so they wouldn't notice what had happened straight away, and Harry included some more little back up spells, in case anybody but us for tried to remove the charms. Once finished, we shot tiny gold stars into the air to signal to the others that our work was done. Immediately the fire died down, revealing two twins wearing Cheshire cat grins on the other side.

"My, my, Sirius, you don't look too good." One of the twins, who I think was Fred, said with a smirk. James turned to look at his old friend. Sure enough, Sirius was spelled completely green. His hair, skin, clothes... nothing was untouched. As for James, he was similarly spelled silver. Harry and I sniggered with Draco as they stared at each other in surprise.

James turned around to face us, mock anger in his eyes. "Was this you, little snakes?"

"Us?" We all widened our eyes into a look of perfect innocence. "You wound us, father dear. After all, Charles was the mastermind."

Charles stepped out from behind a bush as we spoke his name, causing James and Sirius to turn their backs to us. We broke into laughter again at the sight of the snakes that now decorated the ex-Gryffindor's backs. They were quite literally now, walking, talking Slytherin mascots.

As I'm sure you can guess, Mrs Zambini and Mr and Mrs Nott were greatly amused at our spell work, congratulating the four of us. After having to listen to her husband and his friend beg for the past five minutes Lily cast a 'finite incantatum'. Unfortunately for James and Sirius, the spell didn't work. Instead, the front of their shirts started flashing the words 'Slytherin's Rule'. Not very original, I know, but hey – it did work to further humiliate the old Lions. Lily just laughed when her spell didn't work, and suggested they go talk to us about getting it removed.

If took a good hour before the proud Lords managed to bend their pride enough to ask us for help.

"Ok, boys." Sirius pouted. "Jokes over, please can you take away the spells?"

We smirked, nodding at Charles. "You stole Charles' chocolate, so this was his revenge plan. Sorry, but it's up to him, not us."

It was thoroughly amusing watching two of the Marauders beg Charles for forgiveness, giving him back his chocolate. Charles did, eventually, forgive them, and told us to get rid of the spells. Grinning, we grabbed a couple of raw chicken eggs from the kitchens and through them at James and Sirius. Where the egg touched the spells wore off, eventually leaving two egg splattered men behind.

Sirius looked delighted at the idea of using eggs to remove the spells. "Brilliant! How come we never thought of that?"

As our original impression of the day had been – it was a good day. The best part, however, was
definitely introducing Draco to muggle burgers. Blaise had eaten some before, and Theo had too when they had gone on a day trip to London. Draco looked disgusted at the very thought of putting a slab of steak in a bun and then eating it with his fingers. I swear, his expression is something I will remember in years' time. It was priceless!
Chapter 17

A boy stood at his bedroom window, his dark hair still messy from sleep. He wore pyjamas that were far too small for him, decorated with tiny little snitches and broomsticks. The boy was young, maybe six years old, but his eyes looked older, much, much older. They were a clear emerald, and were clouded with sorrow as he watched the scene outside.

Another boy, and identical copy of the boy at the window was laughing with an older man, presumably their father. The man was tall, and had the same messy black hair as the twins, however his eyes were a warm hazel rather than green. Otherwise the two twins could have been a clone of their father, having his bone structure and sharp features.

The boy outside was riding a small broomstick, laughing as his father chased him round the field. After a while his father disappeared for a little while. While he was gone, the six year old on the broomstick sat on the ground, looking around. He caught sight of his twin by the window and a frown flitted across his face. For a moment, the two twins had the exact same look in their eyes; a dull pain brought on by recognition. The boy in the field said one word. A name. Of course, his twin could hear it, being too far away and shielded behind a glass wall, but he could guess which name it was. His name. Harry.

Harry whirled around as his bedroom door opened. A red-haired woman with emerald eyes and a warm motherly expression stood behind it. Her eyes darkened with annoyance as she caught sight of the boy's bedroom. Small, childish painting were drawn onto the walls near the floor. Of course, in her annoyance that they were there in the first place she failed to notice that they moved. She brought out a willow wand and waved it. The pictures vanished, much to Harry's dismay.

But the boy didn't say a word, he just stared at his mother with large, sad eyes and let a lonely tear trickle down his face. He mouthed a word, unwilling to utter it out loud but still desperate to say it. 'Mother.' Such a simple word that to a child meant so many things. It meant love and security and help. It was a person that meant the world to a child, if only they were there to earn that title.

Lily Potter was a distant figure to little Harry. He craved her attention and wanted her to notice him so much and yet she only seemed to have eyes for the achievement of his brother. Lily beckoned her youngest son impatiently.

"Well, Harry? Are you coming to breakfast or not? I called for you ten minutes ago. Come on!" Lily snapped, obviously tired and distracted by something. Whatever it was, Harry didn't want to find out. He walked silently over to her and followed Lily down to the dining hall.

Harry sat down silently in his reserved seat, opposite where his brother would sit. It didn't fail to escape his notice that neither his father nor his brother were at the table either. But if he got upset for every time that this happened to him, Harry would have frown lines before he was ten. But he was used to it by now, and just sat there waiting for the rest of his family to come back.

After a while a slight change overcame little Harry. His straight posture seemed to suddenly slump, and yawned as if he was very tired. If you looked closely enough you could see his eyes were a slightly different shade of green – more of a sea-green than emerald now. Somehow, despite his tired and relaxed posture, he also looked almost as if he was more on edge, ready to get up a flee should he need too.
Just then Harry's father and brother walked in, laughing.

"You should see Charles fly, Lily-Flower." Harry's father James crowed. "He's a natural!"

Charles sat down opposite Harry. "Hey Percy."

Harry – or 'Percy' now – beamed at his brother. "Hey Charles. We watched you today, you were really good!"

"So that's what you were doing." Lily said, giving Harry a disapproving look. "Next time you could actually come when I call and give me a hand round here! And don't slouch at the table! Dear Merlin, you think we'd raised you in a barn…"

Percy looked down at his plate and didn't say a word. Of course, this just riled up Lily and his father even more.

"Harry, reply to your mother when she's talking to you!"

Percy gave Charles a pleading look. Charles nodded, and frowned at their parents. "He's Percy, not Harry. Can't you tell the difference?"

"No, enough!" Lily shouted, running a hand through her hair in exasperation. "I can't deal with this anymore! You are Harry. Just Harry, and nobody else. For Merlin's sake, boy, grow up!"

Percy and Charles looked at their mother in dismay and hurt. Charles even looked furious at the way they were yelling at his brother. He opened his mouth to say something but Percy shook his head. He still didn't utter a word, he just stood up from the table and walked calmly out of the room, leaving his plate untouched. It was only when he reached the door that Percy turned around to look at his shocked parents.

"We're sorry that we can't be who you want us to be, Lily."

Those words where the first that either Harry or Percy had spoken to their parents in months. Usually they just spoke to their brother, the one person in the house who could still understand him. Lily and James used to too at one point. They could accept that they were two people and still their son. But, as they grew up, their parent's got more and more frustrated with them, claiming that Percy didn't exist.

Percy left the room, leaving his parents to stare after them in shock. Sometimes there was just no point in arguing back. Harry and Percy had long since accepted that not everybody could see the world in the way that they did, and decided that sometime the best course of action was just to walk away, happy knowing that they were right even if other's couldn't see that.

Despite not eating breakfast, the small six year old boys decided that they just weren't hungry, and headed outside, towards the woods that lay at the far end of the field that Charles and James often flew in.

From the outside the woods looked dark and ominous, leering down at the little six year old as they approached the treeline. Finger-like twigs reached towards them, pulling the boy through the prickly border and into the familiar woods beyond.

Light filtered through the green leafy canopy above, washing the forest in a warm light. Wood nymphs immediately gathered round them as they walked down the invisible path to their little private clearing. Along the way little glowing fairies floated by, and mushroom shook as they sang their welcome. Centaurs trotted past, regarding Harry and Percy as one of the Forest, not a Wizard
and the spawn of everything wizards' had done to them. Satyrs hung back in the shadows, watching them and making sure they were safe.

When Percy reached the clearing he drew to an abrupt stop at the sight of five men, sitting around in the clearing. They had rough beards and tatty long hair, as if they hadn't shaved or properly showered in a long time. Their clothes were thread bare and patched up in so many places that they were practically made up of patches of different materials. Their fingernails were muddy and hooked like claws, much like their toenails on their shoe-less feet. Sharp fangs peeked out from under their lips as they chatted with one another.

As Harry and Percy's smell reached them the men turned around to face them, cautiously sniffing the air. They blinked in surprise at the sight of the young boy dressed in his pyjamas, surrounded by woodland creatures. From the river that ran by the edge of the clearing three naiads emerged, watching the scene and casting warning glares at the men.

"Who are you?" Percy asked curiously. "And what are you doing on the Potter estate?"

"See Liekos?" One of the men snapped. "I told you it was private land."

Another man grunted. He was the tallest of the lot, with a lot of bulky muscle and an almost overbearing aura of authority. "We're werewolves. We're here because of the full moon last night. Since we don't have territory to call our own, we tend to travel around a lot. I apologise for our trespassing onto Potter Land last night."

"Oh, that's fine." Percy waved off Liekos' excuse cheerfully much to the werewolves' surprise. "Our Uncle Moony is a werewolf too. Our fa-"

Percy cut off, and looked down at his feet. When he looked up, his eyes had shifted colour again, returning to the emerald that they had been when they woke up.

"James and Uncle Padfoot use their animagus forms to make his 'furry little problem' seem less stressful and to keep him company. I'm sure James will understand if you wish to stay here for a few more days to rebuild your strength. Either way, I won't tell him you were here if you prefer." Harry continued from Percy, ignoring the strange looks he was receiving from the werewolves.

"You and your father don't get along an awful much, is that is?" The first werewolf to speak asked, his voice low and comforting.

"No." Harry shook his head. "It's not that. It's just that… well, when your brother is Charles Potter it's impossible to even appear semi-perfect in your parents' eyes, no matter how hard you might try."

"Charles Potter has a brother?" It was the shortest of the wolves that spoke next, tilting his head.

Harry smiled at the movement before a sad look replaced it.

"Oh I'm not just his brother." Harry said in a quiet voice. "I'm his twin."

Before the werewolves could ask any more questions the Naiads intervened, stepping between them. "Enough questions. I believe our young lords are required back at the house by now. Your brother is considering coming in after you."

The last part of their warning was directed at Harry and Percy, who nodded absent-mindedly. "Indeed, I can imagine him doing that. Somehow, however, I can't see the centaurs being too happy with him entering the woods… Good day, sirs. I hope we meet again sometime."

"Wait!" Liekos called as they turned to leave. Harry looked back over his shoulder, raising one
eyebrow questioningly. "May we have you name? And why do they call you young lords?"

"We are Harry and Percy Potter. As for why they call us young lords… you know, we've never actually asked. We always assumed it was something with James being Lord Potter." Harry explained, an unconcerned smile on his lips. "Don't question so much. Everything makes so much more sense if you just accept the most obvious reason to be the right one."

With that wise word of advice Harry began the slow trek back through the forest. He dawdled a little, not wanting to leave the cool shade of the trees and the delightful company of the nymphs and faeries.

Sure enough, Charles trying to fight his way through the thick forest of thick twigs and branches to get into the woods when Harry reached the edge of the trees. The same wooden fingers that had drawn him into the woods were now clinging to his clothes in an attempt to keep Harry and Percy inside the magical woodland.

"Charles!"

Sea-green fought with emerald as Percy addressed their brother. Eventually their eye colour settled on something in between as they shared control. They ran forward and embraced their brother, hugging him tightly. Charles laughed and hugged him back.

"Oh Harry and Percy! Are you ok? You've been gone for hours, and you missed lunch. Mum's worried about you and Dad's really angry!" Charles told them with a warm concerned glint in his eyes.

Harry and Percy sighed. "James is always mad at us."

"Why don't you call him Dad, or at least Father?" Charles asked, upset.

Percy tilted their head to one side. "They don't see us as their son, not all of us. How can they be our parents if they can't accept us for who we are?"

"Harry James Potter!" James' loud angry voice boomed at them as the tall man strode towards the brother's with a quick pace. "You are in big trouble young man. I've told you before not to go into the forest, especially not alone. And what do you do? You go off into it for hours alone. You are grounded for a month!"

Fury filled Harry and Percy. It just wasn't fair! Charles was allowed to do whatever he wanted to and if he needed company than both Lily and James would be more than willing to go with him. So why were all the rules different for them? Life was just so unfair!

They opened their mouth to voice some of their mutinous thoughts but James interrupted them before they could. He grabbed their upper arm hard, too hard. Harry could tell that it was going to bruise, and it would all be James' fault. But there was still a level of shock. Their parents might shout at them, but they'd never physically hurt them. Not like this.

Still trying to come to terms with what was happening Harry and Percy allowed their father to drag them to their room without a fuss. They were all but flung into the room.

"You are going to stay here for the rest of the month, understand? You may leave to visit the bathroom, and to join us for mealtimes but otherwise you're not allowed to leaving this room. If you want a book, send for a house elf to get it. And you won't be seeing Charles during that time, either. Your mother and I don't want you to rub your bad habits off onto him." James snapped. Almost immediately he realised that perhaps he had been a little too harsh and a flicker of guilt stirred in his
hazel eyes. But Harry and Percy didn't see the guilt. There were to overcome with hurt that their father would do this. Did he not want them or anything?

James left, locking the room, and leaving Harry and Percy alone with their tortured thoughts. Each thought built up more and more worries. Maybe James didn't want them to be part of his perfect little family. Maybe they'd be better if they'd just forget him. Maybe Charles really would turn out to be a better boy if he didn't remember them. Maybe… Maybe…

Finally all their worries exploded in one massive wave of accidental magic, locking away all memories of Harry and Percy in their parents and brother until the time was right and they could accept Harry and Percy for who they truly were…

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Percy's Point of View

I woke up in tears, our entire body shaking with sobs. The memory of that day was fresh in my mind. Harry was still asleep in the depths of his own sweet dreams. He didn't remember that day. He didn't remember that terrible mistake that we made. That one tiny slip that ruined years and years of our life. It had been blocked away in our memory, just like we had been locked away in the memories of the rest of our family. But recently… recently it was just another nightmare among the many of that evil voice and the hordes of monsters that plagued our mind.

A light touch to our shoulder shocked me, and I instinctively curled into a tight ball. I heard a soft sigh.

"Percy. I know that it's you awake. It always is isn't it? That's why you aren't such a morning person." Draco whispered to me through the darkness. Another sob wracked our body.

"Yeah, it's me." I whispered back in a shaky voice. "Do you ever feel… do you ever feel that if you could keep the nightmares at bay that you could finally dream of something nice? Of something sweet and untroublesome?"

"I… I don't get nightmares." Draco admitted in a low voice. I let out a shaky laugh. Huh. I sounded a little mad.

"You're lucky." I snorted. "But I have to try. If I can put up with the nightmares, then Harry won't have too. He can just go on dreaming of the good things, dreaming of things that he then shares with me in the morning, chasing away the demons within. See? I can keep him happy and sane, then he can help me too, when I feel most down in the morning."

I could almost hear Draco smile, despite the fact it was too dark to see past our nose. The bed dipped as he sat on it and lay down next to us. I felt his warm arms embrace us in a soft hug, much like Charles used to before we made him forget… before we blocked his memories of us.

"Percy… Harry wouldn't want that. I'm sure if he knew he'd be grateful for what you're doing, but he'd also want you to sleep well. You're no use to him sleep deprived and too exhausted to think. Do you want to talk about your nightmare?" He offered in a soft voice. I smiled. Draco was always so kind to us. He was a good big brother. It's a pity he was an only child.

Shaking our head to clear my random thoughts away I sighed. "Not now. It's still too fresh, too deep. It was more of a memory anyway."

I could feel sleep beginning to tug at the corners of my consciousness as I basked in the warmth of Draco's comforting embrace.
"What was the memory about?" I could only vaguely hear Draco, and for some reason I felt compelled to give him an answer.

"Oh nothing much really. It was the one and only time Harry and I really slipped up with our control over our magic." I yawned, falling deeper into the abyss of sleep. "It made our family what it is today."

The sweet warm darkness took me before I could slur out anymore words and spill anymore information that I'd really prefer to keep a secret. Before I could admit exactly what our slip up did to our best friend and brother.
The remainder of the holiday had passed without incident. When I had woken up the night after Easter Draco was curled up in bed beside us. Percy was still asleep, so when I asked Draco why he explained that he had had a nightmare and Percy had talked to him after it. Apparently they had ended up falling asleep afterwards. To be honest, I'm not sure if he was telling the truth. His eyes were filled with more concern than horror at the mention of 'his' nightmare. But I didn't want to call him out on it. Whatever had happened was to stay between him and Percy, and I'm fine with that. Sometimes it's nice to have a secret that not even your brother knows…

Going back to school after the Easter holiday's almost felt like going home. I think I can say both Percy and I felt kind of guilty for saying it, but it was true. As much as we love Potter Manor and our parents and honourable uncles, Hogwarts was just that and more! The exam season began in earnest, but (at least for us) that wasn't something to be too bothered about. We seemed to breeze through the majority of our exams.

Of course, as everyone else was revising, it was the perfect opportunity to research into Nicolas Flamel and the Philosopher's Stone. There wasn't much to be said about the Philosopher's Stone, given that only Flamel and Dumbledore have studied it, so all the books pretty much told us the same thing; it could create gold and could produce the elixir of life. So that was a waste of time. It would appear, if we were to find anything about this stone we would have to follow Percy's preferred plan of action; steal it and exam it ourselves.

We planned to steal during the first week of June. As it worked out, on the fourth day of the month, a rumour spread round the school that Dumbledore was out of the castle after being summoned to the Ministry. At break time we visited our godfather, who confirmed the rumour. Knowing that we had limited time, Percy feigned feeling sick in Charms. Flitwick immediately sent us to the Hospital Wing with our brother, telling us to get well soon.

"Thank you Charles, I'll deal with this now." Madam Pomphrey dismissed Charles after we had been seated on a bed. When the door was shut she turned and gave as a disapproving look. "There's no point lying to me, Mr Potter. I can see you're not ill, and you most certainly don't have a temperature. I don't know what you're up to, but I'm guessing it's not to do with schoolwork."

I hesitated before deciding to tell her a part truth. "Well, you see Madam, we know about the Philosopher's Stone. Charles found out first, and then he told us in an information exchange. Except… well, they think someone's trying to steal it. Charles thinks that it's Professor Snape trying to steal it, but we're not so sure. We wanted to warn Professor Dumbledore but –"

"He's not currently here." Madam Pomphrey nodded, but didn't relinquish her disapproving look.

"Anyway," Percy continued. "Given that we believe someone is trying to steal the Stone, and Dumbledore has suddenly been summoned away from the Castle, we believe that, if someone is going to steal it, it will happen tonight. We wanted to warn someone, but we didn't know who. As our godfather wouldn't approve of us getting involved, you understand, we thought you might."

"Indeed." Madam Pomphrey's expression softened, but she still looked sceptical. "I will send word to the Headmaster. In the meantime, however I suggest you get back to your lesson."
Reluctantly, we left the Medical Wing, and headed in the direction of Charms before doubling back and heading for the Forbidden Third Floor.

The door at the end of the hall was locked, but that wasn’t anything a simple ‘*alohomora*’ couldn’t fix. We froze at the sight of the massive dog that lay within. He was no doubt an offspring of Cerberus, the three headed dog of the underworld. I steeled my nerves, feeling Percy doing the same, and we stepped through the doorway.

Immediately all three heads let out low menacing growls, eyeing us up as if we were a tasty snack. Remembering the old myth about Orpheus and his visit to the underworld, I transfigured a broken quill we had stored in our pocket into a flute. Raising the gleaming silver instrument to our lips, I began to blow, playing a soft melody. Slowly, the growling died down and the three heads began to yawn, struggling to keep their eyes open.

As soon as Fluffy was firmly asleep, I took a brief break in my playing to open the trap door that lay between two of the dog’s heads. A soft whine warned us that the child of Cerberus was waking up, and I quickly dropped down through the trap door.

We landed on something soft. At first, Percy praised Merlin that we hadn’t fallen further and broken our necks. But, alas, why would it ever be so easy? Especially with our luck… The plant began to move, gripping us in a stranglehold.

Um… Harry. What do we do now? Percy asked, tugging at one creeping vine that was tightening around our legs.

Think… come on think! What is this plant…? I cast my mind back to last term’s Herbology lessons. What plants did we cover? Chrysoplenium Oppositifolium… no, that was a mountain plant. Craterellus corncopoides? Urk! No! That’s a mushroom. Come on Harry, think! I muttered to myself. Finally it struck me, just as the creepers were closing in round our neck. Devil Snare! Of course! We need fire.

Have you ever tried wandlessly summoning fire? If you haven’t, then take a word of advice from me; don’t. It took us almost too long and so much energy to gather even the smallest of flames. I suppose it was probably something to do with our preference to water that made it hard. If you’re summoning something that isn’t your element, do it with a wand to help!

Anyway, rant over. After we managed to summon the fire the plant cringed away, fleeing into the shadows. Quickly, we got up and headed for the old oak door that stood in the corner of the room.

Can you hear that? Percy asked suddenly. It sounds like… wings?

I opened the door to reveal a large room, full of these strange fluttering objects. At first glance, I took them to be birds, but under closer inspection they turned out to be winged keys, fluttering around. A broomstick stood in the middle of the room, so I assumed to pass through the next door we had to catch the right key. Talk about a needle in a haystack!

Never the less, Percy inspected the door. Hum… I guessing it’s big and old-fashioned. Most likely silver like the handle.

I nodded, taking on board his observations. We scanned the hundreds of keys, until Percy eventually managed to spot the right one.

Found it!

Where?
See that glint of silver, hiding away behind that beam?

Got it!

I fixed our gaze on the key and grabbed the broom. Almost immediately the keys stopped their graceful swooping around and began zipping frantically round the room, making it next to impossible to keep sight of the silver key we needed, let alone get close enough to catch it.

Fifteen minutes later, however, we had the right key safely in our palm, being careful not to damage the wings and unlocked the door. Percy grabbed the key as we walked through the door. It turned out to be a good thing that he did. The door clicked shut and shortly after a heavy thump followed as it re-locked itself.

Well aware that there was no other way but forwards we quickly pocketed the key and stepped into the room to get a clearer look at what lay within. We didn't have to quint into the darkness for very long however, because no sooner had we stepped into the middle of the room than it lit up torches lining the walls spontaneously burst into flame.

You know, I've decided that sometimes I really do hate Dumbledore. I grumbled to Percy as I took in our surroundings.

Familiar black and white chess pieces gazed stonily at us, their expressions cold and uncaring. The white pieces lay in front of us, the black behind. It would appear we had to play our way across the board. Our chess board. Stupid meddling headmaster. He couldn't have just asked to borrow it, could he? Oh no, he had to take it under the pretence of marking it. I knew he had been up to something…

After working it out that we had to take the place of one of the pieces, we replaced a knight, riding it's steed into battle.

Our pieces moved silently to where we sent them. Luckily we had managed to just about tame the game enough that the pieces on beat up and dragged their opponents of the board when taking them, rather than smashing them into little bits, but their game was still pretty violent.

It only took a few minutes for us to checkmate the white king. We had animated this game, and so it had a kind of loyalty to us, to our magical signature, and we knew the kind of tactics that the animated side would use, having created it. So all in all, that was pretty easy.

The first thing that hit us when we entered the next room was the dreadful stench. The next was a hard club to the head.

"Who dare's disturb me?" A gruff voice grumbled in the harsh language of the trolls.

"We… We're sorry, Troll of the Mountains. We didn't mean to disturb you. We just want to get past to the room beyond. A stone lies somewhere here, and we need to find it. We believe that someone seeks to steal it, and wish to keep it safe by 'stealing' it first." Percy apologised in the same tongue.

"Ah!" The troll grinned happily, sitting down next to us. "An educated wizard. It's been far too long since I met one of your type. The wizard with the strange purple head-robe put me here. Nasty man that one, I'd watch your back round him if you meet him. Very fond of sending red spells that stun you at the back of your head if you let him."

"We… we shall keep that in mind…" I grinned while Percy giggled in our head at the description of Quirrel's turban as a 'strange purple head-robe.' Easy mistake to make, I suppose, if you're not used
to seeing them.

Percy sobered up quickly as a thought occurred to him. "I say, we met another of your kin a few months ago. A lovely troll named Urnard. He said he'd wrestle with us, but our teacher stopped us before we could... Would you be up for a quick wrestling match?"

The troll grinned. "I haven't had a proper match in ages!"

I groaned, but let Percy have his wrestling match. Of course, it was over rather quickly. Percy did at one point almost gain the upper hand, but the Troll had years more experience and strength on his side. I moaned as our back hit the floor rather roughly.

"'Ah, good match.'" The Troll grinned. "'Come and visit again sometime, youngling.'"

"'We will, if we can.'" We promised with a grin before moving onto the next room.

All that lay in the next room was a table with seven bottle of different shapes and sizes lined up on it. Beside it was a roll of parchment lying next to the bottles. We stepped over the threshold to get a closer look. As soon as both our feet were firmly in the room a fire sprang up behind us in the doorway. The flames were strange, flickering purple rather than orange. In the same instant, black flames shot up in the doorway ahead.

Almost dreading what it might say, we picked up the parchment and read it:

_Danger lies before you, while safety lies behind,_

_Two of us will help you, whichever you would find,_

_One among us seven will let you move ahead,_

_Another will transport the drinker back instead,_

_Two among our number hold only nettle wine,_

_Three of us are killers, waiting hidden in line._

_Choose, unless you wish to stay here evermore,_

_To help you in your choice se leave you these clues four:_

_First, however slyly the poison tries to hide_

_You will always find some on nettle wine's left side;_

_Second, different are those who stand on either end,_

_But if you would move on forward, neither is your friend;_

_Third, as you clearly see, all are different in size,_

_Neither dwarf nor giant holds death in their insides;_

_Fourth, the second left and the second of the right_

_Are twins once you taste them, though different at first sight._

I groaned. Trust our godfather to leave a riddle and a dangerous game to play. It hadn't taken us long
to figure out that each test belonged to a different teacher's area of study. We were just glad we hadn't come across one for arithmancy or ancient runes yet.

Percy shook our head to clear both our thoughts and knock my attention back to the riddle. It wasn't hard. In fact, the riddle was almost incredibly simple. The smallest would bring us forward, and the bottle at the far right end would send us back. Perfect! Now to risk drinking the concoction…

Steeling our nerves once more, we gagged down the foul-tasting potion. Instantly a wave of ice seemed to flood our veins. We shivered, but quickly stepped though the black fire before its effects wore off.

Finally we stood in the final chamber. It wasn't much to look at. Just a large mirror stood in the centre, a ring of flickering flames bordering the room. Stepping closer, I looked into the mirror curiously.

We gasped. I saw Lily and James smiling at us and hugging us with Charles. Sirius and Remus and Severus were all there too, smiling down at us. The image in the mirror looked so perfect… Confused as to why it wasn't showing just our reflection however, we glanced at the inscription above the mirror.

Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi.

I blinked, taking a moment to puzzle it out.

Mirror writing! Such a marvellous creation. The translation was, of course: 'I show not your face but your heart's desire.'

So this is what we wanted most. A loving family. Behind our family I saw Draco and Blaise and Theo watching, grinning at us. And friends. Friends were so important in keeping us sane. Sometimes I really think I would die for them if I needed to.

A glint caught my eye in the mirror. Our reflection winked at us, pulling a glittering red stone out of its pocket before slipping it back. I felt a sudden weight in our own pocket. Curious, I reached in and brought out the Philosopher's Stone.

I'm not even going to pretend that I knew how that enchantment worked. But we had the stone! I grinned at our reflection before we turned our back on it and fled back to the everyday part of the castle. As it turned out, after we drank the potion to go back and stepped through the fire we reappeared outside the door in the Third Floor. Shrugging, I returned to the Slytherin Dorms and took an early night, sleeping though all the events that were yet to come…

When I woke the next morning I had a face full of Draco. He looked worried and a little bit scared. That in itself was terrifying. Draco rarely ever showed that much emotion. Especially 'weak' emotions like concern and fear.

"What is it, what's wrong?" I demanded.

Draco sighed, sending me a look that begged me not to over react. "Your brother's in the hospital wing. Rumour has it that he went to the Third Floor corridor last night to try and protect something. Another rumour has it that Quirrel's dead."

We stared at him in shock for a moment, not wanting to believe it. Then yet another thought hit us. "How do you manage to hear all these rumours before half the castle is even out of bed?"
Draco smirked, waving a letter in the air. All we could see of it was his father's signature at the bottom. "It pays to have good contacts, you see."

Much to our annoyance, we had to wait three days for Charles to wake up so that I could shout at him for being a stupid idiotic moron. Not that he wasn't always a stupid moron, but really? Going after somebody who he knew was probably dangerous and working for the Dark Lord, without any adult being aware of it?! Dear Merlin, he's lucky to be alive!

"Mr Potter you can't go in to see him, he's on bed rest!" Madam Pomphrey told us.

"He's our brother!" We practically yelled back.

"Professor Dumbledore is with him current-"

We cut of the Medi-Witch, pushing past her and into the medical wing. Our brother was sitting up in one of the beds, surrounded by piles of sweets and chocolate as he talked with Dumbledore.

"But the stone-"

"Ah yes, the Stone." Dumbledore frowned, then turned as he heard us all but running towards our brother.

"Harry, Percy…” Charles looked at us pleadingly.

"Of all the stupid and idiotic things you could do, Charles, you went down the trap door. What were you thinking?! I told you over Easter that you shouldn't worry about it. It wasn't your job to watch over the bloody thing!" Percy shouted at him. Dumbledore looked at us in surprise.

"You know about the Stone too?"

"Of course we do!" I huffed. "He's only our brother! Besides, we have more than enough blackmail material on him for a lifetime for times such as this."

"Look, Voldemort was going to get the Stone, can't you see that?" Charles tried to reason with us. We just glared at him.

"You think we didn't know that? You think we couldn't put the same clues together as you did in half the time? Why do you think we told Professor Flitwick we weren't feeling well, huh?" Percy snapped.

Charles looked thoroughly confused, but Dumbledore's eyes lit up.

"Ah, of course. You must have been the student Poppy told me about. The one who 'bunked lesson to warn me about a danger to the safety of the Stone'?"

We nodded curtly. "If you think someone's going to steal something then it stands to reason that you should steal it first."

Percy grinned at the shocked looks on Charles and Dumbledore's face. Charles was doing a pretty good fish impression.

"Bu- But you're the model student!" He protested.

We laughed. "Half-Slytherin, remember? Couple cunning with recklessness and you get a robbery."
We chucked the Stone to Dumbledore. "You might want to keep a closer eye on that, for future reference. I doubt Flamel would be so willing to entrust it into your care in the future if he thought it could be stolen so easily."
Chapter 19

Percy's Point of View

I couldn't help but crack up as we chucked the Stone to Dumbledore. He looked so confused it was hilarious. Even Charles, after he had gotten over the fact that he had gone after a Stone that wasn't there started laughing. Madam Pomphrey, who had previously been standing in the doorway, scowled at us.

"You lied to me." She said in an extremely annoyed voice. We winced inwardly. Rule number one of life lessons that we had learned very early on – never (and we mean never) annoy a Medi-Witch who is going to spend a lot of her time in the future healing you. It always ends badly. Always.

"Aye." I agreed in a quiet voice. "We did. But had we not, Quirrel could have stolen the stone for his master. Talk about a massive fail."

Her glare softened ever so slightly. "Well then, in this these unusual circumstances I will overlook you dreadful behaviour. Please do not put on a repeat performance or I shall not be as lenient. Professor Dumbledore, are you alright?"

"What? Oh yes, yes I'm fine Poppy. Don't mind me." Dumbledore flashed her a weak smile before turning back to us. "So boys. How did you get past all the challenges alone?"

We grinned. "Myths, schoolwork and the fact that you stole our chessboard."

"What?!" Charles squawked. "That was your chessboard? It beat the hell out of Ron when he let the Queen take him."

Harry winced and I grinned sheepishly at him. "We did tell you it had a few issues… But still! It… yeah. Sorry."

The Headmaster frowned at us. "And why didn't you return the Stone earlier?"

I retreated and let Harry do the talking for this one. It had been his plan after all…

"Well, you see Headmaster, we were a little bit more concerned about the end of our exams and our brother being here in the hospital wings… And then when we did go looking for you we couldn't find you…" Harry apologised.

The Headmaster sighed resignedly. "You studied it a little bit, didn't you?"

"Yep." Harry didn't try and deny it. "Fascinating stone, that's for sure. Did you know that the weird golden fluid it leaks can—"

"Wait, what? It doesn't just leak the Elixir of Life." Dumbledore interrupted. "You have to harvest it."

"Oh." We frowned. "Well, we were studying the magic woven into and around it when it began to leak. We collected the liquid if you want it."

Of course, we didn't give Dumbledore all of the strange liquid. We kept a few vials to study. Besides that, nothing really happened. We were put in detention for the remaining two nights before school
with our godfather, who had us scrubbing cauldrons until they shone. Yeah. He was mad at us.

The end of term feast was… interesting to say the least. The Headmaster certainly knows how to make enemies of Slytherin.

The Feast started as was to be expected, the hall decked out in silver and gold, as Slytherin's were far in the lead for the winning of the House Cup. Behind the High Table was a large Slytherin Serpent. It appeared that everything was set for them to win the House Cup for the Seventh year running.

From the corner of my eye I spotted Charles walking into the Hall alone, presumably after being fussed over by Madam Pomphrey giving him a one last check-up. A hush fell over the hall as he entered before everyone started talking loudly at once, whispering about the various rumours that had been spread. He slipped into a seat next to Ron and Hermione, blushing as he tried to ignore the various individuals standing up to look at him. I smirked at Draco who was sitting across from us.

'Oh the misfortunes of doing stupid or heroic things when your famous.' I commented to Harry who snorted in agreement.

The Headmaster arrived a few moments later and the babbled died away. He swept up to the High Table and turned to face us after reaching the top of the steps.

"Another year gone!" He announced in the most cheerful manner possible. I groaned at his enthusiasm. "And I must trouble you with an old man's wheezing waffle before we sink our teeth into our delicious feast. What a year it has been! Hopefully your heads are all a little fuller than they were… you have the whole summer ahead to get them nice and empty before next year starts…"

"Now, as I understand it, the House Cup here needs awarding and the points stand thus: in fourth place, Gryffindor with three hundred and twelve points; in third, Hufflepuff, with three hundred and fifty-two; Ravenclaw had four hundred and twenty-six and Slytherin, four hundred and seventy-two."

All around us Slytherins began to kick up a storm of cheering and stamping. Draco even went as far as to bang his goblet on the table. We just contented ourself with grinning wildly. However, Dumbledore's next words stilled our celebrations.

"Yes, yes, well done, Slytherin," Dumbledore said. "However, recent events must be taken into account."

Silence filled the Hall and we glared at Dumbledore, realising what he was about to do. Oh no. He had no right! The point system was for academic achievements!

"Ahem." The Headmaster cleared his throat, and I bit back a growl of annoyance. "I have a few last-minute points to dish out. Let me see. Yes…"

"First, to Mr Ronald Weasley for the best-played game of chess Hogwarts has seen in many years, I award Gryffindor House fifty points."

The Gryffindor's cheered the loudest out of the racket the other three houses kicked up. By now we weren't the only ones glaring at the headmaster.

'We made that stupid Chess Board ourselves from scratch!' Harry complained. I nodded, sharing his annoyance at being overlooked.

When silence finally fell again Dumbledore continued. "Second – to Miss Hermione Granger for the use of cool logic in the face of fire, I award Gryffindor House fifty points."
It took a while for the Lions to calm down again, but Dumbledore wasn't finished yet.

"Third – to Mr Charles Potter…" Dumbledore started. The room when deadly silent. "…for pure nerve and outstanding courage I award Gryffindor House sixty points."

Now there were cries of outrage from Slytherin mixed in with Gryffindor's deafening din. They were tied now. Dumbledore held up a hand, waiting patiently to be heard.

"There are all kinds of courage," Dumbledore said, smiling brightly. "If takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends. I therefore award ten points to Mr Neville Longbottom."

More than annoyed now, I stood up in an act of reckless anger, moments before everyone started cheering. The Headmaster blinked in shock as he saw us. We glared defiantly at him, ignoring the whispers. Slytherin was used to my Gryffindor side by now, but weren't used to seeing it in public. From the very edge of our vision I saw Professor Snape smile proudly at us before leaning over and whispering something into Dumbledore's ear. The Headmaster's face darkened for a moment before brightening as he remembered students were looking at him.

'Percy.' Harry called to me. 'Percy sit down. There's nothing you can do.'

Charles glanced at us, a strange look of anger in his eyes. I couldn't tell if he was angry at us or for us.

"Which means," he called over the thunderous noise, "we need a little change of decoration."

By now it was only Gryffindor and Hufflepuff cheering. Ravenclaw seemed to see the Slytherin's side of things and be offended by the discrimination that Dumbledore seemed to be showing against the Snakes. Draco grabbed a handful of our robes and pulled us down.

"I think you've made you're point Percy." Draco hissed. "However, I think the headmaster might've paid more attention if you'd been in Slytherin uniform, not Gryffindor.

The morning after the end of year feast was a rush of packing, exam results and goodbyes. After all the excitement over the stone we had all but forgotten about the exam results. From the whispers we heard from the Lions we gathered that they had been hoping Goyle would fail and drop out of school. Privately we agreed, but alas he had scrapped together just enough grades to pass. According to the board at the front of the hall (which listed the top ten in each year) we had come out on top of the year (surprise, surprise), shortly followed by Draco and then Granger. Theo had done abysmally in Herbology, but his flare in Potions had equalled it out. As for Blaise… he wasn't top, but he was above average with his marks. So, all in all, it hadn't been a bad year.

As we trailed down to the Dungeons to pack we were met by Professor Snape handing out notices warning us not to use magic over the holidays. We grinned as we overheard Flint proclaiming sadly that he'll always hope they'll forget to give us these' as he accepted his. I even caught our godfather's lips twitch slightly at that. It wasn't obvious to the untrained eye, but we knew Severus well enough to know when he was amused.

Suddenly, all our wardrobes were empty, our trunks were packed full and we were being rounded down to the little fleet of boats on the Lake so that Hagrid could sail us across the lake. Harry and I watched sadly as the pointy topped stone castle that we'd come to see as home disappeared from sight round a corner.

Next thing we knew we were boarding the Hogwarts express; laughing and joking with the rest as
the countryside blurred into neat green fields; eating Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans as we sped past Muggle towns; changing out of our robes and into the Muggle jackets and coats ready for when we reached the station. And then we were finally pulling into platform nine and three-quarters at Kings-Cross station.

As expected it took a while for us to get off the platform as we all hugged each other goodbye, promising to write and keep in contact. Then, when we had hugged and greeted Lily, James, Sirius and Remus, we also had to get passed the wizened old guard at the ticket barrier who was only letting people go past in twos and threes so not to alarm the Muggles. It would have been quite a funny sight, however, if a massive group of us burst out of a solid wall at once in front of a large amount of unsuspecting Muggles.

Instead of going straight home from the station James send our trunks on ahead before telling us that we were going to have a picnic at a local park before we head home. It was in muggle London, a place called Regents Park. It was a pretty place with a lake/river thing. We sat on a bench, eating our late lunch/early dinner as we watched the ducks and swans milling around in the water.

All good things must come to an end and no matter how much fun we were having watching Sirius chase Charles while James chased him, it had to end too. Unfortunately, it didn't end well. That is to say, it ended with a bit of a downer.

You see, this woman approached Lily, Remus and us as we sat on the bench, laughing at our companions. She didn't look particularly young, with grey streaked brown hair and a stern look. She made me think of that math's tutor our parents hired for Charles when he was eight. A right old witch that one had been.

"You've been giving us problems, honey." She said to Harry and me, ignoring the adults sitting on our left. We tilted our head at her.

"I'm sorry, Madam, I don't think we're met before." We said in reply. "You must have the wrong person."

The lady tugged at the cuffs on her leather jacket, sneering at us. "Did you really think you would get away with it?"

"Get away with what?" We wanted to know.

Lily noticed what was going on. "Excuse me, I'm not sure exactly who you think you are. My sons have just returned from boarding school, I think you must have the wrong person."

"Oh no, I can smell you. We aren't fools, Mr Potter, it was only a matter of time before we found you. Confess now and you'll suffer less pain." The lady growled. When we just stared at her she grew more and more angry. "Your time's up."

Her eyes began to glow in a similar fashion to the dying embers of a bonfire. As we watched in horror her fingers stretched into talons and her jacket melted into large leathery bat-like wings. Dear Merlin. This woman had just turned into a shrivelled hag with wings and claws and yellow fangs who looked like she wanted nothing better than to slice us up into a thousand little pieces.

We stared at her in amusement, and Harry pushed me aside to take control. That seemed to confuse the hag, as she sniffed the air and shook her head this way and that. Harry smiled sweetly at her. "Dear lady, if you're going to reveal that you're a Fury, please could you refrain from doing it in the centre of Muggle London? The Ministry have issues, you see, regarding the International Statue of Wizarding Secrecy…"
Lily stared at the Fury in horror, while Remus got out his wand, pointing it at her threateningly. She ignored Harry's advice and lunged at us. Remus cast a stunner at her, but the red spell just slipped right through her. I heard Remus curse and smirked.

'Harry.' I said.

'Not now Percy!' Harry snapped. 'We're kind of about to die!'

'No we're not.'

I pulled him back and our body dropped like a stone. I took over a fraction of a second later, rolling to the side as the Fury hit the bench where we had been sitting a moment earlier. I then reached into the top of our boot and pulled out a knife. It was a pretty gold colour, and the Fury hissed at the sight of it. Without a second thought I threw it, hitting her shoulder.

I swear, that's all I hit, her shoulder. It was no-where near her neck, or her heart. But the Fury just seemed to… disintegrate. She blew away as this yellow dust, leaving a nasty smell of sulphur in the air.

Harry mentally slapped me. 'Don't do that to me ever again you son of a Gryffindor!'

I chuckled. 'Harry. James was a Gryffindor. So was Lily. Therefore, your insult in invalid.'

"Harry and Perseus James Potter!" Lily snapped at us. "Care to explain why you had a knife in your boot? Hm?"

We paled, turning to face the furious red-head. James, who had heard the commotion, walked over to investigate exactly what was going on, Sirius and Charles trailing after him. He had his strict 'Auror' face on.

"What's going on? Lily?" He asked, looked between Lily and us and the knife on the floor. In the end it was Remus who explained.

"There was this old woman and she started accusing Percy and Harry of having done something, although she refused to explain exactly what. When they didn't confess she morphed into this winged hag-thing – a Fury – and attacked them. They dropped to the ground and rolled away. They pulled that knife out their boot and threw it. It hit the Fury in the shoulder and she exploded into yellow dust." Remus explained quickly. "Now Lily wants to know why they had a knife in their boot."

Sirius sniggered. "Oh, come on now Lily-flower. Can you really blame them for carrying a blade when they sleep in the Slytherin dorm?"

I narrowed our eyes at that. "Our friends as Slytherin's, thank you very much. Not all of them are back-stabbing cowards."

"Not all of them." Charles reiterated with a grin. "Come on Percy, you've got to admit – some of the older years fit that description perfectly."

We nodded. It was true. Take Marcus Flint for example – he was decent provided you were firmly on his good side. One slip and he wasn't above stabbing you where it hurts to get back at you.

"Alright. Well, let's get out of here." James decided, grabbing Charles. Sirius grabbed us and then apparated out of the park.
When we got back to the manner there was a surprise waiting for us in the form of a middle-aged man in a wheel-chair and a young boy of about our age on crutches standing outside dressed in muggle clothing. James, Sirius and Remus, already on edge from the Fury, immediately place Lily, Charles and us behind them as they eyed up the Muggles with suspicion.

"Who are you and how did you get onto our property? This is Private Land and you are trespassing, Sirs." James said in a stern voice, making the boy jump in alarm and turn around to face us. He was a scrawny kid with acne and the start of a wispy beard on his chin. He had curly brown hair and brown eyes. The man in the wheel-chair took a longer time to turn around, obviously hindered by the wheeled contraption he was sitting in. He had thinning hair and a scruffy beard.

"Ah, Mr Potter I presume? We've come to talk to you about your son, Perseus."

Immediately we pushed past the adults standing in front of us. I narrowed our eyes suspiciously at the man. He met our gaze evenly and we almost flinched at the ancient wisdom his eyes seemed to radiate. Then our vision blurred slightly, and we could see inside his wheelchair somehow. It appeared to have been magically enlarged to hold the rest of him. See, this man was a centaur.

"Firstly, how do you know that name, and secondly, why in the name of Merlin are you, a centaur, sitting inside a weird magical wheelchair?" I demanded. Remus practically growled at us as he pulled us safely back behind him. The boy standing next to the centaur kept sniffing the air and glancing worriedly at Remus. Remus, in turn, kept giving him strange looks.

"That boy smells of goat." He whispered to Sirius. Sirius, who kept some of his animagus traits as a human (such as his bark-like laugh) nodded in agreement.

"Something is off here."

"Is nobody going to ask for their names?" Lily commented in an exasperated voice. "I mean, really, have all your manners gone out the window?"

Stepping round James, Lily gave him a warning glare before smiling kindly at the Centaur and holding out her hand for him to shake.

"I'm Lily Potter. That territorial buffoon over there is my husband James and next to him are our good friends Sirius and Remus. Standing behind them are my boys, Charles and Percy." She greeted the pair. "May I ask who you are?"

The Centaur smiled back at Lily. "My name is Chiron and this is Grover. May we sit down to talk to you? This might be a bit of a long story…"

"Before we do sit down can you please explain why you are hiding the fact you're a centaur?" I begged.

Chiron laughed. "Now, young man, what makes you think that I'm a centaur?"

"The fact that we can see through your magically enlarged wheelchair is a bit of a giveaway you know..." Harry replied cheekily. "Oh, and please tell us you're not here to tell us something about the stars and fortunes. Because we've had enough centaurs talk to us about that and honest it just gives us a massive headache."

Grover stared at us wide-eyed. "You... your eyes change colour."

We rolled our eyes and smirked. "We know, thank you. But to business?"
Lily led us round the side of the house to a small patio with a table and some chairs set up. We had only just all taken a seat before the questions began. Harry and I just sat back and watched the scene unfold before us.

"So, what did you want to talk to us about concerning Percy?" Lily asked first.

"It's to do with his heritage." Chiron answered, looking distracted as he looked over us. "You're taking this very well."

Lily smiled. "I can deal with guests, thank you very much. May I presume you're not muggles since Ha- Percy called you a centaur?"

"Ok, one minute." Grover butted in, looked positively terrified from where he was sat next to Remus. "Can someone please explain to me why there's a werewolf sitting at the table?"

Remus looked insulted. "Werewolves are people too."

"Exactly! Anyway, how did you know Moony was a werewolf?"

"Shush Padfoot! As if that nickname doesn't give it away…" James groaned.

Chiron looked interested at this. "From our experience, werewolves are creatures that try to kill Satyrs like Grover and his fellow campers."

"Campers?" Lily echoed, confused.

Harry and I laughed. "Ok, as amusing as it is watching you all trip over yourselves, perhaps you should start at the beginning? That's generally the best place to start unless you want to create a massive confusing mess."

Chiron gave us an approving nod. "Alright. So. How many of you know about the Greek Myths?"

Harry and I nodded, as did Lily. Remus frowned in confusion before joining in. "You mean with the gods and demigods and monsters?"

"That's the ones." Chiron nodded. "Well, the gods are real. They live in the US now, as they move with the Western Flame, but occasionally they take trips aboard."

We frowned as Chiron gave us a pointed look. "Why are you looking at us like that?"

"Well, the gods sometimes have children with mortals. Half-blood children." Chiron said. Lily snapped, her anger sparking.

"Are you implying that I cheated on my husband, sir? Because I assure you that I most certainly did not." She spat. James put a hand over hers, whispering soothing words in her ear.

"I highly doubt you willing cheated on your husband. The gods can take many forms, you see." Chiron tried to rewind. We gave him a 'you-messed-up' look and smirked. Grover gave us a confused look. I switched control with Harry and gave him a wink.

"You ok, Grover?" I asked, tilting our head.

The boy shook his head. "Your scent keeps changing, it's really confusing. Sometimes it's faint, and then sometimes it's really strong, I just don't understand!"

"Scent?"
"Why don't you boy's get down and let the adult's talk a while?" Lily suggested.

"Lily, this concerns us to!" I complained.

Lily shook her head. "No arguments, Percy. Go unpack your trunk."

"Yes mum." Charles muttered sullenly.

"As her majesty demands." I replied sarcastically. "May I have my dagger back?"

"Percy you are already in a lot of trouble, don't make it worse. And if you think I'm letting you anywhere near the gym this summer you will be sorely disappointed." Lily snapped.

'Percy.' Harry warned. 'Just leave it. Lily's had a very trying day. Don't push her.'

Chiron strangely didn't look alarmed at the idea of an eleven year old carrying around a dagger. Neither did Grover for that matter. In fact, Chiron was curious for a completely different reason.

"Why did you confiscate his weapon?"

"Oh." I rolled our eyes. "There was this Fury at the park. I hit her shoulder with it when she was trying to kill me and she disintegrated. I didn't mean to kill her, but well," I shrugged, "things happen."

"Upstairs." James warned, throwing an intimidated look at Lily. "Now."

I rolled our eyes, but followed his instructions. Charles nudged our shoulder. "Dear lord, Percy. Is the insolent teenager phase kicking in already?"

"Shut up Charles!" I laughed. Then we both frowned. "She just called us Percy. Why not Harry?"

"Percy," Charles shook his head with a laugh, "You don't get twin souls in the Muggle world. She was just trying to keep things simple."

"But did you hear him? Chiron was implying we weren't fully your brother." Harry said quietly. "We don't want to believe him. You are our brother, Charles. No matter what. You and Draco. You're the only ones who can tell us apart."

"Oh, Harry…" Charles said. "I know that silly. Where related fully by blood or not, we are brothers. Don't ever forget that."

We parted ways to go unpack. It didn't take long, maybe half an hour tops and shortly after that we were back in the living room, listening into the conversation outside. A few minutes later Charles joined us.

"You mean to tell us that our son is a Demigod?" James was saying. "I'm sorry, but how is that possible? Percy's had blood tests before when he was… sick… when he was younger, and he is definitely our son."

There was a pause. "If the Fury's are after him, then there is no doubt. Besides, the mist hides our world from yours. Perhaps it changed the results to hide the fact he doesn't have DNA in the strictest sense."

Charles exchanged a look with us. DNA? What even was that? Sounded Muggle.

"Chiron –"
"Lily, please. If there is even the slightest chance that this is true… Percy could be in real danger. You saw the Fury earlier. There could be more." James said, sounding nervous. You didn't live with Lily Potter for over a decade without learning that arguing back against her was a bad idea.

Suddenly something grabbed us roughly by the collar and hoisted us up, carrying us outside. We squirmed and fought back, hearing Charles doing the same somewhere to our right. A familiar bark like chuckle sounded by our ear as we were sat down in the seat we had been in before.

"We caught a couple of eavesdroppers, didn't we Moony?" Sirius announced proudly.

We glanced up to see Remus grinning from where he stood behind Charles. "That we did, Padfoot. That we did."

To our surprise we were ignored as the conversation carried on. James was arguing for us to go to this camp, whatever it was, while Lily was arguing against it. Chiron was all for us going as well, apparently for our own safety. He was saying something about how the smell that we let off, as a Demigod, attracted monsters. The safest place for us was his camp because it had wards to prevent the monsters from getting in and attacking us. Furthermore, we could be trained to protect ourselves there. Something about the description rang a bell.

"Hold up." We butted in. "This camp of yours… is it near the sea by any chance? With a forest and a sandy clearing that you use for sword-fighting practice?"

Chiron gave us a look of mild surprise. "Yes, it's called Camp Half-Blood. Why, have you heard of it?"

"No." We gave him a carefully blank expression. "We've been dreaming of it. And there's this blond-haired girl too – Annabeth, and a guy, Luke."

For the first time since we'd met him I saw pure, genuine shock on Chiron's face. "You dreamed about camp? Demigod dreams are usually of something of importance, but I've never heard of anyone dreaming about camp. Or at least, not before they'd been there."

He turned out our parents. Lily looked slightly depressed, knowing that she'd lost the argument. She cupped one of our cheeks in a warm gesture, gazing intently into our eyes.

"Tell me the truth, Percy – do you want to go to camp? It's all the way over in America, and that's fine, we can arrange for you to get there, but do you really want to go? Because you don't have to, not if you don't want to. You're more than welcome to stay here with us." She sounded hopeful, as if she really wished for us to stay here. We gave Charles a desperate look.

"Charles, would you mind if we wanted to go?" We asked in a quiet voice. "We can't lose you. 'Not again.' I spoke the words quietly in my mind, putting all my fears and worried into those two words. I felt Harry hug me tightly.

'We won't lose him. He's our brother, remember? No matter what.' Harry said. I smile at him.

"Percy, if this is truly what you want to do, then I am more than happy for you. Just come back for me at the end of the summer, yeah? And make sure you write. I want to hear about everything. I'll even write and explain to Draco, Blaise and Theo where you've gone until you've settled in and are able to write to them yourself." Charles pulled a face at the offer, but his smile was genuine.

"Thank you." We hugged him tightly. Then we turned to Lily, looking her straight in the eye.
"We want to go to camp. We're not sure why, but nothing has ever felt as right as this does. It feels like we're supposed to be there. Just like Diagon Alley did when we first entered it last year. We're not going to run off and abandon you, Lily, we promise, but we need to do this." We tried to explain. Lily smiled at us, tears welling up in her eyes.

"Oh, my precious boy." She hugged us tightly to her chest, as if we were her lifeline. "Of course I understand. I just wasn't expecting you to go away so soon."

"Hey," Harry grinned. "We'll be coming back. It's just a Summer Camp, after all. Besides, as if we would give up our Schooling. Someone has to keep Charles under control at school. Merlin only knows that if there was a way to blow up the place he would find it if he walked about unsupervised."

Lily laughed, James joining in. Sirius and Remus exchanged looks.

"Like father, like son, wouldn't you say?"

"Definitely."

I turned back to Chiron, meeting his old eyes with conviction. "When do we leave?"

"Well, we flew here, but that isn't always the safest way for Demigods…"

James smirked. "If you fly back, we can get Percy over there. You just give me the details and I'll get him there by tomorrow. You're not the only one with a secret world, Mr Chiron. If you are, as Percy said, a centaur, I'm sure you've heard of your kin here in England."

"Indeed?" Chiron smiled. "I didn't realise we had a group of Witches and Wizards on our hands. Well then, I suppose we'll be seeing you tomorrow morning, won't we Percy?"

"I guess so." I replied with a smirk. "Have a good flight home, Chiron, and don't get too cramped in that wheelchair of yours."

We packed that night, making sure to pack a dozen or so of our favourite blades while James had Lily distracted. Various jeans and other muggle-styled clothes were then piled on top, along with various toiletries and swimwear. We ended up repacking several time before we were finally finished. Remus stuck his head round the door to remind us to bring our summer homework. Harry slapped our head at forgetting such important work.

'Dam!' I muttered. 'We almost had a legitimate excuse not to do it.'

'Oh, hardy har Percy. You know our godfather. No excuse is a legitimate one that doesn't include you nearly dying or breaking every bone in both your hands.' Harry retorted, and I conceded. Severus was strict when it came to homework.

When we finally fell asleep that night we dreamed of camp again. We were sitting next to Annabeth outside a ring of cabins, watching the sunrise. We grinned at the sight.

"Apollo's chariot is quite a sight, isn't it?" Annabeth murmured, almost to herself.

"Isn't it indeed?" We agreed. She turned to face us a small smile on her face. Just as I began to think that she was smiling at us, a new voice spoke up.

"You alright there Annie?"
"I sure am!" Annabeth smiled. "We'll have a new camper here by this evening."

"Oh?"

We turned to see Luke, who had sat down on the other side of Annabeth, grinning at her. Annabeth nodded wisely.

"Oh yes, the nargles told me."

"I'm guessing by that you mean you received news from Chiron." Luke interpreted.

Annabeth grinned, revealing her teeth. "Well, yes. Apparently this one's special. He's British, and isn't just a demigod, whatever that means."

We felt a slight tug as we started to wake up. We smiled on last time at Annabeth. "See you soon. Be prepared for things to change dramatically round here. Two sons of a Marauder are on their way."

We took one last look round the by-now familiar cabins. Next time we would be seeing them we would be awake, and would finally be able to talk to the people who slept in them. Watch out, people. We're on our way!
Chapter 20

Harry's Point of View

The sky was just tinged with the first pink rays of dawn when we woke. Our room was still dark as the sun began to clear the trees of the forest. Eager to be doing something we headed to the gym. Lily might have decided to ban us yesterday, but what could she do now? We would be heading off to camp in a few hours, so she couldn't exactly ground us. I animated several swords to attack us while Percy fended them off.

The first time Percy had persuaded me to help him with this training technique we ended up with a rather large cut down our back. It hadn't been a deep wound, but it had been enough for me to refuse to animate the swords for the next three months. But Percy slowly improved as his technique got stronger, and by now he could hold his own against three and sometimes four different swords.

It was James who found us, two hours later when the sun had properly risen, still training in the gym. By that time we had moved away from the weapons and were doing stretches to cool down. James grinned at us, noticing the small pile of swords on the floor. With a quick wave of his wand, each had returned to their proper place on the wall.

"I wouldn't let Lily catch you in here." James warned, catching our gaze. "She's still upset about that dagger."

Percy flashed him a crooked smile. "Well, we're leaving in a couple of hours anyway."

James snorted, but didn't reply. We did, however, catch an approving smile twitch at his lips. I guess the saying is true – like father, like son. Only, we're better than him because... well. We're half Slytherin aren't we?

Breakfast wasn't the typical loud and boisterous affair that we had gotten used to both at school and here in Potter Manor. Lily looked slightly upset as she tried her best to look happy. Unfortunately, we were all too used to seeing people wear masks after spending the majority of our time around the Snake House. Compared to our housemates Lily was wearing a transparent veil. We grinned at her and tried to crack a few jokes to lift her spirit. Charles joined in too when he finally emerged from bed, but that tiny hint of hurt still hung around in Lily's eyes. We felt a little bad, knowing we had put it there.

Severus came over shortly after breakfast, apparently having received a letter from James informing him we were going to a muggle camp for the summer. Our godfather didn't really say anything to us. He just hugged us tightly to his chest.

Severus pulled out of the hug to stare at us seriously. "You got your homework?"

We laughed, and Percy pulled a face. "Yes. Technically it's a muggle summer camp, but we'll make sure that we do it!"

'Harry!' Percy complained. 'Do we have to?'

'Yes!' I glared at him. 'You are getting lots of outdoor activity. Therefore, I get my studying.'

Charles pulled us away from our godfather. "You are going to write, you hear me? No matter what."
Percy grabbed him in for a hug. "We will. Expect weekly updates, ok?"

"I'm going to hold you to that." Charles warned us. We just smiled at him.

"Stay safe."

Lily and James hugged us next with even more warnings to stay safe and to write home. Sirius of course wanted us to cause mayhem at camp, while Remus to Severus' side and reminded us to have all our homework done.

We were handed a watch by James. Remarkably it was still working, providing an extremely accurate reading of the time. It was a gorgeous old thing with delicately carved hands and roman numerals for numbers.

"This will be your portkey there and back, understand?" James told us. "Keep it safe and on you at all times. It will bring you back on the twenty-fifth of August, to give us time to get your books and robes for next year. Don't lose it, ok? International portkeys are hard to get permission for, so getting you a replacement could be difficult. We only got this one on such short notice because the Minister owed me a favour."

We nodded in understanding as the hands of the watch ticked closer and closer to ten o'clock.

"Bye, you guys." We grinned. "See you soon!"

International Portkey travel is horrible. Normally you just have to deal with the terrible spinning and feeling of movement for a few seconds at most. Maybe you get a glimpse of the land you're travelling over. But when you are travelling great distances? It took us a full five minutes to get over the ocean. Five minutes of high-speed spinning shaking our brain into a befuddled mess.

When we finally landed we received a mouthful of mud and grass. It took a while for our vision to stop spinning. When it did we quickly buckled on our new watch and looked around. We were standing at the bottom of a hill, a pine tree perched neatly on the top. Curious we moved closer to take a closer look at the pine tree. It was different to any other tree we had ever seen before. A shimmering aura surrounded it, much like the aura of life around a witch or wizard. It was the spark of magic.

Like it had when seeing Chiron in his wheel chair our vision blurred before settling again. We gasped. Just inside the bark of the tree was a girl. She looked maybe a couple of years older than us with short choppy black hair and freckles across her nose. Similar to that like a long-distance runner she was lithe and strong. She wore a black t-shirt and black tatty jeans. Her leather jacket was decorated with band badges that we'd never heard of. Probably muggle, I reasoned.

Before we could investigate much more a loud bellowing noise came from the bottom of the hill. This time we were much more cautious when walking down to look at the large figure at the bottom of the hill. It – whatever it was – was easily seven feet tall, with extremely muscular arms and legs. He wore a dirty loin-cloth and that was it. A large axe was grasped tightly in his clenched fist. Starting at his belly button, bristly dark brown hair trailed up his frame, slowly getting thicker and more course as it moved up his chest to his head.

Its neck was a mass of straining muscle, and you only had to look a few centimetres further upwards to know why. His head was enormous, with a snout easily as long as our arm and flaring nostrils that gleamed with snot. A brass nose ring swung as the beast tilted his head up to the sky and bellowed again. As he lowered his head we managed to meet his cruel black eyes. We shuddered. This was not the kind of guy you'd like to meet on an empty road in the middle of the night. Well. Nobody
sane would want to anyway.

Percy startled me out of my thoughts with a sudden curse as his dived to the side to avoid the enormous, razor-sharp black-and-white horns that were pointed our way as the beast charged.

'Merlin's staff!' Percy cursed. 'Harry what is that thing? And what is it with these weird creatures trying to kill us?'

I hummed in agreement. 'I believe that is the Minotaur, son of Pasiphae. As for why he wants to kill us – can we work that out later?'

'Yeah! Right.'

Percy quickly opened our trunk and grabbed the goblin-made silver sword we had 'borrowed' from the gym. It's not as if anyone would have missed it, except maybe James, but he wouldn't mind. We hoped.

Anyway, Pasiphae's son was charging at us again. It would seem he had more in common with a bull than just his head. Judging from how he was only charging in straight lines and taking a while to turn I guessed he couldn't change direction after he had started charging. I pointed this out to Percy, who grinned like a maniac at the useful information.

'So.' Percy winked at me. 'To battle.'

I sighed. 'To battle. Please don't get us too bashed up.'

As it turned out, our blade wasn't good for much. It almost bounced off the beast's bulging chest, barely scratching it. Percy cursed, slowly getting more imaginative and colourful as he blocked the beast's wild swings. We were losing ground quickly, being forced up the hill. Eventually one bad step had us tripping up. Luckily Percy didn't stay stunned for long or we would have been headless. Percy gasped the hilt of the blade with one hand and the blade with our other, thrusting the sword up with all our strength to keep the axe from reaching our neck.

A sharp kick to old Bull-head's loin-cloth had it stumbling back a step, just far enough for us to scrabble back to our feet. We ran up the hill a bit further, feeling the Earth tremble as the Minotaur thundered after us.

"Afternoon, Percy."

A familiar voice greeted us from a few feet ahead. Percy sent a glare at the old centaur, who was finally out of his wheelchair.

"Yes, yes, can we skip the formalities and get back to beef-brain here? My blade is useless!" Percy gasped as we fought for breath.

"Hm." Chiron hummed, tossing us a pen. Percy paused for but a split second to give the centaur a 'what-the-heck-this-is-a-pen' look (because we use that kind of expression all of the time obviously). But he only paused for a split second because the rumbling ground quickly reminded us of the situation.

Before Chiron could respond to Percy's look we found ourselves backed against the punk-girl's pine tree with the bull-headed man charging straight at us. Not having many other choices Percy did the obvious thing. He dropped the pen and sword and jumped up, straight over the monstrous head and onto its hairy shoulders.
The long horns thudded deep into the tree, jarring the Minotaur's neck. We winced, glancing at the
tree.

"Sorry, punk-girl."

A minute later, when beef-brain had freed his head by snapping off one of his horns Percy flung us
off of his back and dropped into a roll to absorb the impact. Percy then quickly ran back to the tree,
and urgently tried to get the horn free. I mean, when metal and steel fail, you obviously turn to the
monster's own horn, don't you? Don't get me wrong, I trust Percy with our life – I mean, I am right
now – but sometimes he has the strangest thinking patterns in the entire universe.

Never-the-less, Percy's plan worked when he finally managed to get the horn out of the tree and then
somehow turn and plunge it deep into the Minotaur's chest moments before it impaled us on it horn.
Just like the Fury, the monster's body disintegrated into yellow dust, and left the charming smell of
rotten eggs hanging in the air.

Turning to face the gaping hole in the tree that was beginning to leak sap, we cupped our hands over
the cut, healing the wood and bark so not even a blemish in the trunk of the tree could be seen. We
placed a hand on the tree, round about where we knew the girl's shoulder to be.

"Rest peacefully, punk-girl." We whispered before picking up the pen and our sword.

When we walked back round the tree there was an audience gathered behind Chiron. Calmly
ignoring the group of gawking teenagers we walked down the hill a little way and picked up our
trunk, dragging it behind us after safely storing our sword inside it.

"Well. I trust you had an uneventful journey." Chiron commented dryly. Percy chuckled.

"What? Oh yeah, because we fight Mino- Bull-headed idiot's for fun all the time back where we're
from, don't we?" He joked.

Chiron tilted his head and we received a lot of puzzled looks as the teenagers peered round us. Percy
smacked our forehead.

"I was talking in the plural again, wasn't I? By Merlin! I need to get that right." He cursed, staining
our cheeks red as he blushed in embarrassment. I laughed at him.

'Use Charles as an excuse.' I advised helpfully.

Percy scratched the back of our head gingerly, offering a weak smile. "I'm usually with my twin you
see…"

The other teenagers just stared back blankly at us. I managed to pick out some familiar faces – Luke,
Annabeth and Ethan to name a few. Not even the crickets chirped to fill in the awkward silence.
Moving our gaze to the ground, Percy suddenly remembered something, turning to Chiron.

"What on Earth was the point in giving me this?" He demanded, holding up the pen. "You might
have noticed but that thing was trying to kill u… me."

'That is going to take some getting used to, isn't it?' I commented with a sigh.

'Oh, yeah.' Percy agreed. 'Feel like taking over?'

'Nah, I'm good.' I chuckled. 'Carry on.'
'Why thank you for being so kind.' Percy retorted sarcastically.

"That pen, young Mr Potter, is a dangerous weapon." Chiron replied, taking it back from us. At our sceptical look he uncapped it. The pen grew, becoming longer and more pointed as it morphed into a new form. The transfiguration couldn't have taken more than a couple of seconds, and when it finished the white centaur was holding a glowing bronze sword. Percy looked at it in awe.

'Look at it Harry! It's perfect. Completely symmetrical, and perfectly weighted. What I wouldn't give to have a blade like that…' Percy rambled to me. I laughed.

'Percy, I think your weapon obsession is getting a little out of hand.'

'Oh.' Percy pouted. 'But it's so beautiful!'

Chiron smiled at Percy's expression and gestured for us to follow him, recapping the pen. We did so. As we passed the tree a tingling sensation tickled our skin. We shuddered. Glancing back at punk-girl's tree.

"Impressive set of wards you have here. And what's with the punk-girl in the tree?" Percy asked, curiosity colouring our voice.

We turned when we heard an angry gasp from behind us. A pair of angry blue eyes glared at us from about a foot away. We frowned at the boy who owned the eyes for a moment before recognising Luke. He looked furious. Percy tilted our head.

"Did I do something wrong Luke?" He asked without thinking.

Luke's blue eyes narrowed. "How dare you call Thalia 'punk-girl'; have you no respect? And how do you know my name?"

Again, we blushed, fumbling to find a legitimate excuse. "Well… um. First of it's not as if we know anything more about this Thalia than what she looks like so… As for your name, we may or may not have been dreaming about this camp numerous times over the past year…"

A familiar flash of blond hair filled our vision for a moment before we had steely grey eyes staring deep into ours. Suddenly, Annabeth pulled back, a serious expression on her face.

"So it was you I could sense." She murmured, apparently to herself.

Chiron put a hand on our shoulder. "Well, everyone, while you're here, I'd like to introduce you to Percy Potter. He's from the UK."

"Yeah," One of the other campers muttered. "As if his accent didn't give that away."

Introductions apparently over, we were herded down the hill and through a series of strawberry fields. We caught sight of various satyrs playing reed-pipes to the plants, making them grow noticeably. We walked a short way into the woods and past the sword training clearing. The group of children – all aged between ten and eighteen – stopped for a moment to watch us pass before the sounds of steel on steel started up again. As the path wended out of the woods we passed an archery range and a lake where another small group of kids where kayaking in the still waters. Further on was a volley-ball court, which we reached shortly before we ended up walking through the horse-shoe of cabins. Finally we reached a large white house. The front had a little porch, where a red-faced man sat by a table, drinking diet coke. He had his black hair pulled back in braids, and wore a leopard skin-patterned top. His eyes were purple, and alight with something that made him look almost mad. We shuddered.
"Percy, I'd like to introduce you to the Camp Director, Mr D. Mr D, this is Perseus Potter, the new demigod that the satyrs in Scotland have been contacting you about."

"Please tell me he doesn't have a Scottish accent!" Mr D complained. "These brats are hard enough to understand without having a different accent."

"Scottish?" Percy laughed. "That's just where our school is. Our family home is in England."

'Mr D, huh?' I mused. 'Sounds like either he doesn't like his name, or wants to avoid it being said.'

Percy rolled his eyes at me. 'Does everyone have an ulterior motive according to you?'

'Yep.' I nodded. 'Absolutely everyone.'

Percy laughed. Out loud. Mr D gave him a very strange look, as if seriously questioning his sanity. Both Percy and I had to refrain from childishly sticking our tongue out at him. Chiron gave us a more interested look, as if he was trying to figure something out.

Mr D waved his hand absent-mindedly and a goblet appeared on the table, almost as if he had bent the sunlight to weave the air into glass. A moment later the goblet filled itself with red wine, letting the fruity tang fill the air. Mr D sighed, picking it up. Before the goblet reached his lips, however, Chiron stepped in.

"Mr D," He warned, "your restrictions."

The red-faced man grumbled, but waved his hand again, changing the wineglass into a can of diet coke and shouted at the sky, "Old habits! Sorry!"

The sky thundered, as if it too was grumbling about red wine. We smirked at the image. Mr D sighed unhappily and popped the top of his soda, and picked up a deck to shuffle.

Chiron winked at us, humour alight in his eyes. "Mr D managed to offend his father a while back by taking an interest in an off-limits wood nymph."

"Wood nymph." Percy repeated.

'I guess I can see why.' I said, grinned at Percy when he hummed in agreement.

"Yes." Mr D confessed. "Father does love to punishment. The first time he put me on prohibition. Me! And for an entire ten years, too! The second time – what can I say, she was really pretty – the second time he sent me here. Camp Half-Blood. A stupid summer camp for brats just like you. He told me to 'Be a better influence. Work with youths rather than tearing them down.' Completely unfair!"

We struggled not to laugh. Mr D sounded like a pouting little kid. Not even James or Sirius reached that level. Then, something suddenly clicked.

"Your father is the big man, isn't he? King of the Gods? Which would make you the God of Wine, Dionysus." I said quietly, but he still heard me.

"Well, duh, Percy Potter." Mr D said bored, glancing up at us. "Or are you? You're mind-set seems to have changed."

We smirked at him. "Oh, well. That happens every now and again."

Chiron led us away, back towards the cabins. Having missed the run-down of everything yesterday, we started to ask questions.

"How is it exactly that the gods of Ancient Greece are in the US?" I asked.

"Ah, yes. I believe I mentioned the Western Flame yesterday?" Chiron asked, continuing when we nodded. "Well, the Western Flame is a collective consciousness that has burned brightly for thousands of years, and the gods are part of it. I suppose you could say they are the source of it, or tied to it so tightly that they couldn't possibly fade unless the entire Flame was obliterated. It started in Greece, then moved to Rome. They're had many different names – Jupiter for Zeus, Mercury for Hermes etcetera, etcetera, but the same forces, the same gods.

"You can see them everywhere they've ever been in statues, in paintings, on the most important buildings… Now look at the United States. Their symbol is the eagle of Zeus, there's a statue of Prometheus in the Rockefeller Centre… I doubt anyone could find and American city where the Olympians aren't prominently displayed in multiple places. America is now the heart of the flame, the great power of the West! Even Olympus is here, just like we are."

"Olympus?" We frowned. "Last I checked that mountain was definitely still in Greece."

Chiron chuckled. "That's Mount Olympus, and it most definitely hasn't moved. But the home of the gods and the convergence place of their powers, which did indeed used to be on Mount Olympus, that's something different. It's still called Olympus out of respect to the old ways, but the palace moves, just like the gods."

When we reached the cabins, Chiron decided to give me a tour. The cabins weren't quite a horse-shoe shape, I realised, but more of a 'U' shape with two ad the base and a row of five on either side. Each building had a large brass number, but apart from that they looked completely different: Number nine had smokestacks like a smoke factory; number four had tomato vines on the walls and a grass roof. Seven appeared to be made out of solid gold, and practically blinded anyone who looked at it on a sunny day.

All of them faced into a commons area that was approximately the size of a foot-ball pitch, dotted with various Greek statues, fountains, flower beds and even a couple of basketball hoops. In the very centre of the field was a massive stone-lined fire pit. Despite the fact it was a warm afternoon, the hearth still smouldered, tended to by a girl of about nine years old.

Slipping away from Chiron, we crouched down by the little girl's side.

"Hello." We smiled at her warmly. The girl smiled back, her eyes looking like the same smouldering coals she was tending to. Our smile widened even further when I saw them. "Lady Hestia."

"You recognise me." She said in surprise. "Most don't have the time to stop and chat, let alone recognise me."

"We went through a phase when Percy was obsessed with 'Mythology'. I managed to pick things up." I admitted. Then our eyes widened. Ops. I didn't mean to say that.

"It's alright." Lady Hestia laughed. "I know that there's two of you. I am the Goddess of the Hearth – I see most things that go on in a household."

"Please don't tell anyone? It's hard enough at home where people know and have accepted us. I dread to think what they might think here." I bit our lip, worried.

"They'll have to find out sometime, and I'm sure they'll be more understanding than you think. A
long time ago, around the time of Herakles, you're kind weren't that rare." With those last words and a warm smile Lady Hestia turned back to the Hearth.

"Percy?" Chiron, having realised I had disappeared, walked up behind me. "Who are you talking to?"

"Oh," We turned to face him guiltily. "Sorry w- I disappeared like that. I spotted Lady Hestia and wanted to say hello."

Chiron nodded in understanding as he started to walk away down to the far end of the field, where I presumed Cabin Eleven must be. When we reached the end of the field, Annabeth was sitting in front of the last cabin on the left; our new cabin.

She passed an eye over us critically when we reached us. Not bothered by this, I tried to see what book she was reading. For a moment I thought Percy's dyslexia was acting up and affecting me, but then I realised the title wasn't even English. It was Greek. However, judging from the pictures of temples and statues and various kinds of columns I guessed it must be something to do with architecture.

"Annabeth," Chiron said apologetically, "I have masters' archery class at noon. Would you mind taking Percy from here?"

"Yes sir." Annabeth replied respectfully. Her expression was carefully polite, but I could sense that she didn't actually want to have to 'babysit' us.

Annabeth didn't say anything as she led us into cabin eleven. Out of all the cabins, eleven looked the most like you would expect from a summer camp, even if it was a bit old. The threshold was worn down, the brown paint peeling. Above the door was a Caduceus – a winged pole with two snakes wrapped around it. It was most commonly associated with muggle medicine, I believe.

Inside was packed full of people, girls and boys alike, far more than there was number of bunks. Sleeping bags were spread over all available space on the floor. In other words, it was a mess.

We stood in the doorway, looking in at everyone else. I could tell they were all sizing us up from the calculating stares each and every one of them was giving us. We had gotten used to this routine from both the Slytherin and Gryffindor Houses. While we was accepted better in Slytherin, we weren't exactly one of them either.

"Well?" Annabeth prompted, nudging our back. "Go on."

Percy snapped out of our semi-trance first. But, naturally, he tripped walking through the door and made a complete fool out of us. We glared at the floor when we heard some sniggers from the campers. Fortunately none of them said anything.

"Percy Potter, meet cabin eleven."

"Regular of undetermined?" somebody asked.

Unsure how to reply to such a vague question we just stared blankly at them, but Annabeth said, "Undetermined."

Everyone groaned. I took it that wasn't a good thing. Then Luke stepped forward, smiling. "Now, now, that's why we're here, isn't it? Percy, you can take the spot on the floor over there." Luke pointed to a small space on the floor that was completely empty. There wasn't anything on the floor, but the reason why it was empty was fairly obvious. Half the reason was because every other
possible space was taken up. The other reason was because the floor was damp from where water
from the nearby toilet and showers and soaked through the thin wooden wall.

Luke offered us an apologetic look. "Sorry about the damp. We're a bit lacking in space."

"That's fine." We sent him a small smile. "My dorm at school is in the dungeons, so I'm used to a
little damp."

We got more strange looks at that, and quickly explained.

"We go to a boarding school in Scotland. The school building is a castle. We're split into Houses,
and my house – Slytherin – have our dorms in the old dungeons. Merlin only knows why." I
explained.

'We should probably stop swearing by Merlin.' Percy said randomly. 'It's not a very muggle thing to
do.'

"Merlin? Did you know he was a famous son of Hecate?" A random girl said. Intrigued by what she
had said, we studied her silently. She was a few years older than us, maybe fifteen, with short dyed-
ginger hair. Her eyes were a clean blue.


"For now." I echoed.

Luke grinned. "You're undetermined. Since they're not sure which cabin to put you in, you're here.
Cabin eleven take in all newcomers and visitors. Hermes, our patron, is the god of travellers after
all."

We placed our trunk on the tiny little piece of space allocated to us. We didn't have a sleeping bag
yet. It was just our trunk. Remembering that Hermes was also the god of thieves, I thanked Merlin
that we had our trunk warded so that only we could open it.

"How long will I be here?" Percy asked.


"How long will that take?"

The other camper's laughed. Annabeth grabbed our wrist and dragged us outside. Even from a few
feet away we could still hear the other cabin eleven kids laughing at us. Annabeth shook her head at
us.

"Potter, you need to do better than that."

"What?"

How were we expected to do better when we didn't even know what we did wrong? Annabeth
simply shook her head and muttered angrily under breath, guiding us towards the volleyball court.

"What is all you guy's problem?" Percy demanded, starting to get angry. "All we know is that I kill
some bull-guy –"

Annabeth interrupted us with a laugh. "Do you have any idea how many kids here wish they'd had
your opportunity?"
"Opportunity for what, exactly? To almost get killed?" We scoffed.

"To fight the Minotaur! What do you think we train for?"

We shook our head. "The Minotaur? As in, the one from the Myths? Theseus killed him!"

Annabeth gave us an 'are-you-stupid-or-what' look. "Monster's don't die, Potter; they can be killed. But they don't die."

"Why thank you for that astounding explanation. I understands absolutely everything now!" Percy snapped.

'Calm down, Percy. Yelling won't help. Let her explain.' I cautioned him. For once in our life, Percy actually listened to me.

"Monster's don't have souls, like you and I. If killed they can be dispelled for a while, or maybe a lifetime if you're lucky, but they're primal forces. Chiron calls them archetypes. Eventually they reform."

"Oh." Then another question formed. "Why are there so many empty cabins?"

We pointed up the far end of the field to cabins one, two and three.

"If cabin eleven is so full than why not use the empty bunks over there?"

Annabeth paled. "Percy, we don't just choose a cabin to stay in. We sleep in our parent's cabin."

She looked at us as if expecting us to understand. Percy narrowed our eyes. "Our parents are Lord and Lady Potter. British citizens. James is a sort of police officer and Lily is a stay-at-home mother."

"You didn't say mum or dad." Annabeth pointed out. "Just how friendly are you with your parents?"

We snapped at that, our magic tugging at its bonds, trying to get free. Our messy hair and clothes being tugged at by the invisible magical breeze that nobody else could feel. I could almost feel our eyes glow green.

"Don't you dare talk about our parents! That's private and none of your business." We snapped. "You don't understand anything!"

Just at that moment somebody else decided to make themselves known. "Hey look. A newbie."

We turned to glare at the owner of the husky voice. It was a big girl from the ugly red cabin, sauntering towards us as if she owned the place. Behind her were three other girls, just as big and ugly and mean-looking as she was herself.

"Clarisse." Annabeth sighed. "Why don't you just go and polish your new spear or something?"

"Oh sure, Miss Princess." The big girl retorted with a sneer. "Just so I can run you through with it Friday night."

"Errete es korakas." Somehow the Ancient Greek words translated themselves for us. By why on Earth Annabeth would use 'Go to the crows' as an insult was beyond us. Clearly it was a worse curse that it sounded. "You don't stand a chance."

Clarisse rolled her eyes, but quickly focused on us. "Who's this little runt?"
"Percy Potter." Annabeth said.

"Whatever. Come on, I'll show you."

Annabeth tried to intervene, but some of Clarisse's minions stopped her. Secretly we were relieved. We had to make our own reputation round here. Percy adopted the stance I had come to know as his 'ready' stance. To anybody else it probably looked as if he had no idea what he was doing, because it wasn't in any guide-book to fighting we'd read. In fact, it was a mix of all the techniques Percy had learned.

Percy managed to give Clarisse a strong left hook to the jaw, but somehow Clarisse managed to recover quickly and had us round the neck before we knew it. Then she began dragging us towards a cinder-block building we immediately knew must be the bathroom. We smirked quietly to ourselves and stopped struggling. We just turned into a limp dead weight for Clarisse to deal with. The buff girl grunted at the sudden weight, but didn't lose her grip on us.

'Bathroom means water.' Percy smirked.

'Water means somebody's getting wet.' I sniggered back.

Of course Clarisse dragged us into the girls' bathroom. There was a line of toilets on one side, and a line of shower stalls down the other. It smelt awful, like that public muggle toilet we'd been in once.

"Like he's 'Big Three' material." Clarisse sneered as she pushed us towards one of the toilets. "Yeah right, I bet the Minotaur fell over laughing he was so stupid-looking."

Just before we were shoved into a stall I caught sight of Annabeth standing in one corner, watching through her fingers. Then we were forced to our knees in front of the toilet bowl. Percy started to laugh as our head was slowly forced into it. Clarisse paused for a moment, confused.

Then Percy struck, pulling on all the water in the room. It flew out the toilets, the showers, the taps, spraying the entire bathroom. There was just a small bubble round us that didn't get wet, leaving us kneeling in the only dry part of the floor.

We smirked at the sopping wet girls. "And that, ladies, is why you don't mess with us, newbie or not."
Chapter 21

Percy's Point of View

We were standing in a sopping wet bathroom. We might have accidentally forgotten about Annabeth when I exploded the plumbing, or perhaps some part of us had wanted to get back at her a little for her questioning about our parents. Either way, she had ended up just as wet as the other girls that had been trying to stick our head down the toilet. Admittedly, Annabeth hadn't been knocked to the floor under the force of the water like the others, but that was a minor detail.

Annabeth was staring at us in shock, long after the other girls had taken a strategic retreat, vowing vengeance. As we walked towards her I banished the water from under our feet so that our shoes wouldn't get wet.

"How in Hades did you…" Annabeth said. I winked at her.

"A wizard never reveals his secrets, madam."

Before the blond could reply, we walked outside and were met with a group of gawking campers. Clarisse was out there, growling at anyone who so much as looked at her. Her dripping hair hung in matted locks and her camo jacket stunk of sewage. At the sight of us she put on a death glare. I don't think we'd ever received a more hate-filled look, not even from the Gryffindors.

"You're dead, Newbie, you hear me? You are dead."

Unperturbed, we raised an eyebrow at her. "Once you've quite finished with the death-threats, may we have a formal introduction?"

A few of the campers laughed at the dumb-struck look on Clarisse's face. She utterly shocked that we actually wanted to know who she was. Annabeth walked up behind us, giving us a curious and puzzled look. She also looked frustrated, like she couldn't quite work us out.

"I'm Clarisse La Rue, daughter of Ares, God of War. Now your number one enemy in camp. Well done, newbie, you just annoyed the one cabin that you really don't want to annoy." Clarisse announced with a small smirk.

We smiled pleasantly. "Nice to meet you, Clarisse. I'm Percy Potter. And unfortunately for you, we have a water affinity. Next time try trapping us in a pit. It might actually work for a small amount of time."

Clarisse grinned at the idea. Then she laughed, hitting us on the back. We stumbled forward under the heavy blows. "You know, Potter, I might just come to like you."

Annabeth led us away from the crowd, showing us a few more places, such as the metal shop (where you could forge your own sword!), the arts-and-crafts room (where we discovered a group of satyr's sandblasting a massive statue of a goat-man - Pan), and the climbing wall (which could both throw boulders and spray lava at you while it shook violently as you attempted to scale it. So awesome!)

Apparently word spread quickly round camp, because we received a lot of pointing fingers and heard several murmurs about toilet water. The other option was that they were just staring at a soaked Annabeth, but we very much doubted that.
We were abandoned at the canoe lake by Annabeth, who claimed she had training to do.

"Dinner's at seven-thirty. All you need to do is follow your cabin down to the mess hall."

With those delightful parting words, Annabeth ran off, leaving us staring into the clear, clean waters of the lake. At the bottom of the lake we noticed several teenage girls sitting cross-legged under the pier. They wore blue jeans and green T-shirts. Their long brown hair floated around their shoulders as they wove baskets. One of them noticed us looking at them, and grinned, waving at us as if we were long-lost-friends. Curious about them, we jumped straight in off the pier, and sat down among them. We summoned a bubble round our mouth in an imitation of the bubble-head charm.

"Hello." I grinned and Harry smiled mentally at them. "How are the baskets coming along?"

"Not bad, thanks." The nymph who had waved at us replied. "Are you Percy and Harry Potter?"

We nodded shyly. The nymphs grinned delightedly at us, abandoning their baskets in favour of forming a circle round us. I counted four of them, watching us avidly.

"Our friend from Scotland, Nerissa, mentioned you to us. She said you'd be coming here soon, Lords." Another nymph told us.

"Hold on, you know Princess Nerissa? How do you keep in touch with Merfolk who live thousands of miles away?" Harry demanded, his thirst for knowledge coming out to play. Again, the nymphs laughed.

"Iris messages. You make a rainbow and throw in a drachma as a donation to Iris, then request a person and where they are."

'That is so cool!' I exclaimed to Harry, who smiled back at me.

'It is as well. And it means you don't need a phone or fireplace to talk to people. Just some water and light.' Harry mused. 'It's a shame wizards can't use it.'

Vibrations shock the water. They were small at first, barely noticeable, but slowly getting slightly stronger. We ducked out of sight from above, right under the pier where there was no chance of us being seen. The nymphs gave us a funny look.

"We're hiding from everyone else." Harry explained. "They've been giving us funny looks ever since we blew up the plumbing in the girls' toilets. Clarisse was trying to shove our head into a toilet bowl. Charming girl, that one."

The nymphs laughed. We stayed and chatted about everything and nothing for a couple of hours. We talked about sea-politics and the other politics on Olympus. The nymphs, who I found out were called Nerida, Tulia, Mira and Morwenna, were more than eager to point out all the flaws in each of the different demigods from each cabin. Ares' children were bullies. Aphrodite's could shallow and selfish at times. Athena's could be incredible egotistical occasionally, believing nobody could do a better job than them.

When we finally came back up to the surface, it was starting to get dark as the sun descended for the night. It wouldn't properly set for another hour or so, but it was enough to make us worry. How long had we been sitting there? It must be dinner soon. Remembering our watch, I glanced at our wrist, a small smile tilting our lips at the sight of the beautiful time-piece. Dam! It was already seven twenty!

We reached cabin eleven just as its occupants were leaving. Luke gave us a look from narrowed eyes.
"Where've you been? Nobody has seen you in hours!"

We blushed, looking down at our shoes. "We found some Naiads, and got talking. Apparently our friend Nerissa told them about us and they wanted to meet us."

"How does your friend now some American naiads?" Luke asked sceptically, as if wondering whether or not to believe us.

Harry and I grinned. "Nerissa's one of the Merfolk that live in a lake we often go swimming in. Apparently they met at some meeting in Poseidon's realm and have kept in touch ever since."

Luke snorted, but didn't ask any more questions.

'I was thinking about what Hestia said.' Harry said randomly as we followed the rest of our cabin down to the mess hall.

'Yeah?' I asked.

Harry paused, as if contemplating what he wanted to say. 'Well, she's right. We shouldn't hide. I think we should talk to Chiron. He might be able to advise us on what to do.'

I smiled, having hated the idea of just being 'Percy Potter' as much as Harry had hated us being just 'Harry Potter' before the wizarding world found out we were twin souls. 'That would be nice. Maybe we could find him after dinner?'

'Yeah.' Harry agreed. 'Let's do it!'

The open aired pavilion was lit up by blazing torches, and a central fire burned merrily in a bronze brazier, filling the air with the musky scent of wood smoke. Each cabin had its own table adorned with a purple trimmed white cloth. Four of the tables were empty but, much like our cabin, Hermes' table was overflowing. As we lowest in our cabin's pecking order we had to squeeze onto the edge of a bench, half falling off it.

We spotted a familiar face sitting at table twelve with Mr D, a few satyrs and a couple of Mr D mini-mes. It was the boy who was with Chiron – Grover. Chiron himself stood to one side, the picnic table being too small for the white centaur. We blinked before remembering that we had been told that Grover was a satyr.

Annabeth was sat on table six, surrounded by other blond-haired, grey eyed serious-looking athletic kids. They seemed to be in a heated debate about something. We grinned. They all seemed to have exactly the same interests. It must be nice being able to relate to your siblings… our smile fell, and we frowned. Charles and Harry and I could have been like that, if we hadn't distanced ourselves…

Moving swiftly on, we caught sight of Clarisse sitting at Ares' table behind us, laughing and belching along with the rest of her siblings. Clearly she must have gotten over her shower of toilet water, if just for now.

Finally, Chiron hit the floor with one hoof. Everyone immediately stopped talking, turning to face their Camp Leader. He smiled at them and raised a glass. "To the gods."

The reply was thunderous as a hundred or so demigods raised their glasses turn and simultaneously repeated his toast. "TO THE GODS!"

Wood nymphs appeared shortly after, carrying plates of fruit, cheese, fresh bread and even barbeque! Our glass remained empty however, much to our dismay. Luke noticed our problem and grinned.
"Speak to it. Just ask for whatever you want – non-alcoholic, of course."

Harry and I grinned. At least we didn't have to leave behind our home comforts here. "Pumpkin juice."

Our glass immediately filled with the thick dull orange substance. Luke gave us an odd look, but then shrugged, assuming it was one of those 'weird British things' we must do. I was about to start to eat when Harry nudged me, pointing out how everyone was getting up and dropping a portion of their meals into the fire; the ripest strawberry, the juiciest slice of beef, the warmest, most buttery roll.

"They're burning offerings to the gods." Luke murmured in our ear. "Apparently they like the smell."

We gave him an 'are-you-kidding-us' look, but the look he sent us in reply warned us not to take this lightly. Still, we couldn't help but wonder why a god – an immortal, all-powerful being – would enjoy the smell of burnt food.

When Luke reached the fire he tossed a bunch of fat grapes into the fire, muttering, "Hermes."

When we approached we dropped a roll into the fire. "For Hestia. Thank you."

We murmured our pray, too low for anyone else to hear. The expecting clogging stench of burnt food was replaced with that of warm chocolate chip cookies and the fresh smell of baking bread, just like the smells in the kitchen back home. We let a smile flit over our face as we moved to sit back down and begin eating.

Harry took over from me as we joined in the conversation. A lot of it seemed to be firing questions at us, which we answered a truthfully as we could. Some of these questions included: "Is your school really a castle?" "What's England like?" "Does it really rain all year?" and "How did you explode the plumbing?" Of course, we skimmed over the details of some of these questions (aka, anything to do with our control over water), not wanting to explain about the wizarding world just yet.

Once everyone had finished eating, Chiron called for everyone's attention for another announcement before we all left. Mr D go up with a huge self-suffering sigh. "I suppose I'm expected to say hello to all you brats. Well, hello. As you may know, tonight is Capture the Flag, according to our activities director, Chiron. Cabin 5 currently hold the laurels, I believe."

A huge cheer started up from behind us, as the Ares' campers banged on their table and cheered their achievement.

"Personally," Mr D continued in a bored voice, "I couldn't care less, but congratulations. Oh, and we also have a new camper today – Peter Potts."

We sighed and shook our head. Then, Mr D shook his head, just as Chiron was about to say something.

"No, er… Percy Potter." Mr D corrected himself. A few hushed mutters sprung up. Apparently he didn't do that very often. "Hurrah and all that. Now go run along to your little game and don't kill yourselves. Paperwork is bad enough as it is."

Everyone cheered and we all ran off back to our cabins to go get our armour fitted on. Luke lent us some from the little weapon shed. It was far too big, as we were rather small, but it fit us enough. We refused the heavy, un-balanced swords that Luke showed us, rather getting out our Goblin-silver sword and golden dagger, which we had stolen off Lily before we came. We were also given a blue plumed helmet and a large Greek shield.
When everyone arrived back at the pavilion a conch horn sounded. We frowned. How did we know that was a conch shell being blown? Before we could dwell on the matter, however, Annabeth and her siblings ran in carrying a large silk banner. It was maybe three metres long, and had an embroidered barn own sitting on an olive tree on a grey background. From the opposite side of the pavilion, Clarisse and her buddies ran in, carrying a blood-red flag, depicted with a boar's head and a spear.

"Those are the flags." Luke told us, having to yell over the loud cheers. "Athena and Ares don't always lead the teams, but they often do. We're allied with Athena tonight."

"So what happens if a different cabin captures a flag?" Harry asked curiously.

Luke grinned slyly. "You'll see. But first, we have to get one."

The teams were announced. Athena had made an alliance with Apollo and Hermes. From what we had gathered, the alliance had been brought by trading privileges – shower times, the best slots for activities, chores… Despite only consisting of three cabins, our team was large, as Apollo and Hermes were the largest cabins.

Ares had an alliance with everybody else: Hephaestus, Demeter, Aphrodite and Dionysus. From what the naiads had told us earlier, Mr D's kids were good athletes, despite their slightly chubby appearance, however there was only two of them. Demeter's kids were brilliant with nature skills and outdoor stuff, however they weren't really aggressive. Aphrodite's sons and daughters… they didn't sound like anything to be worried about. Apparently they just sat out activities checking their reflections in the lake and redoing their hair as they gossiped. As for Hephaestus' kids… They weren't exactly pretty, but all four of them were big and burly from working in the metal shop day-in day-out. They could be a problem. A big problem. Which finally left Ares' cabin: a dozen of the biggest, meanest and probably ugliest kids to be found anywhere on the planet. And also the one cabin we had managed to insult during the six short hours we had been here. Brilliant.

In a movement that was becoming rather familiar, Chiron bashed his hoof the marble floor and announced the rules. "Alright Heroes! You should all know the rules by now. The creek is the border line; all magic items are allowed. The banner has to be prominently displayed, and no more than two guards are permitted to guard it. No gagging or binding prisoners, although you may of course disarm them. And I must firmly enforce this next rule – no maiming or killing! I will be on site to serve as referee and battlefield medic, however you better hope I'm not needed."

As soon as the rules had been laid down, we headed off on Annabeth's order; "Blue team, move out!"

We cheered, shaking our swords as we followed our leader down the path to the southern side of the creek, exchanging taunts with the red team as we went. One particular rule stuck in our mind, and we turned to Luke to ask about it.

"Chiron said we're allowed 'Magic Items'. Does that include wands?" I asked, fingering my invisible wand holster strapped to our right wrist. Luke laughed.

"A wand? Who do you think are you, a son of Hecate?" The older boy joked, his left hand absent-mindedly stroking the long scar on his cheek. "Magic items are objects blessed by the gods and gifted to their children. Though I suppose a wand could fit into that category."

I grinned. 'They are so dead.'

'Percy.' Harry cautioned. 'Only wandless magic. Don't reveal anything that might mark us out as
wizards before we can talk to Chiron about it.'

I sighed and grumbled about over-cautious Slytherins, but still nodded at Harry, agreeing not to use my wand.

We suddenly tripped over our shield, and grunted in the effort to stay upright. "Are we really expected to be able to carry and fight with these?"

Another member of our cabin – Connor, I think – snorted. "Well, I hear cabin 5 wants your head, so unless you want to be skewered by one of them, I'd suggest you adapt quickly."

Luke chuckled. "Don't fret though, you'll be fine – I've seen you in action with that sword against the Minotaur. Anyway, you're on border patrol, so hopefully you'll be out of the way to watch tonight."

We nodded, but after catching the gleaming grey eyes of Annabeth as she looked back, we suddenly weren't so sure. Athena was well known for always having a plan. If Annabeth had put us on border patrol, then it was for a bigger reason that just keeping us out of the way.

The night was warm and sticky, and the woods were dark. Annabeth had stationed us next to the little chattering creek where some flat worn stones would make the crossing easy over the fast flowing current. The rest of the team scattered away into the trees after we had been placed, leaving us alone in the gloom, with only the sound of gurgling water to fill in the silence.

Far away, a conch horn blew. Another sound that was becoming more and more familiar. From all around us the still was broken by the sounds of clanging metal and yells as the battle began. A blue-plumed ally ran nimbly past us, leaping from stone to stone and disappearing into red territory.

Shortly after a deep canine growl sent shivers up our spin. We whipped around, searching for the source of the ominous sound, but the woods were still around us. The terrifying sensation of being stalked sunk into us, and we tightened our grip on our shield. I felt Harry slipping backwards, trusting me to take care of whatever it was. I sent him a silent thank you. For all his book knowledge, Harry was useless on a battle field.

Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the rumbling growl stopped, and the presence vanished. Before we had time to question why, the bushed opposite us on the other side of the stream parted to reveal five Ares' warriors, led by Clarisse. At the sight of us they grinned maliciously.

"Get him!" Clarisse yelled, screaming out a war cry as she charged us. Her glinting eyes glared at us through the slits of her helmet, making her look even scarier than usual. She brandished a two-meter long spear. I swallowed down our fear as the barbed metal tip pointed towards our chest. The air was crackling with static, and I had a sinking feeling that I knew where it was from.

'Holy Merlin, that's charged with electricity!' Harry cursed. 'Don't touch it. Try and trap it against the wood of the shield.'

'Got it!' I grinned in anticipation of the fight. We nimbly dodged out of Clarisse's way, then met the glowing bronze blades of her siblings. They were the standard-issued camp swords, heavy and unwieldy and I was confident that I could beat them. It was Clarisse's spear I was worried about.

Unfortunately a blow to the head caught me off guard and sent us tumbling into the stream. Spurred on by the jeers of her siblings, Clarisse grabbed our hair, using our own knife to cut a large section off. I tilted our head to one side.

"Planning on doing so messed up voodoo schist?" I asked calmly.
Clarisse laughed cutting off more of our hair. Rather than replying she sliced our cheek. I winced

"No maiming, remember?" I spoke between gritted teeth. Hair was easy to fix, but cuts? If we scarred I would kill her. I didn't want to have to answer the awkward questions from Draco and the others. Not to mention our family…

The other Ares' kids had backed off, having noticing the swirling water around us. Clarisse just ignored them, forcing our head underwater. I breathed normally, not even struggling. Instead, I used one foot to pull the girl's feet from under her, sending her crashing into the water. The other campers, enraged at their leader's humiliation, charged us. I summoned our sword out of the water, expertly countering their moves and knocking them unconscious by hitting their helmets hard with the flat of our blade.

Clarisse was up and moving again, and we ducked to avoid her spear not a moment too soon after knocking out the last of her siblings. Turning to face her I used Harry's earlier advice and trapped the spear against our shield with our sword before forcibly snapping it in one swift movement. The blast of energy that was release when the weapon broke sent both of us flying in opposite directions.

Clarisse screamed in annoyance, throwing our gold dagger at us. I caught it before it hit, making the enraged girl scream again. "Ah! You idiot! May Hades prey on your soul, your corpse-breath worm!"

Before she could charge at us again, however, Luke came charging out the bushes, followed by some of his siblings who were fending off the reds. As soon at the cabin eleven counsellor crossed the boundary our side erupted into cheers. The Ares kids got up, mumbling angrily.

"A trick!" Clarisse shouted, still seeing red. "It was a trick!"

The red banner seemed to shiver as the red morphed into silver, and a large caduceus took the place of the boar and spear.

The game was over. We'd won.

"Nice fight, Hero."

We glanced sharply to our left to where Annabeth was watching us with an amused expression, a New York Yankees cap in her hand. "Shame about your hair though."

I shook our head. "Doesn't matter. It'll be back to normal soon."

I replaced our dagger in its leather sheath in our belt, and dug shoved our sword into the sandy bank. I ran a hand through our hair, subconsciously pouring magic into our scalp to speed up the growth of the sheered of hair. Within seconds, it was our usual messy hairstyle. Annabeth gasped.

"How did you do that? And how did you heal your cheek?"

"What?" Harry ran a hand over our cheek. Sure enough, there was no sign of the cut Clarisse had given us. Just drying blood.

"Step out the water, Percy. Don't ask, just do it." Annabeth ordered, her face pale. Rolling our eyes, Harry did as he was bidden. A sudden wave of exhaustion fell over us. We staggered into a tree. It was weird. We'd never felt like this before. Not even after hours of swimming in the lake.

"Styx!" Annabeth cursed. "No, no… I always assumed it must be Zeus… It should have been Zeus!"
Before I could ask what the daughter of Athena meant a low growl thundered towards us, closer than last time. This time it was followed by a howl, too.

The cheering campers immediately fell silent, hands falling on their weapons as they readied themselves to fight. Chiron shouted orders in Ancient Greek, which our brain automatically translated for us.

Annabeth drew her sword, and we grabbed ours from where we had buried the tip in the sand.

The sound of claws on rocks drew our gaze upwards. There, on the rock above us was an enormous black hound, easily the size of a rhino, with dagger-like fangs and glowing red eyes. Glowing red eyes that were fixed on us.

Nobody moved, until the beast leapt. We jumped backwards into the stream, slicing at the hound's nose with our sword. It whimpered, its eyes dimming with pain. A strange feeling of concern for the poor dog ran through us, as our natural instincts to look after the hurt animal fought to take over.

The hound didn't attack again, it just licked our face with a long hot tongue. We shivered at the sight of the large teeth. Vaguely we could hear people shouting at us to run, but our legs couldn't move. We were frozen in place. I reached up with one hand to stroke the enormous canine, but before we could touch its furry head an arrow struck its flank, and it burst into yellow dust. We coughed, staring in dismay at where the hound had been.

"Percy… Why didn't you run?" Annabeth asked.

I turned to her with a blank look. "It wasn't trying to hurt us. I think… I think it wanted to play."

Luckily nobody else heard us, because Annabeth's startled look was enough to let us know that usually rhino-sized hounds didn't like to play with demigods. At least, not in the sense we were thinking of.

Angry shouts filled the air.

"Di immortals…" I heard one camper gasp. "That… that was a Hellhound. They're not supposed to leave the Fields of Punishment!"

"Someone summoned it." Chiron said. "Someone inside camp."

"Percy! Percy must have summoned it. It's all his fault!"

"Be quite child." Chiron warned her. "He didn't even know they were real before yesterday."

Suddenly, gasps filled the air. Everyone was staring at something above our head. We looked up. There, above our head, was a spinning green trident. I frowned at it, wondering if I was just seeing things.

Annabeth gave us a worried look. "Your father… this is bad. Really bad."

"Our father?" I shook our head in confusion. What did a glowing green trident have to do with James?

"Poseidon." Chiron announced as everyone started kneeling, even the unhappy Ares cabin. "Earthshaker, Stormbringer, Father of Horses."

The last words were spoken by all. "Hail, Perseus Potter, Son of the Sea God."
Chapter 22

Harry's Point of View

We were moved out of cabin eleven that evening and put straight into cabin 3. It was dusty, and eerily empty in the blue cabin. It was made of rough sea stone and decorated with embedded coral and seashells. A large bronze trident hung over the door. It had a curious salty smell, like sea-air. The inside was walls made of abalone. Otherwise the cabin was bare, with just six bunks with silken sheets to take up the space.

We lay on our side, eyes shut against the darkness and let the tears begin to fall, slowly and quietly. We were alone here. Our friends were behind in England with our family. Poseidon… Poseidon wasn't our father.

'Harry.' Percy tried to smile at me. 'Relax. You're strung tighter than a bow. What're you thinking of that's got you so uptight?'

I sighed. 'Sorry, Percy. I just… I don't want to believe it all. James is our father. He might not have always been around for us, but at least he was physically there. Poseidon… He's a god. I just… I can't…'

I struggled to put my feelings into words. Percy nodded in understanding.

'He doesn't feel real, just yet, does he? Hopefully… maybe when or if we meet him it might feel more real.'

Feeling slightly better, I relaxed a little, enough to get to sleep.

We dreamed of the beach again. The horse and eagle were still fighting, desperately lashing out at anything they could to hurt one another. This time we tried to run towards them, to pull the eagle off of the horse and stop them once and for all. The sand seemed to tug at our feet as we ran, making each step harder than the last. The stormy wind battered us back too, and thunder boomed ominously, but no lighting flashed in the dark sky.

Still running towards the animals, we tripped over a clump of grass, and fell through the sand into a different vision. We just saw a glimpse of a lightning bolt, crackling with electricity and lighting up a small dark cave before the image was gone, and we were suddenly at Hogwarts.

We were sitting in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, though the ghost was no-where in sight. From one of the cubicles we could hear a girl sobbing, and the shifting of her feet on the floor. The door opened and a tall boy walked in, looking about the age of sixteen. He had fine facial features, with the same aristocratic look about him that the Malfoy's had. His hair was dark and neat, much like his uniform. Clear green eyes flittered round the room curiously. They skipped over us before resting on the locked cubicle door. Shrugging, the boy turned to the sink.

$Open.$ The boy hissed in a familiar language, apparently to the sink. We gave him a strange look.

'Why is he talking to a sink?' Percy laughed nervously. This boy, whoever he was giving off scary vibes, and we didn't like that.

The cubical door creaked open an inch behind us, but we ignored it, watching in shock as the sinks
slowly moved apart, the top floating off it. A large snake waited inside, its hide a sickly green and its eyes... they looked an almost sulphuric yellow, and had a freezing power. I felt positively sure that, had this not have been a dream, we would have dropped dead after looking into that gaze. We shivered.

A sickly thud echoed round the room, originating from the cubical behind us, where the crying girl had been. A triumphant smirk lit up the other boy's face, and we shivered, forcing ourselves to look round.

We saw the pale hand first. Limp, as if she was unconscious. They we saw the rest of her, from where she had fallen out of the cubical. Her messy black hair covered her face, but I had a strange sense of certainty that she wore glasses, and her round face was patterned with freckles. Myrtle. Moaning Myrtle. The poor, poor girl...

Suddenly, a loud booming noise chased the dream away as it woke us. We sat up, fear making our heart pump faster. Eventually the sound faded away, replaced by the steady patter of heavy rain drops hitting the cabin roof. The thunder boomed again, rumbling right the way through us, and shaking us up even more. Percy moaned, hiding behind me and putting his hands mentally over his ears.

I winced. Percy hated thunderstorms. He could cope with them when he was around other people, but alone with me...

The first time we had been in a thunderstorm was shortly after Christmas when we had been six. It was the first Christmas we had spent without our family and Percy had been beyond upset. We both had. Most of the day had been spent curled up on our bed crying and reading and feeling sorry for ourselves. The house elves had brought us Christmas Dinner and Christmas pudding, but we hadn't eaten.

Percy had started to cry harder at the sight of the Christmas pudding. He and Charles had always fought over the last slice, and they couldn't do that anymore. The harder Percy had cried the harder the rain started to fall. Then the thunder had boomed and by Merlin had it scared Percy. Sad and scared... I didn't know what to do, how to comfort the twin of my soul, and I felt so helpless.

Then, all of a sudden the door burst open. Percy whimpered and huddled us further under our covers. I didn't fight him, pulling the duvet over our head.

The raining noise grew louder for a moment then the door slammed shut. I heard a snort from above our head, and a familiar female voice spoke up.

"Scared of a bit of rain, newbie?"

I pulled the overs off our head and glared at Clarisse. "None of your business, Princess."

Clarisse laughed. "Maybe not then. Common, it's mid-morning already, you missed breakfast. Chiron sent me to see why you haven't appeared yet."

"Urk! School just finished, I didn't think we'd have to be up so early!" I complained. Then, a thought hit me as I recalled one of the numerous facts Annabeth had recited to us on the tour yesterday. "I swear Annabeth told us that it only rained here if you wanted it to. Why would you want a thunderstorm?"

"We didn't." Clarisse scowled at us. "Apparently the big man didn't like you."

'Huh?' Percy tilted his head to one side, his eyes drowsy with sleep. 'Who doesn't like us?"
I laughed. 'I presume she meant Zeus. He doesn't get along very well with his brothers, according to myth.'

'Oh.' Percy nodded. 'Stupid god.'

I laughed, with only resulted in us receiving an even deeper scowl from Clarisse.

"What's so funny, prissy?"

"Oh, just a passing thought. Sorry about the weather though. Should we go see Chiron now?"

Clarisse nodded. "Might be a good idea. He's in the white house. And you're talking in the plural again!"

We only vaguely acknowledged Clarisse's passing remark as we pulled on a pair of trousers under the duvet and put on a shirt and hoodie and shoes before running out the door. The grassy field outside was almost bog of mud. The sticky mud soaked into our trousers but the rain didn't seem to soak us. It was like we could decide whether or not we wanted to get wet. Brilliant! I'd like to see Peeves try to water bomb us now!

Chiron was waiting for us under the porch at the white house, standing calmly in the dry. He smiled when he saw us coming, and beckoned us inside.

"Nice weather, huh?" Percy joked. "Looks like England's following us wherever we go."

Chiron smiled, but otherwise didn't react to his joke. "Indeed. On a more serious note however, we need to talk to you about exactly why Zeus is so angry at your existence. And it's more than the usual sibling rivalry I'm afraid to say."

We paled. "Following the line of serious conversations, we wanted to talk to you too."

Chiron nodded and led us into a games room, the centre of the room taken up by a large table-tennis table. A couple of seats lined the walls of the room. Chiron motioned for us to sit in one. We did as he bid, trying to force down all the worried gnawing at our minds.

"Well, I suppose our story really begins a long time ago." Chiron said. "The gods received a prophecy that a demigod child of the big three would have the power to potentially destroy Olympus. Understandably, they weren't too happy about this. So, the three made a pact. No more demigod children. And it worked – for a long time it did. But then Zeus found a pretty young mortal. Their daughter, Thalia, died just before she reached camp, killed by an army of monster's sent Hades."

"Thalia…" We breathed. "The girl in the pine tree?"

Chiron nodded. "Yes. But, as you can imagine, since his daughter couldn't survive, Zeus isn't that pleased that you are allowed to. But that isn't the only reason behind why he hates you so much."

We swallowed nervously. "Of course not. Why would our luck only expand to one reason why a major god might hates us?"

Chiron ignored us. "At the winter solstice, Zeus' master bolt was stolen during our visit to Olympus. Zeus of course, blamed his brother Poseidon, accusing him of making a demigod steal it for him. Zeus gave Poseidon till the summer solstice to return it. After you were claimed yesterday, there was a meeting at Olympus. Mr D said that Zeus ordered Poseidon to return the bolt, or he would obliterate you and your family."
We paled, pulling our legs up to our chest to make ourself a smaller target. 'No! But the solstice is barely a week away! It's the fourteenth today!'

'Well. If Poseidon won't return the bolt, then we'll just have to find it and return it ourself.' Percy said, resolved. 'I'm not letting them hurt Charles or James or Lily.'

'Right!' I agreed as we turned back to Chiron. "How can we stop him?"

Chiron frowned at us. "Percy, do you even know what you're asking?"

"Yes." We stuck our chin out stubbornly. "We're asking how to save our family."

A proud glint entered the old centaur's eyes as he looked at us. A frown momentarily crossed his face before clearing replaced by curiosity. "That something you wanted to talk to me about. Is it anything to do with you talking in plural?"

We winced. "…Yes?"

We sat in silence for a moment before Percy and I realised Chiron was waiting for us to speak more. Percy sighed, rubbing our eyes. "So, you know how we're wizards?"

The white centaur nodded. We sighed again.

"Well. That's not quite all we are. Our world call us twin souls, two souls living in one body."

Chiron actually grinned. "I guessed as much. I haven't met one of you in years. I believe the last one of your kind I met was about three centuries ago!"

We snapped our head up. "You've met our kind before?"

"Of course." Chiron chuckled. "I'm well over two millennia old, how couldn't I have? Twin souls used to crop up every few years or so in demigod-magic-folk. I haven't seen any since the gods were in England though. That was a long time ago… So Percy, what else are you called?"

"Harry." I grinned. "Harry James Potter was the name we were born under. That's why we didn't expect you to know Percy's name."

"Indeed." Chiron stopped smiling. "So, you two. What are you going to do now?"

"Find that bolt and save our family. Zeus has no right to bring them into this. Merlin, he doesn't even any right to bring us into it, the egotistical –"

Loud thunder cut us off before we could finish that sentence. Percy shrunk into me, away from the noise. Chiron shook his head disapprovingly. "Don't annoy the gods. They aren't like your fellow wizards or demigods. They will kill you."

"Sorry." I looked down at our feet. "But back to the topic of that bolt… any idea where we might find it?"

"If I knew that, Harry, then I would have already retrieved it." Chiron pointed out. "But to start… I suggest you go talk to the Oracle."
Chapter 23

Percy's Point of View

As it turned out, talking to the Oracle involved walking up a flight of rickety wooden stairs up into the attic of the large white building. Inside the cold attic the storm sounded so much louder, the thunder sweeping through my mind and obliterating any clear thoughts other than that he was angry, and so I should be scared. Normal thunderstorms scared me. They seemed to have a direct link to my emotions, and that thought terrified me. What if I hurt someone by accident when I got angry or upset?

But this thunderstorm wasn't a normal one. This one was due to the anger of Zeus, and despite the fact there was no lightning to light up the sky in a glorious display of power, it petrified me. If Zeus had this kind of power to fling around in a minor temper tantrum, what could he do to our friends and family? The thought wasn't even worth thinking about.

I shielded my thoughts from Harry, refusing to let him into my inner turmoil. I rather he thought I was merely scared of thunderstorms than for him to know the real reasons why. Harry had enough on his plate already – I wasn't going to add to it.

Inside the dusty attic the air was warm with a strange scent of mildew, rotten wood and reptiles. Or, to be more specific – snakes. There was the strangest collection of broken weapons, items of clothing and armour. Old, leather cases were strewn around the room, labelled with various names such as ITHICA or AEAEA and even THE LAND OF THE AMAZONS. Places from Odysseus' journey. There were even a few monster heads and other such 'spoils of war'. Before we could take a closer look we noticed the mummy.

She wasn't your average mummy, as in, she wasn't wrapped in strips of cloth. Instead, she was a shrivelled husk of a female human, wearing a tie-died sundress and lots of bead necklaces. Her long black hair was tied back in a headband, making the thin leathery skin stretched over her skull even more prominent. Her eyes were a glassy white, like marbles. Whoever this poor lady was, she'd been dead a very long time.

The very sight of the woman sent shivers up our back. But, as if the sight of her wasn't enough, she sat up on her stool and opened her mouth. Green mist poured out of the mummy's mouth and coiled on the floor like a massive snake. It hissed too, sounding like thousands of snakes, and yet one voice. We caught snatches of lines from the hissing.

*A half-blood of the eldest gods…*

*Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies…*

*To storm or fire the world must fall…*

*The Mark of Athena burns through Rome…*

*And fail without friends, to fly home alone.*

*Those with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approach…*

We flinched back away from the hissing mist, trying to get back to the trapdoor, but it seemed miles
away. An ancient conscience seemed to knock at our mind shields before sweeping them away as if they were a thin cloth curtain. The conscience then seemed to coil round our mind, hissing in content as it peered at us.

"I am the spirit of Delphi, speaker of the prophecies of Phoebus Apollo, slayer of the mighty Python. Approach, seekers, and ask."

I was all for legging it out of the room there and then, but Harry steeled us, and took a deep breath.

'She's not alive, Percy.' Harry reassured me. 'She's just a host for something else – the Oracle of Delphi. She doesn't feel evil, does she?'

'No.' I replied in a small voice, unsure of exactly who Harry was trying to reassure – me or himself. But he was right, the presence in our mind didn't feel evil. Ancient beyond belief and more powerful than anything I'd ever felt before, agreed, and most definitely not human, yes. But it didn't seem particularly interested by the idea of killing us either.

Steeling our nerves, we asked: "What's our destiny?"

The mist began to solidify into shapes before us. Soon recognisable figures stood in front of us; Draco and Severus with Blaise and Theodore. If it wasn't for the green mist twirling slowly around them we could have believe that they really were here, in this small dusty attic in America.

Draco was the first to speak. Well, the rasping voice of the Oracle spoke through his image; "You shall go west, and face the god who has turned."

Blaise, who had his arm wrapped round Theo grinned at us. "You shall find what was stolen, and see if safely returned."

Then it was Severus' turn. His face was sad as he looked at us, as if contemplating the misfortunes that lay ahead. "You shall be betrayed by one who calls you a friend."

Finally Theodore frowned as he delivered the worst line of all: "And you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end."

Their message delivered, the figures dissolved back into the mist they had been created out of. As we stood there, staring dumbly at the swirling green mist, it retreated, coiling into a huge green serpent and slithered back into the mouth of the mummy. Harry snapped out of it first.

"Wait! What do you mean? What friend? And what will we fail to save?"

The tail of the snake had almost disappeared when we heard one tiny hiss. $He who calls you friend hides closest to your hearts...$

Stunned by that one line, we collapsed on the floor. 'Closest to our hearts… But who is that?'

Harry cursed. 'I hate Oracles and Seers. They always speak in the most ridiculous riddles, and twist the truth to make it as confusing as possible.'

I sighed. 'Exactly. But Prophecies are never interpreted in the way that you expect. That, at least, we should remember.'

Harry grumbled, but didn't disagree as he picked us off the floor and headed downstairs. Chiron was waiting for us at the bottom of the stairs with Annabeth. The old centaur gave us a grave look.
"What did She say?"

"Oh, a fair bit." I admitted. "But not much good."

Annabeth huffed. "But did you get your quest?"

We nodded. "We think so. She said we would find what was stolen and see it returned, at least."

When we didn't divulge the rest of the prophecy Chiron gave us a knowing look and a kind smile. "Don't dwell on Her words too much. Everything will work out in the end."

We nodded. "When can we leave?"

Chiron tilted his head. "You'll need a couple of companions. Three was always the sacred number when it came to quests. And I believe you have one volunteer – am I right Annabeth?"

The blond girl nodded curtly, her grey eyes assessing us. Then the most peculiar thing happened. They grew distant and unfocused, as if focusing on something through us. We frowned. From what little we knew of Annabeth, that didn't seem much like her personality at all. She smiled at us.

"Harry James Potter."

We flinched back. "What did you just call us?"

"Harry James Potter." She replied. "The nargles talk to me about many things and you're the talk of the century. Brother to the boy-who-lived."

We narrowed our eyes at the girl. "You aren't Annabeth, are you? Annabeth is the clear headed daughter of Athena. She doesn't strike me as one to have an interested in folk tales such as Nargles."

The daughter of Athena snapped out of it. "What? Sorry."

Chiron frowned at her. "Are you alright, Annabeth? You seemed to… disappear for a moment."

She frowned but shook her head. "I'm fine. I just saw a different name when I looked at Percy. Coupled by a title."

We took a deep breath. "We were born under the name Harry James Potter. They just didn't believe us when we told them about me – Percy that is. Lily and James just thought that we were messing around, and that we were ill, and that's why we acted differently at times."

For the smallest moment something akin to recognition shone in Annabeth's eyes. I could tell that we were going to end up thoroughly interrogated on the subject by the end of the day "Curious."

I turned to Chiron then. "Do we need anyone else if we go with Annabeth? I mean, we are kind of two people."

The centaur tilted his head. "I suppose it would qualify, but you might need another for man power."

We grinned. "Chiron, we have magic on our side. We'll be fine."

Rolling his eyes, Chiron acknowledged our point. "Go pack and you can leave after lunch. You don't have much time."

Annabeth looked like she wanted to argue for a minute, but in the end she just left with a small sigh. We followed after her, ignoring the rain that seemed to slide of an invisible shield a few centimetres
away from our body and the sticky mud that was soaking into the bottom of our jeans. The rain was
starting to ease off, and the impenetrable black clouds had lightened up enough to let a few weak
beams of sunlight through.

Packing didn't consist of much, given that we hadn't yet bothered to unpack. We stuffed some
clothes in a spare rucksack we had packed along with some toiletries. We then shrunk our trunk
wandlessly and cast the featherweight charm on it before stringing it on a chain around our neck.

Lunch was a much lonelier affair then I had originally anticipated. I realised that Chiron might not
even have been looking for us at breakfast to notice we weren't there. We were sitting alone at our
own little stone picnic bench, with no siblings to talk with. The curse of being the only living child of
one of the big three. We sighed as we picked at our food. We had sacrificed a good part of our lunch
already to Poseidon, hoping for some help with our quest.

Half way through lunch an owl decided to drop by for a visit, carrying a letter from Draco. We
grinned as we read it, ignoring the strange looks we received from all of the other campers. From a
spare pocket we pulled a spare roll of parchment, a quill and some ink. It always paid to have some
with you. While Harry wrote the letter I added random contributions, breaking his more formal style
of letter. Draco had always told us that reading our letters was hilarious. We could talk about the
same subject and have a mini debate with each other in the letter at the same time. After reading this
one before Harry sent it off I agreed with him.

Before sending the poor owl off back to Draco we gave it some water and a few spare owl treats we
had on us. It hadn't taken longer than the first week at Hogwarts to realise that it was
always a good
idea to carry owl treats. A sudden presence behind us made us look up. It was Annabeth.

"What was that?" She demanded, looking slightly offended.

'Owls are Athena's sacred animal.' Harry commended offhand. I scowled at him.

'Not helping.'

"That was us sending a letter to our friend."

"Overseas." Annabeth snapped, her voice low.

We nodded absent-mindedly, not really paying that much attention to what we were saying. "Before
you start lecturing us about owls, we know. But our culture don't use normal muggle posting
systems. We use owls to deliver messages. Our magic messes with technology, so we can't use that –
even if purebloods would lower themselves to that standard."

Annabeth bristled at that. "Lower themselves to that standard? Who do these mortals think they
are?"

This time it was us glaring at her. "They are purebloods. Generations of clean magical blood that
hasn't yet been 'tainted' by muggle blood. I'm not saying we approve of their beliefs that anything
muggle is 'dirty' but enough of our friends share those beliefs, so we understand how they think.
Given my friend Draco is a pureblood and his manor is on unplottable land, I can't exactly use
muggle methods!"

This time Wisdom's daughter drew back as if struck. "Muggles. You keep saying muggles. And
magical blood and unplottable… What do you mean?"

We had probably already said more than we should have. The Statue of Wizarding Secrecy
technically wasn't being broken since Demigods existed in a world that was just as secret as our own.
Besides, legend suggest we had evolved out of their culture so it's not as if they would suddenly go around blurting out our secrets anymore that we would theirs. So, with a sigh, we tried to explain. "I don't suppose you've heard of the magical communities in the world, have you? Witches and Wizards? We exist in the folk-tales of most cultures."

She shook her head, her anger trailing away as it was replaced by her insatiable curiosity.

"Well, we exist. The most common story of our origins is that we are descendants of Hecate, Titan of Magic, or were blessed by her with the gift of magic. Muggles are non-magic folk. Over half of the Wizarding population are 'muggleborn' – witches or wizards born into muggle families. Since 'purebloods' don't like mixing with muggleborns… well, you get extremists who try to wipe out the entire muggle population."

Annabeth gasped, as did some of the other campers who had started listening in. They didn't question our story. I guess after finding out that the Greek Gods exist, learning witches and wizards do too couldn't have been too much of a stretch.

The next half hour was spent answering questions until Chiron finally came to interrupt so Annabeth and we could leave for our quest.

"But Chiron!" Luke protested. "A quest is supposed to be a group of three!"

"Didn't you tell them Percy?" Chiron asked. We looked at the floor and shook our head. Chiron sighed. "I believe a few of you have come across the mention of twin souls as you study some of the more modern heroes I trained. It would appear, they're not as forgotten as I had thought. Percy here was born under the name Harry James Potter, and later they had to name Percy because their parents believed them to be ill as they didn't know about twin souls."

Chiron went on to explain exactly what a twin soul was and his theory about magic-folk, demigods and twin souls.

After all the explanations were finally over, we didn't feel quite as isolated. There were no more secrets between us and the campers now and it felt strangely liberating. We didn't have to worry about accidentally blurting out the wrong thing, or doing something that they found really strange. It was almost as if we were starting to fit in a little.

Annabeth and I were just getting into the camp bus to get a ride to New York where we would properly start our quest when Chiron suddenly remembered something. He handed us a rather normal looking muggle ball-point pen. We gave him a strange look, but he explained before we could comment on the pen.

"Your father gave me that years ago. I kept it, not knowing that you were who I was waiting for. But the prophecy seems clearer now. You are the one."

I tilted our head, but curiously uncapped the pen. It grew longer and heavier in our hand. Within half a second we were holding the most beautiful shimmering bronze sword with a double-edged blade, a leather-wrapped grip and a flat hilt riveted with gold studs. It was perfectly balanced in our hand, almost as if it was made for us.

"That sword as a rather long and tragic history behind it that we needn't go into now." Chiron told us. "It's called Anaklusmos."

"Riptide." Harry translated easily. I could almost picture the Greek letters as Chiron said the word. It seemed strangely fitting for the blade. But a thought did occur to us.
"Why are you giving us a sword? We already have one."

Chiron smiled. "That isn't just any sword, Percy. It's made out of celestial bronze, forged by the Cyclopes and tempered in the heart of Mount Etna before being cooled in the River Lethe. It's deadly to monsters, and any creature from the Underworld – provide they don't kill you first. However, it won't have any effect on a mortal. The blade would simply pass through them like an illusion. A demigod however… he can be killed by both celestial and normal weapons. You're twice as vulnerable. Keep that in mind."

"Good to know." I swallowed nervously, recapping the pen. We had been studying in while the old centaur had been talking and had come to the conclusion that it had a retrieval woven into the sword. If we lost it, it would return to us within a few minutes. "But won't the mortals see it?"

Chiron gave us another of those strange smiles of his. "Mist is a very powerful thing, Percy. Remember that."

Not bothering to question that, I put the pen in our pocket. Just before I could get into the van, however, Luke came running up to us, a box clutched tightly under his arm.

"Hey! I'm glad I managed to catch you." He grinned, offering Annabeth a warm one armed hug. Then he held out the box to us. I tilted our head curiously at him, but we accepted the box. Luke scratched his head as he tried to explain. "I wanted to say good luck and um… I thought maybe you might find some use for these."

Inside the box was a pair of what looked like perfectly normal trainers. We gave Luke a questioning look. He smirked.

"Maia!"

White bird's wings erupted from the heels, startling us so much that we almost dropped them. Luke smiled fondly at them.

"Those served me well on my quest. A gift from Dad. I don't have much use for them nowadays." Luke's expression turned sad, and he ran a finger over the scar on his cheek.

"Thank you." We offered him a genuine smile. "We'll put them to good use and return them good as new to you."

Finally, we were off. Argus, the hundred eyed camp guard, was our driver. He winked at us as we got it. He started the engine and began to pull away. Behind us, next to Thalia's Pine tree, Chiron stood in his full centaur form, waving his bow in salute. We recognised it from when we had decided to study centaurs as a side project last year. It was the farewell that a father would give to his son when he was sent off to war. We felt strangely touched by it, and waved back.

Fixing our eyes on the road ahead after the camp disappeared behind us, I turned to Harry.

'So it begins."

'Aye.' He grinned. 'So the adventure begins. Lily's going to have a fit when she finds out about this!' I chuckled. 'Not to mention Severus if we fail to complete our homework.'

We both burst out laughing at that. We ignored Annabeth's eye rolling. Right now, life was good. Our quest had begun, and we felt free.
Chapter 24

Harry's Point of View

We watched the countryside blur into a mess of green with curiosity as Argus drove ever closer to the city. Annabeth huffed as she looked at us – our nose was all but pressed up against the window as we watched.

"Really, Seaweed Brain?" The blonde girl snorted. "You'd think you'd never been inside a car before."

"We haven't." I sent the girl a frown. "Our world doesn't use them. Well, unless their on Political missions to the muggle Government."

With those few words we turned back to the window. We had slowed down as we reached the city and the blur of green countryside had melted into the shapes of grey buildings, colourful flashing signs and people. We found ourselves staring at the various food restaurants – McDonalds seemed to pop up a lot – and every kid in the back of his parent's car, every billboard and every shopping mall. It seemed so foreign to the tidier, smaller streets that we wizards preferred. Everything was just a jumble of colours and people and noise.

I can guess what you're thinking – we've visited our muggle cousins before – so why haven't we seen all this before? We don't actually leave the Dursley's house when we visit them. Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia are far too concerned with appearances and are constantly worrying that we'll say something strange, or do a 'freaky thing' if they let us outside. Muggles!

Annabeth huffed again. "You're so weird."

We looked at her, hurt. "What? We bet you'd behave similarly if you visited our world. Besides, why do you hate us so much?"

"I don't hate you. It's just…" Annabeth fiddled with her invisibility cap, "we're not supposed to get along, ok? Our parents are rivals."

We narrowed our eyes at her, the now old argument springing up again. "Well, we don't see how that can be, given your parents have never met ours."

"You are the son of the sea god!" Annabeth snapped. She sighed, and her eyes softened slightly. "You're going to have to accept that sometime."

"James might not have been the best father for us, but at least he was around when we grew up. Poseidon might have donated some of his genes to us, but he is not our father."

Thunder rumbled ominously in the background, and Annabeth flashed us a sad smile. "You don't have a great home-life do you?"

Our barriers snapped up. "That's none of your business!"

Argus caught our eye and winked at us. We offered a small smile in return. We liked Argus, we had decided. He wasn't a man of many words, but he had come across as the type who was fiercely protective of those he cared about. I mean, just look at the myths of him and Hera!
"Believe it or not, most kids at camp didn't have a good home life either. I mean, I ran away from home when I was seven." Annabeth's voice was hesitant, as if she didn't really want to talk about it, but she didn't stop. "I met Luke and… and Thalia, and we formed our own little family."

We snorted, but didn't turn to look at our new travelling companion. "Yeah, no offence, but I think your life was a bit different than mine. You didn't have a famous brother thrown into the spotlight while you were all but forgotten in the shadows. You don't have to deal with only being allowed a half-relationship with him because you were sorted into the wrong house! You don't have to watch him and wonder if he will actually live to use the grades he gets in his exams, because you don't have a psychopathic Dark Lord threatening to return and destroy your entire world!"

When we finally did turn to look at the blond, her eyes were wet with unshed tears. "You're right, I don't," Annabeth admitted, "but my point is – we have all been through something similar. Admittedly some more than others, but you're not alone, here. We are your family, and we look after our own."

Before anything more could be said, Argus stopped the van, and signalled that this was where he had to leave us. Climbing out, I looked for any land mark to indicate where we might be. There was a Greyhound Station a little way up the road, but otherwise we could have been anywhere. Annabeth grabbed our hand, and led us inside.

"Where do we need to go, Seaweed brain?" She asked. "Any idea from your Prophecy?"

"You shall go west, and face the god who has turned." We quoted, "You shall find what was stolen, and see it safely returned."

"The god who has turned…" Annabeth mused. "Well, the only god I know for sure lies west is Hades in Los Angeles."

We chatted quietly to one another as we waited for the bus. Annabeth asked us about Hogwarts and we asked her about camp. We talked about our families and friends, and the kind of hobbies we enjoyed. And eventually, our conversation faded away into a companionable silence, as we just sat there, enjoying each other's company.

'She's like us.' Percy told me randomly. I gave him a strange look.

'What do you mean, she's like us? I mean, yeah, she's a demigod but…'

'No, no, no.' Percy interrupted. 'I mean she's like us – a twin soul. Watch her. Annabeth is in control almost all the time, but she still gets distracted rather easily, and she gets these distant looks, as if someone's chatting in her ear when she's doing something. And then when she said your name – she just seemed to blank out.'

As Percy spoke it all seemed to just click in our head. There were times when Annabeth would just shift, her eyes taking on a dreamy tinge as she looked at the world. If you looked closely, her eyes would look more silver when that happened, not the clear grey that her cabin mates' always had.

I thought back to that dream we had a while ago – the first time we had seen her. She had come across as a much more distracted character, noticing nothing but yet everything going on around her. Her voice had been both dreamy and confident, as if there were two personalities trying to speak through it.

"Why didn't you tell us?" We asked suddenly, breaking the silence. Annabeth gave us a startled look.
"Tell you what?"

"That you're like us."

Annabeth looked down at her feet, frowning. When she looked up, her eyes were that strange silver-grey. It was so beautiful...

I shook my head to clear it. Annabeth smiled distantly at us.

"Hello Harry Potter. Percy Potter."

"Hi?" We frowned back at her. She laughed.

"I'm Luna, Annabeth's other half. I distract her a lot, so I try and leave her alone as much as I can..." Annabeth blinked, but didn't look overly upset.

"No!" I exclaimed. "Don't you get lonely doing that? As if you're not quite complete?"

"Sometimes." Luna nodded. "But it's fine, I usually just listen to the Nargles when she's busy."

Then Luna frowned, and her eyes abruptly cleared. "Sorry! Luna can be a bit..."

"A bit what?" I frowned. Luna was nice! "Annabeth, Luna is your other half. Stop blocking her out. You'll never reach your best potential if you don't. Besides, personally, we'd be lost without each other. You don't realise how much you're hurting yourself by pushing her away."

Annabeth scowled. "Our stepmother didn't want to accept that she existed. She used to hit me whenever Luna started ranting on about one creature or another. I mean, at first she just passed it off as childish nonsense, but later..."

Annabeth shook her head. "No. It's better this way. With Luna it's just too hard to fit in. I love her, don't get me wrong, but... I mean, look at you two! You were ignored for years because of who you were."

We flinched, our eyes hardening as we threw up our barriers. We gave her a hard glare. "Well at least we can accept who and what we are. Until you can do that you are lying to everyone – including yourself."

The previously comfortable silence was gone, replaced by a crackling anger. Eventually it became almost too much to bear, so we stood up and started pacing back and forth fuming silently. How could she just block out her other half? I wouldn't be able to last half an hour ignoring Percy, let alone for an entire day! I mean, I could understand why she was scared of not being accepted. If nobody else would understand that we could, but still... Being different wasn't always a bad thing, and at some point in her life she would just have to accept that.

A soft hand on our shoulder paused our pacing. Our head snapped up to meet Annabeth's eyes. She looked upset and guilty, unshed tears welling up in her eyes. Suddenly all our anger faded away and we pulled her in for a hug.

"I just... we used to be really close, and then people started to stop accepting us. And... it hurt, you know? So I started blocking her out. I guess it did still hurt – but in a different way and... I miss her!" Annabeth cried quietly into our shoulder. I patted her on the head.

"Shhh." Percy whispered. "It's fine. Just... stop fighting her, yeah? And if people back at camp can't accept you for who you really are, then they aren't anyone to be called friend, are they? Besides, I'd
say you could probably commit murder and still be Luke's little sister. In fact, I don't doubt he already suspects it. We used to dream of you two at camp, you know. You aren't going to get rid of that boy that easily. Especially since you both lost... well."

Luckily the bus arrived before we could say anything else. We shouldered our pack and grabbed Annabeth's too before climbing onto the large vehicle.

The bus journey was blissfully uneventful. Annabeth, Luna, Percy and I all chatted about the gods' politics as well as fighting techniques and other day-to-day gossip. Annabeth also told us about Celestial Bronze and its properties that allowed it to kill monsters. Thoroughly interested, we asked about our gold knife. Annabeth and Luna looked delighted as they explained the myth about Chrysaor and his golden blade.

The bus stopped at another station, and we had to get off. Night was closing in on us, and we were hungry and tired. The next bus to where we wanted to go didn't leave until the morning, so we resigned ourselves to a sleepless night. Wandering around a bit, we came across a strange little place.

"Aunty Em's Garden Emporium." I read for Percy and Annabeth's benefit. Luna wasn't dyslexic, but she didn't often help Annabeth with reading, so that left it me. We could smell chips cooking from inside, and by popular vote decided to investigate. Percy was far too excited by the prospect of food to really pay attention to his surroundings, but the further into the shop we went, the more foreboding I felt.

'Percy.' I hissed. 'Look at the statues.'

'Huh?' Percy faltered, making Annabeth pause too.

"What is it?"

"The statues." I waved a hand at them. "Look at them. You'd think you'd want happy statues, wouldn't you? So why do they all look so terrified, so scary? Something isn't right here."

"Ignore them." Annabeth laughed. "Maybe it's just a bad sculpture. You'd be amazed at what artwork some people create nowadays."

"Maybe..." I couldn't throw off the feeling of unease however. I slipped to the back of our mind, letting Percy take complete control while I just watched and took in all the small little details that the others were missing.

When we reached the source of the food smell, we were met by the sight of a woman dressed in a long dress and a veil covering half her face. She smiled at us, greeting us warmly enough and sitting us down with some food to eat, but I still couldn't get rid of the feeling something was wrong here.

"Ah, Percy." The woman smiled at us. "Don't you look so handsome – you have your father's eyes you know."

We flinched. I became suddenly aware of a low hissing noise in the background, something that could easily be dismissed as hissing oil in the pan, yet I knew couldn't be...

"How do you know our name?" We snapped. "And we got our eyes from our mother, actually. James has hazel eyes."

The woman's smile faltered. "Oh. You look like someone I used to know... Is Percy your name too? I could have sworn my nephew looked exactly like you..."
The words were lies, I could almost smell them, but Percy just seemed to accept them. His consciousness seemed to have a warm fuzziness to it. I almost cursed.

'Percy! Oi, Percy, snap out of it!' I begged. 'Please. Something's wrong, can't you see that?'

"Now, you two lovely children. Would you mind me taking a photo of you for my next sculpture? You look like such lovely children."

Annabeth and Percy agreed willingly enough, more than happy to help a kind lady. No matter how much I tried, I couldn't distract Percy or steal control from him. It was only when the woman started to lift her veil that I realised exactly who she was. I curse and all but yanked Percy aside, clamping our eyes shut and pushing Annabeth to the ground she groaned.

"Percy, what the Hades?"

"Well excuse me if you want to be turned into a rock by Medusa."

The lady hissed in laughter. "Such a clever boy, and you broke my spell as well. Just who are you exactly?"

"Names have power." I snapped back, keeping our eyes locked firmly on Annabeth. I could hear Percy whimpering in the back of our mind, apologising over and over again. I flashed him a grin.

'Percy, it's fine. She bewitched you or something.'

I slowly moved my hand into our jacket pocket where we had put Riptide. I winked at Annabeth. "You alright, wise-girl?"

She let out a shaky laugh. "I think I'm alright."

Nodding, I raised our voice to talk to Medusa again, aware of her moving closer to us. "You going to let us go, or do we have to kill you?"

"As if you could kill me, foolish demigod."

I pulled the pen out of our pocket. Before I could uncap it, however, the clatter of hooves distracted us. Our head snapped up. To our surprise it was Grover, his face pale as he quickly looked at the ground after glimpsing Medusa's snakey hair.

"Oh Zeus." The satyr whimpered. "Not good, this is so not good."

"Grover?" Annabeth gasped, her voice shrill with a hint of fear. "What are you doing here?"

"Let's ask questions later, yeah?" I recommended, uncapping Riptide and jumping to our feet, swinging wildly at Medusa with our eyes tightly shut. The monster leapt back, hissing at the sight of our blade.

Percy, recovered from his shock, nudged me aside. 'Budge up, Bro. You're little use here. Can you use our magic to give us an idea of what things look like?'

'Sure thing!' I grinned. I summoned a blindfold with our magic first, then I reached out with our magic, using it like an echo system, feeling it reflect back as it bounced off of things. Percy immediately swung into motion as soon as he could 'see' what he was doing. He turned us to face the monster head on, ignoring Annabeth's and Grover's shocked gasps. Percy swung Riptide, sheering of the bronze claws that Medusa was trying to slice us up with.
"Hades, woman. You really do need to get a manicure at some point. Claws were so last millennia."
Percy joked, earning him a weak chuckle from Grover. I couldn't keep track of Percy as he ducked slashed and hacked at Medusa. Finally, however, he got a lucky swing and Riptide passed through Medusa's neck like a knife through butter. We heard a wet thud and a dull hiss before everything grew silent once more. We transfigured Medusa's veil into a sack and put her head into it before removing the blindfold.

Medusa's body had turned into the now familiar yellow monster dust, although her head remained as a spoil of war. We recapped Riptide before dusting off our hands and turning to face our stunned companions.

"You can open your eyes now." We grinned. Annabeth and Grover looked at us incredulously.

"What was that?"

Our grin widened. "That, my dear friends, was magic. We sent out waves of magic. They would bounce of things and reflect back to us, giving us a clear image of what was around us without needing to use our eyes. Useful, huh? No sense of colour though. Just shapes."

"Cool!" Grover smiled at us then nodded at the sack. "What are you going to do with that?"

I frowned, then Percy whispered an idea to me and our grin returned. We headed back into the shop and looked in the till. There were several boxes, some packing slips for Hermes Overnight Express and quite a few galleons in the till. We put Medusa's head in a box and placed a couple of galleons in a pouch before addressing the box to:

Zeus
Mount Olympus
600th Floor,
Empire State Building

With best wishes,

PERCY AND HARRY POTTER

"He's not going to like that." Grover warned. "He's going to think you're impertinent."

"Well maybe we are." We flashed the satyr a smile. "Besides, he hates us anyway."

There was a sound like the ding of a cash register, then the package floated off the table before disappearing with a pop.

"So." Annabeth turned to face Grover after rolling her eyes at us. "Why are you here again?"


"Ok. Repeat that a little slower." I requested.

"Dionysus kind of make me follow you guys and make sure that you were safe." Grover blushed an even deeper red.

"Meddling gods." I muttered. "Still. At least he cares."
A cackling laugh made us all spin around. All three of the Furies were standing in the doorway. The one from Green Park grinned at us.

"Oh Dionysus seems to have an odd attachment to Twin souls. Something to do with two personalities driving your kind mad or something."

We slipped our hand into our pocket, curling our fist around Riptide. "Look, I'm not sure exactly what you want us to confess to but-
"

"Oh no," the Fury interrupted, "our Master sends his apologies about that. In fact, he insists that he we fetch you to meet him in person. He wants… a favour… from you. If that isn't too much to ask."

We nodded, ignoring Annabeth and Grover's mutters of disapproval.

"Well, if Percy's going then so are we. We're his quest partners." Annabeth declared, daring the Furies to suggest otherwise. They nodded, as if expecting that. The Fury I had fought before grabbed me, and the other two grabbed Annabeth and Grover. The shadows seemed to bend towards us, and then suddenly we were travelling at high speed through a very dark tunnel. Strange howls filled the air as things brushed past us.

Finally, however, we came out in a large hall, and were thrown to the floor in front of a large throne, upon which sat a man dressed in a black toga. His eyes were as black as the shadows we had just past though, and they seemed to gleam as they passed over us. We could practically see the light of our souls reflect in the dark orbs.

"Greetings, Demigods and Satyr." The god boomed. "I am Lord Hades. Welcome to the Underworld."
Chapter 25

Percy's Point of View

I started up at our Uncle in a sense of shock. Here he was, the Lord of the Underworld, greeting us with a simple "I am Lord Hades. Welcome to the Underworld." Talk about a let-down. I mean, the myths got his looks perfect – long dark locks, Tartarus-black eyes and pale skin with his moody expression. But his actually mood? He looked… well, I wouldn't say Happy, but he didn't look much like he wanted to kill us either…

"Hi?" I replied, tilting our head at our Uncle. "We were expecting more death threats from that…"

Hades chuckled, the sound sending chills up our spine.

'Percy!' Harry scolded me. 'We're trying to live, yes? Not persuade Uncle Hades to kill us!'

"You are very bold, young Demigod. And not entirely in agreement with yourself, I see. No matter. Most of your kind would give anything to find me on a good day but, alas, I don't seemed to have many of them round my brother's spawn."

"Gee." I commented dryly, noticing Hades' eyes glittering with amusement. "Thanks, I think. So glad we can entertain you."

Hades smirked at us as if in agreement. Then his face grew serious. "You were coming to see if I had my brother's bolt, weren't you? I apologise about the Fury earlier, you see, I was angry because something of mine was stolen and when I sensed your aura… well. Let's just say I didn't really pause to think that England might have been a bit far way to steal from us gods at Olympus…"

We nodded and offered our Uncle a small smile. "We all have our bad days. I mean, once, Percy was really sleepy and almost blew up the entire dungeons at Hogwarts…"

Hades laughed at that and I pouted. 'Harry! We agreed not to speak of that again!'

"You truly do amuse me, nephews. If Poseidon wouldn't declare war over it I might just decide to keep you."

Our eyes darkened at the thought of Poseidon and we scowled, but bit our tongue. Annabeth and Luna slipped their hand into ours. It wasn't a big action, but it meant more to us than any words could. With them at our back, I felt like we could take on anything – Dark Lords, gods… Perhaps I'd go as far to say Titans to!

"Uh-hem. Yes." Harry shifted our feet awkwardly.

"So do you have any idea where the bolt might be?" Annabeth spoke up, her grey eyes sharp and questioning.

"What can you offer me in return for such information?" Hades eyes glinted ominously, though our female companions apparently missed it. Before we could intervene, Annabeth spoke up.

"What do you want from us?"

We cursed Annabeth. Any Slytherin knew not to bargain with a guy who looks like he's already
'Annabeth would never be a Slytherin, would she?' I sighed. Harry laughed.

'Nope! I doubt Luna would either… she's too…'

'Herself? Obsessed with the unknown?'

'All of the above.' Harry laughed.

"Well. If you promise to return my Helm of Darkness to me, I could be persuaded." Hades smirked.

We rolled our eyes. "We could agree to those terms, provided we can put Zeus' bolt as a priority. I mean, a war of the gods… That could be catastrophic!"

Hades' eyes narrowed and we flinched back slightly. Annabeth noticed this, and piped up.

"If it wasn't for the promise of war hanging over our heads, I swear, we would prioritise your Helm. As it is, Zeus is also threatening Harry and Percy's mortal family. I imagine the paper work for that would be absolutely awful…"

Hades nodded, then chuckled. "Don't think I can't see what you're doing. Now, run along. I believe what you're searching for can be located near the sea. Alecto! Drop off my nephews and their companions in a hotel for the night. May the fates gift you a swift quest, Heroes."

Hades smiled at us, then we were trapped in the shadows again, with the world speeding around us. We were dropped off outside a large hotel. It didn't look like anything that Lily had described to us that a hotel usually looks like. It was all bright lights and loud music and loud voices. Large flashing letters above the hotel spelled out 'Locus Casino'. We frowned.

"What's a casino?"

Grover let out a bleating laugh. "A casino is a place where mortals go to gamble money and play games. To have fun."

We glanced sharply up at Alecto, who was grinning maliciously down at us.

"Lord Hades said a hotel."

"Oh, the Locus Casino is also a hotel. Don't worry so much, it's safe." The Fury bared her fangs at us in a smile before the shadows bended towards her and she disappeared.

"Well. Lord Hades' orders." Annabeth said with a sigh, looking up at the large building.

Inside it was even noisier. We checked in at the front desk and were provided each with a card-key to our room. We were told that the key could also work on all the games. Unlimited balance. Uneasy, we walked slowly up to our room, and dumped our belongings on the beds. Vaguely, at the back of our consciousness, I was aware of our suspicion slowly fading away into the background, until it was just a tiny voice in a crowd of screaming fans.

A slow smile stretched over Annabeth's face. "There's not much we can do tonight. Why don't we go have fun for a little while?"

Grover was quick to agree to the idea, and so was I. I could hear Harry warning me that this mightn't be the best idea, we had to get off early in the morning after all, but I just pushed him away with a laugh.
'You have to live at some point Harry!' 

We went down to the ground floor, and started investigating some of the games. There were a lot of muggle computer games and all kinds of gambling. We avoided those and settled on cards. In a small corner we found a young boy, shuffling a deck of cards as he rearranged some small figurines. I grinned and went over to investigate.

As we drew closer I began to look at the boy in more detail. He couldn't have been much older than nine, with dark hair and eyes and an olive tan. The young lad's eyes lit up with delight as he saw us walking over to him. He stood up, and I grinned as I took in his black jeans and white top, with an over-sized avatar jacket over the top. He was just too adorable!

"Hey." I smiled at him. "What game have you got there?"

"Mythomagic!" The boy exclaimed. "Have you ever played it?"

"I can't say that we have." Harry joined in. "Want to explain the rules to us?"

The boy frowned slightly at us. "Why are you talking in the plural? Do you have an imaginary friend? Because my sister says that I'm too old to have an imaginary friend."

The boy pouted.

"Not exactly." We said. "More that there's two of us in one body. We're Harry and Percy Potter."

The lad brightened up a lot. We had always found that younger children could understand us more, as they had the imagination to believe almost anything to be true. "I'm Nico Di Angelo. Do you really want to learn about Mythomagic?"

At our nod the boy shot off describing the rules and aims of the game and the different players and their attack levels and a whole ton of other stuff that we could hardly understand. We played a few games with Nico, until an older girl came along.

"Nico? Nico? There you are! What have I told you about running off and playing with strangers?" The girl scolding, crouching down next to us. She shared many of his features, with long curly black hair, warm dark eyes and olive tan, with a splash of freckles on her face. She looked maybe a year or two older than us and we flinched back as she glowered at us.

"Sorry Bianca." The boy sighed, looking forlornly at his shoes. "I was just trying to make friends. And Harry and Percy are really nice! They actually want to play with me."

Nico crossed his arms, and I saw a flash of guilt cross Bianca's face as she pulled him in for a hug. "Oh, I'm sorry Nico. I'll play with you later if you like, ok?"

"But Percy and Harry want to play with me now." Nico retorted.

Bianca turned to look at us. "Percy and Harry? Which one are you?"

We blinked at her. "Both."

The older girl frowned. "That's not funny, you know. Playing with a younger boy's head. Who are you really?"

"Percy and Harry Potter." We sighed. "It's complicated, but the basics is that we're two souls in one body."
"Harry! Percy! Oh there you two are!" Annabeth exclaimed as she came running towards us. She blinked when she saw our two companions. "Who's this?"

"Bianca and Nico di Angelo." Harry introduced. "We were playing Mythomagic with Nico here when his sister came along."

Annabeth nodded, obviously distracted. "Hi. But, we need to leave, now!"

"Why?" I tilted our head at our younger friend. "We only just got here!"

But the blonde daughter of Athena was already dragging us away, "This place is a trap. We need to find Grover and get out. Are you familiar with the tale of the Lotus Eaters?"

"The people who lived on that island that ate some weird hallucinogen drug that made you forget about your home country?"

"Yes!" Annabeth shook her head, and Luna came through. "I was obvious, wasn't it? Alecto had a grudge with you. This was the best way to follow Hades' orders and still get back at you. The Lotus Casino. We need to leave. Now!"

"What? Ok." Even with two of us it took us a moment to process what we were being told. "Where's Grover?"

Luna flashed us a grin. "This way!"

She let go of our hand and ran, trusting us to follow. Grover was playing some weird muggle game were the deer were shooting the hunters rather than the other way round. He seemed to be getting really into it.

"Die mortal scum! How do you like a taste of nature huh?!" Grover was yelling. Luna grabbed one of his arms, and I grabbed the other.

"We need to go. Now!"

"No!" Grover yelled. "I want to play!"

"Grover it's a trap!" We pleaded. "We need to go. We have a quest, remember?"

Since Grover refused to listen, Luna handed my bag to me and shouldered Grover's and her own. "Can you get him? I'll go check out."

We nodded, and prised Grover away from the game and pulled him towards the exit. It took a while, but we were slowly making progress. Nico appeared at our side suddenly.

"Are you leaving?" He asked, his eyes wide. We nodded. Nico gasped. "But nobody ever leaves!"

"Which is why we have to." We told him. "Listen, get your sister and tell her you need to get out of this place. Go somewhere new. It'll be a good experience for you. Maybe even find a school to go to. But get out of the casino, ok?"

The younger boy nodded. "She might not listen to me though…"

"Hey." Harry put a hand on his shoulder. "She cares for you, ok? And even if she doesn't listen, I'll come find you when this all blows over, ok?"

We smiled, and Nico smiled shyly back. We pulled Grover away, and found Annabeth arguing with
"We have to leave. Now!" Annabeth was snapping. Or, at least I think it was Annabeth given she was shouting. The man said something back and Annabeth growled, grabbing us and storming towards the doors. Some guards attempted to get in our way, but Annabeth pulled out her knife, and they quickly backed off. We grinned. That girl was certainly one of a kind.

Once we were outside Grover stopped fighting.

"Oh my gods." He moaned, putting his face in his hands. "I am so sorry. I didn't hurt you, did I?"

We shook our head. "Nah. Maybe a couple of bruises but we'd had far worst, don't worry about it!"

After retreating a little way from the Casino we decided to create a game plan. We were still in Los Angeles, so we decided to first head down towards the beach, and see what we could find there. Annabeth decided to check out the latest newspaper when we passed a little café near the beach. She swore when she noticed the date on it.

"Guys. It's the seventeenth today! We were in that casino for two and a half days!"

"What?!" We shot her an incredulous look. "We couldn't have been in there for more and a couple of hours at the most!"

Grover shook his head. "Time moves differently in places where monsters dwell. Why do you think so many people get lost in the Bermuda Triangle?"

"Because it's a portal to a different dimension?" Harry retorted. "It's just a coincidence!"

"Harry, it's not. We have four days to find this bolt. We shouldn't waste them." Annabeth snapped.

'Harry, let it go. They know more about this than we do. As much as you love to read, you didn't even get a day at camp to find out information. Grover and Annabeth have had years. Besides, we're all tired from lack of sleep. For the sack of our sanity, let it go. Get some rest, I'll look after things for a while.' I advised, pushing Harry gently to the back of our mind.

'Ok. Just for a short while then…' Harry agreed, quickly slipping into the land of dreams.

I turned to the others. "We should eat, then investigate the sea. Agreed?"

Our companions nodded, and we sat down at a table to order. Just as our food arrived, a tall man walked into the café, wearing typical biker's gear. He quickly scanned the busy café before his eyes landed on us. Or, at least, I think they did. It was a bit hard to see since he was wearing sun-glasses, but it wasn't too hard to guess.

The man strode over to where we were sitting and sat next to Harry and me. A wave of anger washed over us with his arrival, and I had to use all our Occlumency skills to avoid punching the guy there and then. I didn't recognise him, but Annabeth and Luna sure did. I'm not sure about Grover; he was too busy stuffing his face to notice what was going on around him.

"Lord Ares." Annabeth bowed her head to the god. "What brings you here?"

"Actually." The god said casually as he stole one of my chips. "I was looking for you three… five… whatever!"

"Lord Hades mentioned that what we are looking for we would find near the sea. The prophecy
mentions a 'god who has turned'. Quite a coincidence, don't you think?" I asked Annabeth, who widened her eyes in horror at our words.

"Percy! You don't go around accusing gods of something like that!"

"Why? We were going to accuse Uncle Hades if he hadn't reached us first." I pointed out.

Ares coughed, obviously amused by our argument. "Well, demigodlings. You certainly are the most agreeable bunch I've met during a quest."

I glared at him. "How about this, Ares. You don't seem to be one to talk much. What do you say I challenge you to a duel? If we win then you tell us what you know about Zeus' bolt and Hades' helm – or if you have them we get them as spoils of war. If you win then," I swallowed nervously, "then you can kill us."

"Alright. I accept your challenge, boy. I hope you're ready to meet Thanatos, because you have no chance." Ares declared.

I scoffed. "Is that so, War God? Surely your daddy dearest warned you not to underestimate your enemies? You gods know nothing about us! You didn't even know we existed until we came to camp."

Ares' eyes began to glow behind his sunglasses, proving my statement true. I beamed at him. "Well then. Shall we go to the beach for this? It's a bit crowded for a duel, isn't it?"

"Fine!" Ares' snapped, storming out of the café. We threw some money on the table then followed him out. Annabeth and Grover followed us.

"I hope you know what you're doing Percy. Harry is not going to be happy with you when he wakes." Luna stated dreamily. "Don't die. Hades might like you, but Thanatos? He's not exactly fair."

"We know." I said grimly. "Tell my brother I love him if I fail, yeah?"

The blond girl nodded. I flashed her a small smile before pulling out Riptide. Here we go.

Ares was already swinging his sword when we reached the sand. Not wanting mortals in interfere I threw up a notice-me-not barrier round our section of the beach, especially round us. Ares raised an eyebrow but didn't comment. Annabeth counted down from three, then he charged.

First of all, when it comes to challenging war gods… don't. Even if you're absolutely positive that you can win, it's still bad for your health. It took all of my skill to dodge Ares' blade, let alone get it any blows of my own. I let ourself be forced slowly back into the sea.

As the water touched our skin I felt a rush of energy flood us, and Harry jolted away. He let out a startled yelp as the first thing he saw was Ares' blade swinging straight for our head.

'Percy!' He yelled. 'I can't even leave you alone for an hour, can I?'

I grinned. 'Depends on how exciting you want things to be when you come back.'

'Not helpful!' Harry screamed mentally as Ares' sent a boar made out of sand straight for us. I hardly battered an eyelash as I destroyed the boar with a wave. With a bit more concentration I forced the waves to reduce in size.
I waited, just blocking Ares' swipes until he entered the sea as well, then let go of the power that taming the sea had built up. The waves became massive, sweeping Ares' feet out from under him. I lunged, hitting his arm, then his leg before finally scratching Ares' neck.

"I think we win." I declared, letting the god stand up. Ares glared at us in shock, holding a hand to his neck as the bleeding refused to stop. By the laws of a wizarding duel, the wounds wouldn't heal until one opponent was defeated or conceded. Since we, as wizards, dealt the challenge, it was a wizard's duel, and so followed the rules we knew so well. Ares' obviously realised this.

"You're one of them aren't you? Hecate's pet project."

"That's one way to put it. By the rules of the duel, it doesn't end until either one opponent is unconscious, or one has managed to mark their opponent's neck. So. Our prize?" We smirked at the dumb-struck god.

"You cheated!"

"No we didn't." We sighed. "You accepted our duel, so… cough up."

Ares snarled. "Fine!"

He snapped his fingers, summoning a bag and his bike helmet. The bag seemed to weigh a ton, and the helmet transformed into a traditional Greek war helmet as we caught it.

"The bag will work as a sheath for the bolt. But I'm warning you boy – next time you're in a battle to the death, your blade will fail you!" Ares' growled.

"Warning or cursing…" I chuckled weakly. "It was a good duel, Lord Ares. Perhaps the next will be on your terms."

Looking slightly more placated, Ares nodded before stalking off. Alecto suddenly appeared at our right shoulder.

"The Helm, Potter."

We chucked it over to her. "Next time you have a feud, could you please settle it in a manner that won't threaten hundreds of lives? Oh, and tell Hades that he might want to retrieve his children from the Locus Casino. Nico's a good lad. It would be a shame to trap him in there longer."

Nico had been puzzling us for a short while, but seeing Alecto again had just made everything click into place. The Fury gave us a puzzled look, but nodded in consent. "I will pass your advice on. Your debt to Hades is hereby fulfilled."

Grover and Annabeth walked over to us, stunned looks on their face.

'Percy.' Harry said warily.

'Yeah, Harry?'

'You do know what you just did, right?'

'What we did, you mean.' I smiled. 'You're as much part of me as I am of you."

'Fine then. We just defeated the undefeatable god of war!'
Chapter 26

Harry's Point of View

After Percy's recklessly Gryffindor fight with Ares, we had some more planning to do. We still had the majority of the money that camp had lent us, so it wasn't so much the cost as to how and which way we needed to get back to New York. We only had four days! Add in stops to eat, sleep and other delays (aka monster attacks) then it appeared to be that all the fates were against us.

Eventually we decided to spend what was left of the day arranging preparations to travel for tomorrow. Annabeth was all for getting a taxi as far as we could, then arranging something else when it came to that.

"We need to consider the now. If a taxi can get us half way back, then brilliant! I say we deal with our problems as we come to them. The fates only know we can't predict them."

Percy had, unsurprisingly, agreed whole-heartedly. I figured it made sense, but it wasn't exactly what I would have done. If there was a train, or bus, that could have taken us all the way back to New York then that would have been much better. Still, I concluded, Annabeth and Luna know the country much better than we do... Who was I to suggest anything otherwise?

Percy laughed at me. 'Cheer up, misery guts! It'll be fun. Besides – when have Lily or James ever let us do anything this exciting? James even banned us from entering the Forest!'

'True.' I grumbled. 'But I still can't help thinking that this is just asking for trouble.'

Percy laughed. 'Life like you're going to die tomorrow – isn't that the saying? Loosen up! I mean, really? Just how badly can this actually go wrong?'

Famous last words if ever I'd heard them.

Not an hour later, when we were searching for a taxi company, we ran into trouble. It started when a gang of school boys cornered us in an alley. Being the hopeless fool that he is, Percy swung Riptide, forgetting that it can't harm mortals. The blade simply misted through the older boy, surprising the gang for a couple of seconds.

In that couple of seconds, we decided to dash for it, sprinting down the dark damp alley, dodging the garbage and dark sludge that littered the pavement. The end of the alley was another small street, the tall buildings reaching up to block out the sky, creating a twilight setting. A man from up the street hailed to us, then herded us into his store.

'Crusty's Waterbed Place.' I muttered to Percy. 'I have a bad feeling about this.'

Percy gulped nervously. 'You had to say it didn't you? So do I.'

The tall sales man stood a good seven feet tall, and dressed as if it was still the seventies. No joke, I don't think I'll ever be able to burn that image out of my brain. Anyway, Crusty decided to show us round some.

"Now, this here is our unique massage mattress – care to give it ago?"
Grover volunteered happily, jumping into the large comfortable looking bed. He all but bleated in delight as the massage started. Crusty suddenly got a distant glint to his eye, as he guided Annabeth over to another bed, pushing her back onto it.

"Do me a favour Darling and try this one over here. Might fit..."

Annabeth hesitantly laid down, and I saw her eyes mist over. Good. Luna noticed things differently to the rest of us. If something was wrong...

As she laid down you could Luna didn't quite fit the bed, which you'd think would be expected since she wasn't yet fully grown.

"Hm... so inconsiderate these people. Never the perfect height! No matter how many times I make beds for people six feet tall, they're always too big or too small!" The man mumbled to himself. Then he suddenly snapped his fingers. "Ergo!"

Long vine-like ropes wrapped around Annabeth/Luna's and Grover's wrists and ankles, tying them down to the beds. Crusty sighed, as if he had been greatly wronged.

"Not cool!" Grover yelped. His voice shook from the massager, but I could still hear the fear in it. On the other hand, Luna wasn't panicking. She just fixed those misty grey eyes on us and smiled. I gritted our teeth. We were going to get them out!

"Crusty..." I mused. "You wouldn't by any chance be associated with one Procrustes, famous bandit of Greece?"

The man puffed out his chest. "Why, that would be myself. Procrustes is such a hard name to say though, so I shortened it to something the customers might prefer."

We nodded, as if agreeing with him. "Crusty is a good name. Wasn't the Stretcher another of your titles? Our Mythology is a little rusty, but..."

The man nodded enthusiastically.

"And the workmanship on these beds... absolutely marvellous!" We complimented him, running a hand over the carved wood.

The ropes were starting to stretch our friends now, and even Luna let out a small whimper. We turned to Crusty with pleading eyes. "I'm sorry to point this out, good sir. Your methods of straightening out size issues are perfectly sensible, but... Well. We haven't yet stopped growing, you see. Currently we might be too small for fit your beds, but come a few years... If you stretch Luna and Grover too much now, they'll never fit your beds."

Crusty nodded, considering our reasoning. "Well, I could just sort that our then."

"So. How do you sort out people who are too small?"

An almost feral grin crept over the sale-man's face. He walked over to the desk, and pulled out a huge double-bladed brass axe. "Simple. I just centre them as best as possible and lob off the excess."

We gulped. 'That can't be pretty.'

'No...'

"...indeed. That's brilliant!" We had to apply all my acting skills to come across as truly agreeing
with the monster that stood before us. Then we spotted one of his waterbeds, and quickly read the sign next to it.

We walked over to the bed. "And this one really has dynamic stabilizers to stop wave motion? Even on a big guy like you? No waves whatsoever?"

Crusty nodded enthusiastically again. "Guaranteed."

"No way."

"Way."

"Show us!"

Crusty sat down on the bed, patting the mattress. "See?"

We moved quickly, snapping our fingers. "Ergo!"

Move ropes moved to lash Crusty securely to the mattress. Ignoring the man's pleas for mercy, we ordered the ropes to centre him perfectly before drawing Riptide. If he was human than our blade wouldn't so much as scratch him. If he was as we suspected a monster… Well. The head hanging off the top of the bed would start rolling. Steeling our nerves, we brought Riptide down on his neck. The man burst into yellow dust, hopefully to remain that way for a while.

We quickly cut Luna and Grover loose, and they sat up, sending us glares and rubbing their limbs.

"Take your time!" Grover grumbled. We smirked, looking up at him.

"You know we do believe you may have grown…"

"Not funny dude!" Grover complained, but a few seconds later he was laughing right along with us and Luna. We missed Annabeth's return but we certainly didn't miss the sharp slap to the face that she gave us.

"Stupid Seaweed Brain!" She shook her head. "You had us worried… well, me at least. I genuinely though you were going to abandon us!"

We brushed aside the hurt and embraced Annabeth in a warm hug. Percy murmured gently in her ear, "We're not going anywhere. Harry's a snake though, so manipulation is sort of his thing. We don't kill mortals though."

It took us another hour to find the taxi company we had been originally looking for before we got side-tracked. The man had given us a rather sceptical look before he swiped the card Annabeth had given him – it was the green plastic card the Casino had given us.

'What's she doing?' Percy asked. 'That can't be worth anything!'

'Actually…' I replied, watching at the screen flashed infinity signs. 'Casino cards, when accepted, can be worth a lot.'

'How do you know that!' Percy grumbled.

I smirked. 'Simple. The guy at the desk told us when he gave us the cards.'

Percy huffed and blocked me out, sulking that I, yet again, knew more than him. I chuckled, knowing he wouldn't sulk long. Percy never did. Sometimes I wondered if he could even hold a
grudge for longer than five minutes.

Much to our surprise, the taxi man offered to drive us to our destination immediately. The furthest that he was willing to drive was Denver, but hey. We were willing to take whatever we could get. It would get us at least a third of the way home.

The journey was long, but passed quickly in a flurry of conversations and jokes and general gossip. Grover confessed that he wanted to become a Seeker and find Pan, the Lost God of the wild, patron to satyrs. Annabeth told us that she wanted to become an architect. Luna wished to become a journalist. We had to think a lot before we could answer. In the end, we decided that while I probably wanted to become an Unspeakable in the Ministry, working on creating spells, translating ancient texts and investigating the rare anomalies in Magic, Percy wanted something more active, such as becoming an Auror, or the DADA professor at Hogwarts.

"Just probably? You aren't yet sure?" Luna asked.

We looked down at our feet. "The Dark Lord still haunts our world. And even if our brother is destined to defeat him, we can't help by feel that we might not survive this war. So we are pretty sure that that's what we want to do, it's merely a matter of surviving long enough to see it become true."

Grover and Annabeth and Luna shared a sorrowful look, glancing at us with guilt in their eyes. "We have a prophecy too. It talks about a demigod of the eldest gods reaching sixteen with the choice to preserve or destroy Olympus. That's why Zeus was so quick to point fingers when he heard of you. If you don't reach sixteen…"

"Then the prophecy won't happen yet." We sighed. "Of course it gets worst."

We were, for the second time today, met by a sharp slap from our blond friends. "Don't you dare talk like that Potter! You're not allowed to talk like that, you hear me… us? You promised you weren't going anywhere."

Green met steel as we looked up into their eyes. A fierce fire was burning deeply within them. Grover placed a hand on our shoulder.

"I'm not going to let you die, you hear me? I'm not going to let another one…” Grover trailed off, his warm brown eyes tearing up.

Something clicked then. "Were you the satyr that was tasked with bringing Thalia to camp?"

Annabeth and Luna had vaguely mentioned the Satyr sent to collect them when she told us about her mini family that she had chosen. You can't choose your blood relatives, they say, but you can choose your friends. We had thought like that once. Then we realised just how much we had misjudged our situation, and had learnt not to take family lightly.

Grover nodded, a few tears slipping unbidden down his cheeks. As we were sitting in the middle of our companions, we pulled him in for a hug.

"Hey! It's not all that bad. I mean, she's not actually dead!" We soothed him. Grover's head snapped up suddenly, his brown eyes staring into ours as he searched for a lie.

"What do you mean she's not dead?" He asked miserably. "Zeus turned her body into a tree."

We shook our head. "What are you talking about? If Thalia was dead, then that pine tree wouldn't be alive. She's in a kind of status sleep. I imagine she'd have fully healed by now. You just need to find
a way to wake her up."

When the taxi finally stopped we were all half asleep. The clock was ticking ever closer to 1am, and
we were more than ready to find somewhere to sleep. The taxi driver smiled kindly at us, indicating
the inn outside.

"It's a good place to rest your heads, I've been there many times with my own children. I hope you
three get home safe. Good luck with your journey."

We all mumbled drowsy thank-yous before falling out of the taxi and checking into the inn. It was a
homely place, with clean white beds and a wooden wardrobe. The cream walls were lined with
various paintings and the smell of wood smoke from the small fire filled the room. The otherwise
wooden floor had a thick light blue rug on it. It sent a wave of nostalgia through us and, for the first
time since leaving Potter Manor, we felt slightly homesick.

However tonight no amount of homesickness or worries of the eminent war was going to put us off
our sleep. Within minutes of curling up in the warm bed we fell into Hypnos' sweet embrace, drifting
gently into the land of dreams.

Tonight our brain was working overtime. The first scene we dreamt of was of Potter Manor. Lily,
James and Charles were in the dining hall, eating dinner with Remus, Sirius and the Weasley's. The
Longbottoms were there as well, we noticed, Augusta having her say in the local affairs. Suddenly,
the rather peaceful dinner was interrupted by a sudden flash and a boom of thunder. We were thrown
backwards into a wall, and by the time the dust cleared again the ancient house was on fire.
Everyone who had been at the table was unconscious, except Charles, who was blearily looking
round. He stared at everyone with shock, then his eyes met ours.

_Your fault. These deaths are on you._

In the dream Charles mouthed the words. A shiver ran though we and we wanted to scream. _We're
sorry! We didn't mean to! We swear, we tried our best!_

Then the scene shifted and moved, and we were at Hogwarts. While the shape of the corridors were
familiar, the paintings all seemed different and there were random places were old suits of armour or
statues that we didn't have dwelled. We guessed this much have been years ago.

A flicker of black caught our attention up ahead. It was a boy. We crept closer, recognising the boy
from a dream we had a while ago. The Parselmouth. He entered the girls' bathroom, and crept closer
to the sinks. A sudden voice pulled him to a sudden stop.

"What are _you_ doing here? This is the _girls'_ bathroom. You're not a girl, are you? Tom Riddle?"

The boy spun round to face the ghost of Myrtle. She smirked at the older boy.

"If you don't leave, I'll tell Dumbledore. I'm sure he'd be fascinated to know you came here.
Especially since it's out of bounds to students."

The boy's green eyes lit up with a sudden fire. He glared at the ghost, and raised his wand
menacingly. The ghost flinched back, holding her hand out in front of her body as if to protect
herself from whatever was to come.

"You _dare_ threaten me? You filthy little mud-blood!"

A red curse flew from Riddle's wand, and hit the ghost. She fell back with a cry and the boy
smirked. We simply started in amazement. It wasn't supposed to be possible to hit a ghost with a
spell. Just exactly who was this boy?

Alas, before the question could be answered we were rushed on into a new vision. We were on Olympus, the large temple still blindingly white. Poseidon and Zeus were fighting again, the skies reflecting ever blow and cutting insult as thunder boomed and rain fell in heavy sheets as the wind blew it around.

"My son is innocent! You had no right, no right to threaten either him or his family!" Poseidon was shouting. "Besides, Lily and James Potter are wizards, under the protection of the Titan Hecate. You would incur her wrath as well? You are asking for war, brother, and it'll be your fault when it comes."

"You dare question what I am doing? I remind you that I am your king and you will bow to me!"

"King? You are truly arrogant, Zeus, if you still believe you are in the best position to sit in that thrown."

Then the two brothers began fighting again, trident against sword in a violent game of death. Poseidon split the first blood, grazing his young sibling's cheek. With a furious roar Zeus cut Poseidon's arm, but the calmer sea god merely grinned, disarming the sky god with a single sweep of his Trident.

"You have till the summer solstice to apologise and take back your threats!" Poseidon warned.

Zeus sneered. "And you have till the solstice to see my bolt returned!"

Ares spoke up now, his normally gruff voice slightly smaller as he risked incurring the anger of both his father and his uncle. "Perseus is faring well. He had already located the bolt and is returning home by land. He is not so stupid as to enter your realm, father."

"Ah yes." Zeus narrowed his eyes at his son. "I heard about your little meeting with the sea spawn. Did he not challenge you to a fight then beat you?"

"The duel was on his terms." Ares sulked. "It wasn't all my fault."

Poseidon grinned. "Of course. He is in Slytherin after all. Watch out nephew, round my son. He knows his way round more than just physical fights. Cunning it a good trade, when used wisely, as I'm sure you'll acknowledge, Hermes."

The messenger agreed with a grin. "That it is, Lord Poseidon, that it is."

"Harry! Percy! Dude! You guys need to wake up!"

Our eyes snapped open and we jumped out of bed, Riptide at the ready when a hand roughly shook us awake. Annabeth and Luna looked at us with sparkling grey eyes.

"I'm glad we don't often room with you. How did your dorm-mates survive the year?" She laughed. We shook our head, recapping Riptide.

"Simple. They learned not to tickle the sleeping dragon."

Percy chuckled at our private joke, while Grover and Annabeth and Luna rolled their eyes.

"Never mind that now. It's almost eight. We need to move out and hit the road ASAP." Grover
pointed out. "Come on, let's go exploring!"
Denver wasn't a bad place, I supposed. Of course, it was in the muggle world, and so was much messier and louder than what we were used to, but you have to take what you can get. We collapsed in a litter diner after over an hour of searching without luck for anyone who would be heading to New York today. Much to our surprise, shortly after our food had arrived we had a rather unexpected visitor.

The first time I noticed that someone was approaching there was a familiar presence that set our teeth on edge and made me tense ready for a fight. Harry, sensing where my thoughts were heading shook his head at me and shoved me to the back of our mind.

'Oh no.' He snapped. 'You've going to sit this one out very much. Especially after last time.'

I pouted, but conceded. 'You may have a point…'

A couple of minutes later a large man in a leather biking jacket and wearing large combat boots came in and sat down at our table, stealing some of our crisps. Harry frowned, but didn't comment on it.

"Lord Ares." He inclined our head to the War God. "What brings you here?"

Luna smiled. "One might think you were stalking us."

Grover just slunk deeper into his seat. I chuckled when I caught his faint pray that we don't annoy Ares so much that he kills us all this time.

Ares gave us a frown. "You sound different. And… your aura's changed. Just a powerful, but… more like Hecate's than Poseidon's."

Harry offered a lazy smile. "I offer our sincerest apologies, Lord Ares, for my brother's reckless behaviour at challenging you yesterday. He has a tendency to do things without consulting me first."

Ares' frowned. "Your brother?"

Harry smiled, then shook his head as if having suddenly remembered something. "I'm sorry, I had presumed that Percy had properly introduced us. We are Harry and Perseus Potter, demigod son of Poseidon and wizard."

Ares let out a booming laugh. "No wonder my aura affects you so little. You're constantly at war with yourself, aren't you? So where's Perseus today? Doesn't feel like coming out to play?"

'What? Oh no he did not just accuse me of being a coward!' I snarled. Harry did the mental equivalent of grabbing me by the scruff of my neck and throwing me back as I fought him for control.

'Can't you see this is what he wants?' Harry hissed. 'He's egging you on to fight, and that isn't going to get us anywhere, understood? Now. Be quiet and let me do the talking for once ok? Not everything can be solved by fighting.'

I acknowledged his wisdom grudgingly, and shut up again, following the conversation Annabeth
had struck up with Ares.

"So, as Harry asked, what brings you here? Surely you can't miss our charming –" (here Annabeth sent a glare our way) "– personalities."

Ares' chuckled again. "Oh, I don't know. You do amuse me some. Especially that twin soul over there. Though if I didn't know better I'd say the same about you, Athena spawn. You seem to have a rather split personality as well."

Annabeth and Harry glared at Ares while Grover glared at them for glaring at the god. I burst into laughter until Harry smiled slightly. Ares did eventually drop his façade however.

"Alright. Well, I heard you were looking for transport. I want to propose a favour for a favour. Deal?"

Before Annabeth could agree, Harry jumped in. "What kind of favour would we owe you? We're not going to agree to do any favour, any time you want with no conditions."

Ares snorted with amusement. "Fine. I lost my favourite shield when I was out with Aphrodite. I'd like you to retrieve it for me."

Annabeth glanced at us then nodded. "Alright. Now where did you lose your shield? Nearby I presume."

Ares nodded, summoning a map. I giggled when I noticed it was a theme park map. Ares cheeks tinted pink, but he didn't really blush. He pointed to one of the rides – The Tunnel of Love. I gave up on trying to laugh quietly and burst into full out laughter.

'Percy!' Harry scolded. 'Be nice! He's dating the Goddess of Love after all. I bet you'd bow down to her if you were him.'

'Yeah, but I don't have to admit that!' I sniggered.

"I forgot my shield there. If you return it to me before sundown I'll have your transport ready." Ares said, scratching the back of his neck in embarrassment.

Grover was the first to agree. "Well do it. Thank you Lord Ares."

"Don't thank me yet, satyr. You have to get the shield first."

The water park was rather run down, we noted as we stood at its gates. The paint was peeling from the large metal gates and the once bright and cheerful sign was dirty and falling apart. The attendant at the gate taking pay for entry was delighted to see us. Hardly surprising given that it looked like we were probably among the few hundred that might have visited today.

Finding the ride was easy – getting onto it was even easier. Given it was a couples ride, and Grover looked scared by it, Annabeth went on it with us. The boat was small, so how the mortals had missed Ares' massive war shield was beyond us. Then again, they're hadn't been a queue either… Stepping into the boat I noticed a Greek symbol on the side of the boat. I frowned at it.

'Hey Harry, look at this…'

Before I could finish my sentence everything seemed to happen at once. Strange metal spiders came out of cracks on the wall, and the cherubs at the top opened their eyes and began filming us as a loud voice announce: "Airing to Olympus in 5, 4, 3…"
I snarled. No wonder Ares didn't bother retrieving his shield himself.

'It's a trap!'

Annabeth groaned, fingering the Greek letter. "Hephaestus, of course! Trying to catch his wife and Ares' on camera to show the entirety of Olympus!"

"Never mind that!" Harry replied, glancing at the golden net being woven above our heads. "We need to get out of here!"

Annabeth squeaked when she saw the spiders, so Luna took over.

"Use your sea-god powers." She suggested. "Control the current to move us out of here!"

Harry nodded, turning to me. 'You have the best control…'

'Alright, alright!' I muttered, feeling the water with my magic. We felt a twisting in our gut then the water bent to my control, pushing the boat faster away from the net. The cherubs followed us with their beady red eyes. Annoyed at the trap, I stuck our tongue at them.

"Stupid cherubs!" I muttered.

"Percy!" Luna rolled her eyes. "Not the time."

We reached a corner, and we flinched as I turned the boat a little too late, resulting in it almost hitting the wall. We glanced up, but there was nothing until a metal grate a little way up. Harry nudged Annabeth and Luna, pointing.

"If we jump at the right time, the wave should give us enough of a boost to get up there. Come on brain girls! Can you calculate the optimum time to jump?" Harry asked.

Annabeth smirked. "Big words for a seaweed brain."

"Can you do it?" We insisted, letting the nickname slide just this once.

She nodded, her eyes confident.

"Alright!"

I used my control of the water to push the boat up, our legs bent and ready to jump. Of course, it was in my ability to lift the boat up all the way, but if I did that I doubt we would have had the energy to hold on to the grate, and also the mortals would probably have noticed.

On Annabeth's command, we jumped and grabbed the grate. To our shock and delight, Grover appeared at the top of the wall, a few feet up.

"Need a hand out?"

It was a bit of a struggle, but we eventually managed to get out. It evolved a bit of me boosting the girls, Grover grabbing them, and then the tiniest bit of wandless magic to get us out of the ride. Then, we had to run before any security guards or such found us. All in all, it was brilliant fun!

Annabeth and Luna were soaked, though Harry and I were warm and dry. I sniggered at the girls' bad luck until they hit us, and then Harry and I were quick to dry them off too.

We found Ares back in the dinner where we had left him. Ares looked surprised to see us, but
grinned when he spotted his shield on my back.

"I must say," the god grinned, "you two made a spectacular show on Olympus T.V. I think Poseidon and Athena also cried when they saw you together. Then they started fighting again."

"You deliberately sent us into that trap didn't you?" Annabeth demanded. "Next time, do your own dirty work."

"Ah, your safe and sound aren't you? And I've arranged you a lift to St Louis. Live a little will you? I mean, really, you should have seen Hephaestus' face when he caught a couple of demigod kids, not Aphrodite and myself. Priceless!" Ares chortled. I rolled our eyes and handed over his shield.

"Now we've amused you enough, you mentioned transport?"

Ares nodded. "Admittedly it's nothing stylish, but there's an animal circus van outside. Sneak on and it'll get you where you need to go."

Grover frowned, clearly upset. "That can't be human."

Ares tilted his head to one side. "Well then. I suppose you could make the poor animal's lives much better."

The van was stuffy, and we had to hide behind a few bales of hay to remain unnoticed by the circus owners. In order to get Grover into the van we offered to set the poor animals free when we reached our destination. There was a gazelle, a lion, a zebra and a few other animals in the van with us. Grover conferred quietly with the unhealthily thin animals during the twelve hour ride. I dozed for good portion of the journey, but I think Harry must have stayed awake for quite a while longer, possibly talking to Annabeth and Luna, because when I woke our body was physically exhausted.

"Lords." I glanced up to look at the Zebra in surprise.

"You can talk to us?"

"Of course Lords. You are Poseidon's sons are you not?" The Zebra sounded confused.

I nodded. "Yes... We're going to try and set you free when we reach St Louis."

Grover nodded, putting a hand on our shoulder. "We're not going to leave you to suffer here."

I watched in interest as Grover touched the Zebra on its nose and mumbles a strange chant. He then proceeded to do the same to each of the other animals. I gave him a questioning look and he grinned sheepishly.

"Blessing of the wild. It should protect them and keep them safe."

I smiled back at him. "It's nice you care. Most don't. Not it the mortal's community, not in the Wizarding world or many demigods from what I've seen. That just makes you all the more important."

"Rumours have it you healed several Unicorns last year." Grover countered. "You care too."

"I guess." I nodded. "But still, you can do more than Harry and I can at the moment."

Before the conversation could go on much further, the van came to a halt. We quickly unlocked the animals' cages before hiding behind the hay again. The driver and his partner got out of the cab and walked to the back, bickering about whose turn it was to feed the animals. A few seconds later the
back doors were opened and the animals pushed out.

"Thank you Lords. Thank you!" The zebra snorted at us in gratitude. I nodded, and quietly urged him to leave.

The circus' owners ran off after their animals, leaving us to quickly climb unnoticed from the van. I gently woke Harry as we all sat down on a bench to decide where to go here. It was about five am in the morning, but it wasn't really worth finding anywhere to sleep. Annabeth really wanted to see the St Louis Arch, and neither Grover, Harry nor I had the heart to say no to her.

It looked like we were going sight-seeing for the morning.
We walked to the St Louis Arch, feeling the need to stretch our limbs after the long journey here. It was a warm day, which was nice compared to the rain that had been pelting us on and off for the past couple of days. It seemed that Zeus was debating how annoyed he was, and which area of the country he was most annoyed at, judging from the weather reports we caught on the news in one of the bars we had stopped in on the way.

Before riding to the top of the Gateway Arch, Annabeth and Luna dragged us through the underground museum, sprouting random facts as we looked at old wagons that were a couple of hundred years old, or the plans and structures that went into building the arch.

Grover, who had brought a packet of jelly beans on the way over kept passing Percy some at random intervals, just often enough to keep him from complaining. I laughed at Percy's fidgety state, as a mixture of boredom and the worry that something might happen over took him. His ADHD was playing up again, and he kept pointing out the strangest things to me or Grover, or would disappear into thought for a minute or so, before commenting on whatever was on his mind. I mainly tuned him out, quite used to this after years of having to deal with a sugar-high Percy, and paid attention to Annabeth's ramblings and laughing at Luna's strange inputs.

"Grover…" Percy suddenly said, sounding deadly serious. "Grover can you smell anything?"

Grover shuffled his feet, and took a deep breath in. "Underground. Underground always smells of monsters. Probably doesn't mean anything."

Percy nodded, but started keeping a keen eye on the other people standing in the queue around us. I watched with him for a while, trying to see what was bothering him so much, but when no answer revealed itself to me, I was forced to ask him.

'Percy, what is it, what's wrong? Did you see anything?'

'I didn't see anything per say…' Percy muttered, distracted. 'It's more the fact that the hair on the back of our neck has been tingling for a few minutes now. I feel like we're being watched, and not by friendly eyes…'

I frowned. 'I haven't felt anything."

Now it was Percy's time to chuckle. 'No, you were too interesting in what Luna was saying, weren't you?"

'She's funny, ok? We've never met anyone quite like her who says exactly what's running though their mind and can sprout the most amazing nonsense while sounding like she is speaking perfect sense.' I retorted.

Before anything more could be said, we reached the front of the line and we caught sight of the small elevator we were going to ride to the top in. Our nerves peaked. If there was one thing that Percy and I hated it was being confined. Especially in small places. It drove us nuts.

We were herded into the small car with a large lady and her Chihuahua, which was wearing a
rhinestone collar. Percy frowned, noticing how the guards didn't mention so much as glance at the
dog. Ok, admittedly we weren't the front of all knowledge when it came to muggles, but we did
know that both worlds didn't let pets go to the top of important monuments. We mentioned this to
Grover, but he just shrugged, muttering something about it possibly being a dog trained to help blind
people or something. We were still sceptical, but didn't say anything else, deciding to keep a firm eye
on the lady and her dog instead.

The elevator started with a jerk, and we shivered as it curved upwards, our stomach twisting
viciously.

"No parents?" The large woman asked, her voice curious.

We tilted our head at her, taking in the woman's beady eyes and pointy stained teeth. She was
wearing a floppy denim hat and a matching dress that seemed to bulge so much she looked like a ball
of blue denim. We shook our head in the negative to her question.

"We left them below." Annabeth lied smoothly, Grover chipping in with:

"They're afraid of heights you see."

"The poor dears." The lady said. There was something unrealistic and mocking in the lady's voice,
and we glared at her.

The Chihuahua growled right back at us. We shivered again, noticing the viciously intelligent beady
eyes that matched his owners almost perfectly.

'I really don't like this.'

'No.' I agreed. 'This is bad. Even if they are mortal, they're wrong somehow.'

"Behave, sonny. We have guests."

"You named your dog Sonny?" Percy asked incredulously, getting distracted again.

The woman bared her pointy teeth in a smile. "No."

She said the word as if it would answer all our questions. And while she hadn't actually done
anything that could suggest that she might be an evil monster sent to kill us, but our instincts told us
otherwise. It's always best to listen to your instincts. Always.

The observation deck at the top of the Arch looked a bit like a carpeted tin can. The walls were lined
with rows of tiny windows that looked out over the city on one side, and the river on the other. Now,
I told you how Percy and I don't like confined spaces. Add in a large height into that equation and
we were feeling a bit sick. I was more than ready to go by now, but we felt that it would be mean to
cut Luna and Annabeth's time short.

They were rambling on about the structural supports, and how they would have made the windows
bigger, and perhaps designed a see through floor. There was a boy next to her, listen in rapt attention,
occasionally adding in his own ideas for the lighting and the lift and various other mechanical stuff.

Curious, Percy and I took a closer look at the boy. He was small Latino, with curly brown hair and
slightly pointed ears, and the warmest brown eyes we'd ever seen on a boy. He was buzzing with
excitement. His clothes were slightly wrinkled and were a bit dirty, as if he'd been on a streets a
while.
Suddenly I noticed the smoke that was curling from his hair. I blinked, the looked again. Nope, still there!

"Um… Dude, sorry to interrupt but we think your hair might be on fire."

The boy cursed in what sounded like Spanish, patting his hair down. He flashed us a bright smile. "Sorry about that. It keeps doing that! Anyway, I'm Leo. Who are you?"

"We're Harry and Percy."

Leo chuckled. "And British! Cool. Do you people watch Doctor Who? Because, come on. That is pretty much the best British T.V. show there is."

We laughed, thinking about the sci-fi show that Lily liked watching. We always used to sneak in and watch it with her, hiding behind the sofa and trying not to shriek when the bad guys scared us. I mean – Silence in the Library? We wouldn't even go near the Potter Library for months after that episode.

"We do, but we were at boarding school all year, so missed the latest season."

The boy pouted. "Ouch. Boarding School? Geeze, how much do your parents hate you?"

Immediately we threw up our barriers, and gave the boy a blank stare. His enthusiasm faltered slightly at our cold gaze. "What's it to you? Our life is our own, leave it be!"

"Percy! Harry!" Annabeth and Luna grabbed our shoulder in a tight grip. "Lay off, ok? He's joking. I know it's normal for you to be sent off to boarding school, but for us normal school is bad enough without being there twenty-four seven. Just… ease up, ok? He wasn't implying that your parents were trying to get rid of you or something."

We flinched, realising the truth in their words and gave Leo an apologetic smile. "Sorry. I guess we don't get along to well with Lily and James. They spent a long time favouring our brother, Charles, so… yeah. Touchy subject."

"Yeah." Leo looked sad now. "I lost my Mum a few years ago in a fire. My dad ditched us when I was born so… I guess I know a bit of how you must have felt."

A few more minutes later, we started to head down, with Leo joining us. We sent Luna and Grover into the elevator first, before realising that the car was full, as two other passengers were already inside.

"We'll see you at the bottom." I told them with a small smile when Annabeth opened her mouth to protest. "Annabeth, if you stay we wouldn't see you again till the Arch closed for the night. We need to get a train, remember?"

She pouted, but didn't deny it. We scanned the observation deck as we waited. It was early, before the morning rush, so the only people up here were a small boy and his family, Leo and the fat woman with the Chihuahua. We sent an uneasy smile at the fat lady. She returned it, her forked tongue flicking between her teeth.

We froze. Hold on, *forked tongue!* Before we could certify we'd actually seen that, the Chihuahua decided to start barking at us, jumping up and down. The woman sighed, and gave her dog a long look.

"Now, Sonny, does this really look link a good time? With all these nice people here?"
"Doggie!" The small boy cried happily, but his parents pulled him back. Percy pushed Leo behind us as the Chihuahua started growling at us, foam gathering on his black lips.

"Well then, son." The woman sighed. "If you insist."

"Did you just call that Chihuahua your son?" Leo asked incredulously, while we nodded in agreement.

"Chihuahua?" The woman laughed. "Oh no dear, he's a Chimera, dear. It's an easy mistake to make, though."

Pushing back her denim sleeves, the woman revealed green scaly arms. This time when she smiled we spotted fangs and noticed her pupils were reptile-like slits.

The Chihuahua kept barking, louder and louder, growing in size with each bark until it reached the size of a lion. Its tail grew thin and green, a snake head forming at the end, its red eyes glaring evilly at us. The former Chihuahua's back legs became more goat-like, forming little hooves. As the rhinestone dog collar grew with its owner until the words were clear to read:

**Chimera – rabid, fire-breathing, poisonous – if found, please call Tartarus – ext.954**

"Wow," Leo gasped, "that's one heck of a dog."

Leo's voice pulled us out of our shock, making us realise that we hadn't even uncapped our sword. The little boy was screaming his head off in the background and we were standing but a few metres from the beast's bloody maw, and we knew without doubt that as soon as we moved, it would lunge.

The snake-lady let out a long hissing sound that could possibly have been laughter. "Be honoured, Perseus Potter. It is rare that Lord Zeus lets me test a hero with one of my own. For I am the terrible Echidna, Mother of Monsters!"

We started blankly at her. "Really. We are standing facing a fire-breathing, poisonous rabid Chimera, and you think that saying that would scare us or put us in awe of you? Geeze! Gods these days!"

Meanwhile, Leo was thinking something very different. "Echidna? I thought that was a kind of anteater?"

The terrible Echidna let out a howl, her face turning brown with anger as she released a gust of horrible breath all over us. "Gah! I hate Australia! Naming some ridiculous animal after me. For that, I will destroy you as well!"

The Chimera charged, gnashing its lion's teeth together in a deadly chink. Grabbing Leo, we only just managed to throw ourselves aside a dodge the bite. We ended up next to the family and the park ranger, who was also on the deck. All four of them were screaming now, desperately trying to pry open the emergency exit doors. We steeled our nerves.

'We can't let them get hurt.' Percy said, uncapping Riptide. I nodded in agreement, stepping back to give Percy full control to fight. He ran to the opposite side of the deck and yelled; "Hey Chihuahua, over here!"

The chimera moved faster than we believed to be possible. It opened its mouth, unleashing a wave of fiery breath straight at us. Before the inferno could reach us, however, Leo stepped in front of us, his hands out stretched, and somehow forced the flames back to the chimera, burning the lion's mane off.

The beast roared in pain, and Percy used the distraction to swing his blade at its neck. A mistake.
The shimmering bronze blade merely bounced off the dog collar. As we fought to regain our balance, keeping an eye on the lion's head, we forgot about the snake. It struck swiftly, sinking its fangs into our calf.

$Ouch!$ We hissed in pain as the venom set our leg on fire. Percy attempted to jab Riptide in the chimera's mouth, the serpent wrapped around our ankles and pulled us off-balance; our blade flew out of our hand and into a shadowy corner far out of our reach.

The snake prepared to strike again, and we yelped.

$Wait! Please stop!$

The snake paused, retracting its fangs and flicking its tongue out to smell us. $You speak?$$

$Yessss.$ We hissed, drawing out the word. $Why are you attacking us?$$

$You are a demigod, our natural enemy. Your scent calls to us to kill you.$

Apparently the lion didn't understand us, because it roared again, sending a wave of fire at the wall, the heat melting the wall. The pain was making us delirious now, and we collapsed to the floor.

$Please don't hurt us.$ We pleaded, one hand gently rubbing at the lion's mane. It purred slightly, and its red eyes softened slightly.

"Chimera poison is deadly, son of Poseidon. Show true to your heritage. Jump into the river and let your friend here die, or save him and die yourself." Echidna declared happily, crouching down beside us.

"Percy – catch!"

Leo threw us Riptide. We caught our sword, but only just, stabbing Echidna in the chest. She howled in pain before collapsing to the floor in a pile of dust. The chimera whined, then licked our cheek, its rough tongue strangely soothing.

"Water." We gasped at Leo. "Do you have any water?"

The confused boy pulled out a water bottle from the pack he was wearing. Both Leo and the chimera watching in amazement as we poured the water over our injured calf, the water following our commands and drawing out some of the poison. The water ran out too quickly though, so we only managed to save some time. We quickly turned to the snake again.

$We aren't just a demigod. We are also a wizard, blessed of Hecate, and a twin soul.$

The snake hissed again. $Marked with Zeus' bolt and blessed by Pan… Go, hatchling. It's not the Fates' decision for you to die today. Jump, and embrace Poseidon. Go!$$

Noticing the snake had said nothing of Leo, who we were pretty sure must be a demigod of some-kind by now, we grabbed our friend and limped over to the hold in the wall.

"Trust us?"

Leo shook his head.

"Then this is going to be hard. But we don't trust the chimera not to kill you. Please don't hurt us till we've healed again." We requested before jumping, pulling Leo with us.
Leo screamed as we fell, but we used our control on the water of the river below to soften the impact. We both might be a little bruised, but it was better that then dead. The water worked quickly, healing our calf and clearing our head. We quickly searched for Leo, who was lying on the river bottom a few feet away, in shock. We grabbed, him, knowing that it would be urgent to get him to the surface to that he could breathe. Surprisingly, as soon as we touched Leo a thin bubble of air covered his skin, drying his clothes and letting him breathe. The boy gasped in oxygen, and looked at us with wide eyes.

"What? I'm breathing! But we're underwater! How? What? I-"

"Hey!" We exclaimed. "Calm down a little, would you? We're a son of Poseidon, the god of the seas. Hence we can control water. Including let you breathe under it. Oh, and don't worry. We were the exact same when we found out."

We used the water to propel us closer to the surface before sneaking out the river, avoiding the press that the crowded by the river. We heard several rumours about the hole in the arch being a terrorist attack, and quickly ran off, looking for Luna and Annabeth and Grover.

Annabeth and Luna were not best pleased with us at all.

"You! Of all the reckless and stupid things to do, you blow torch a national monument! Perseus and Harry James Potter!"

We flinched away from the blows they were raining down on our head, glaring at Leo and Grover as they sniggered at us. "Ouch! Hey! Lay off! It's wasn't our fault! The Chimera attacked us, it wasn't as if we were trying to provoke it. If anything, it was Leo's comment that annoyed Echidna the most!"

Leo immediately put his hands up in surrender. "In my defence, I didn't know it was possible for a Chihuahua to turn into a large fire-breathing poisonous and rabid Chimera, so please forgive my comments."

"You… you saw it?" Annabeth gasped. Luna tuned in then. "Your smoking hair. I'd say you were a son of Hephaestus. Rare gift that, very rare. I'd suggest keeping it a secret for now."

We all nodded. "Alright. So. Any ideas on how to get back to New York from here?"

As it turned out, the remainder of the money that we had been given from camp had been lost when I fought the Chimera. And since Leo was tagging along now too, we needed money, and fast. Tomorrow was the twenty-first, and we had a deadline to keep to.

At lunch-time, we sat in a park. We knew that we didn't have enough money to get to New York, so we decided to get food for lunch, and debated what to do while we waited. Grover spotted something in the bushes and disappeared off for a minute or so. When he returned, he was carrying something very pink, and very fluffy.

It turned out to be a pink poodle. Grover was talking to it quietly before he looked up at us and grinned.

"Everyone, meet Gladiola. Gladiola, meet Harry and Percy, Leo, and Annabeth and Luna."

"Hello Gladiola." Luna replied immediately. Leo rolled his eyes, but did the same.

Everyone then turned to look at us expectantly. We looked at them wide-eyed. "Oh, no. We are not
saying hello to a pink poodle. Forget it."

"Potter." Annabeth growled. "I said hello to the poodle. You say hello to the poodle."

The poodle growled.

We said hello to the poodle.

Grover explained how Gladiola had overheard us talking about our need for money. He had mentioned that she had run away from a local rich family who's posted a two hundred-dollar reward for his safe return. While Gladiola didn't really want to return to his family, he was willing to if it would help out a satyr.

"How does Gladiola know about the rewards?" Leo asked, voicing the question that had been on our mind too.

"He read the signs." Grover replied as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. "Duh."

Leo exchanged a look with us. "Oh course," We said together. "Silly us."

Grinning, we high-fived the Latino, who grinned back at us.

"Why are you both Percy and Harry?" Leo asked.

We pulled a face. "We are two people in one body I guess. Annabeth and Luna are the same. We just share control."

Leo asked dozens of questions, many of them old, but some of them new. "What's it like sharing your mind with someone? What happens if you don't agree? Do you both dream the same dreams?"

We laughed and tried to answer the questions as best we could as we tracked down Gladiola's family to get the reward money before booking the train tickets to NYC. Finally, our quest was almost complete…
Chapter 29

Chapter 29

Percy's Point of View

The train journey was hilarious to say the least. Leo was definitely a son of Hephaestus. He took great pleasure in tinkering with the scrap bits of metal he had on him, creating little windup toys, helicopters that would actually fly a small way, alarms, small figures… anything really. He cracked jokes all the while.

We did have some rather serious conversations as well. Such as why we were in such a rush to get back to New York, or why Leo wasn't with his parents…

"So you're telling me, that we fell from the Gateway Arch, into the river below and you had a lightning bolt in your bag. Dude, haven't you ever learned physics? Electricity and water are a massive no-no!" Leo exclaimed, looking positively horrified.

I laughed at him, asking innocently; "What's physics?"

Leo groaned and banged his head against the window, sending Annabeth and Luna a pleading look. "They're going to kill themselves, aren't they?"

"Anyway," Harry carried on. "We're trying to return the bolt to my Uncle, because otherwise he's threatened to kill both our family and us if we don't by midnight tonight."

"So yeah. We have a bit of a deadline." Grover nodded.

Leo rolled his eyes. "Death threats. Love them!"

We sat in silence for a few moments, then Leo spoke up again. "Harry, Percy, why were you hissing when you were fighting the giant Chihuahua? Like, is that some weird ritual or something?"

'Hades!' I cursed. 'He noticed us.'

Harry rolled his eyes as I pouted. 'Yes, it appears he did. But does that matter here? They don't have the same prejudices about it being the mark of an evil wizard, do they?'

'I guess…'

"We… we weren't hissing." We admitted, scratching the back of our neck. "We were talking to its snakey tail. See, our heritage from our mortal side of our family isn't exactly normal either. Our parents are magical. So… yeah. We inherited a rare gift of Parseltongue – snake speak."

Leo, who had heard weirder things today, didn't even raise an eyebrow. Annabeth and Luna did, however. They hit us on the shoulder. Hard.

"Ow! What the Hades, guys?"

"You have this other amazing gift and you then fail to mention it to us? Thanks a lot, mate!" Annabeth pouted at us. We winced.

"Well… We explained to you two the strange prejudices in the Wizarding World, right? With blood-purity and Light and Dark Magic? Well Parseltongue is considered Dark Magic, so we don't exactly
go around advertising the fact we're a Parselmouth." I explained. "Habits are hard to break, I guess."

Grover, noticing how uncomfortable we looked, abruptly changed the subject. "So Leo… What are you doing all along? No offence, but you smell like you haven't bathed in quite a while."

Now it was Leo's turn to wince. "Um… Well. My mom died in a fire when I was eight. My Aunt Rosa prevented my other family from taking me in so I was put in foster care. This is my third time that I've run away."

I pulled the upset boy in for a hug. I'd say he must be about ten or eleven, younger than us, anyway. To have run away that many times already though… We hugged him tighter.

'We're going to make him a new home.' I swore to Harry. 'At Camp Half-Blood. That way he'll have somewhere to run away to not from if he gets put in care again.'

Harry nodded in agreement.

We lightened the subject after that. Grover told Leo about Camp. Harry and I listened in. We'd only been there for a night before we'd been sent on this quest, so we were more than happy to listen to the inner workings of Camp Half-Blood.

We were all really fidgety by the time the train finally reached New York, about six hours after we'd set off. After being confined in the train for so long we spent about ten minutes running around outside to stretch our limbs.

We'd set off from St Louis at about ten o'clock in the morning, so it was still only four. We had plenty of time to get to Olympus – should the Fates be willing.

I turned to Grover and Annabeth and Luna. "You guys should head back to Camp. Take Leo – we're already established he's in need of a shower." We winked at the blushing Latino, then carried on. "We'll get to Olympus. Hopefully I'll be back in time for curfew."

We grinned, but didn't hold our breath. Some instinct told us that no matter how this panned out, Zeus was not going to be happy with us. Hopefully our 'father' Poseidon would be willing to help us out. Merlin only knows he hasn't done anything else.

We walked the relatively short distance to the Empire State Building, enjoying the fresh air. Ten minutes later we walked into the lobby. The glamour inside made us feel just a bit self-conscious that we were wearing the same tattered clothes we'd been wearing for the past two days, and still bore the bruises from our fight with the chimera (we didn't have time to be healed properly by the water).

We walked up to the guard at the front desk and politely asked for "The six hundredth floor, please."

The guard was reading a book, a huge one with a stereotypical mortal wizard on the front, and didn't look pleased that he was being interrupted. "No such floor, kiddo. Now why don't you go play somewhere else?"

I ignored the looks we was getting from some of the other people in the lobby and sighed. "We require and audience with Zeus."

"Excuse me?" The man laughed.

We glared. "You heard us."
"No appointment, no audience, kiddo. The King of Kings doesn't have time to see for silly mortals that demands an audience."

We smirked. "Oh, well we'll believe he'll make an exception."

Unzipping our back-pack, we showed him the metal cylinder that lay within. For a few moments the guard looked unimpressed, but then he paled dramatically.

"That isn't…"

We nodded. "Yep."

"So you're Poseidon's kid." The guard narrowed his eyes at us before passing us a plastic key card. "Insert this in the security slot. Oh, and make sure there's nobody else in the elevator with you, yeah?"

We rolled our eyes, but agreed. Following his instructions, as soon as the doors dinged shut Harry slipped the key card into the slot. Almost immediately a new button appeared and the card disappeared. I pressed it and waited, ignoring the terrible muggle music playing.

Finally, the doors slid smoothly open with another ding, and we stepped out.

We gasped at the sight in front of us. We were standing on a stone walkway in the middle of the air, far above Manhattan. In front of us white marble steps climbed up a cloud. And at the end of those stairs…

The decapitated peak of a mountain hung suspended in the clouds, a gleaming marble city clinging to its sides. There were dozens of terraced houses, multi-levelled palaces and hundreds of little temples all connected by roads that wove their way up to the snow-capped peak, where the most impressive building of all stood. A palace of gleaming rock, fit for the gods.

Walking through the Olympus we passed precariously perched gardens of blooming olive trees and rose bushes. And then there were the colourful open air markets and stone amphitheatre, hippodrome, coliseum… It was Greek, there was no doubting it. It felt like when we had first stepped into Diagon Alley, a year ago. It felt like coming home.

As we walked by we saw giggling wood nymphs throwing olives at us from the safety of their gardens. Hawkers in the markets offered us the strangest things. Ambrosia on a stick. A new shield. A replica of the Golden Fleece. We saw the nine muses preparing for a park concert, while a group of good looking teenagers – presumable minor gods – satyrs and nymphs gathered to watch.

There was a festive mood in the air, as if none of them were even the slightest bit worried about the impending civil war hanging over their heads.

The palace at the peak reminded us of Hades' palace in the Underworld. Admittedly everything gleamed white and silver rather than black and bronze, but it was still clear that the underworld god had based his palace this one. We felt a twinge of sorrow for our Uncle. Anyone banished from here should have the right to be bitter.

Steps lead into a central courtyard, and beyond that lay the throne room.

The throne room was massive. It made the Great Hall in Hogwarts look like a broom closet. Columns rose to the domed ceiling, which was guided with moving constellations. Harry grinned, finding more inspiration to add to the paintings in our room at Potter manor.
Twelve thrones, arranged in an inverted U, like the cabins at Camp filled the room. They huge as well. We'd have to be three times my size just to be able to touch the seat, let alone get onto it. An enormous fire crackled in the central hearth pit – the Flames of the West.

Only two of the thrones were currently in use – the head throne on the right and the one immediately to its left. We didn't have to be told to know who there were. Sky blue and sea green eyes watched as we approached. It took all our strength to keep our back straight and our chin high like a true pure-blood heir as we approached.

The gods were in giant human form, much like Hades had been. Even looking at them made our body tingle, as if threatening to burn. Zeus, King of Kings, wore a dark blue pin-striped suit, and sat on a solid platinum throne. His beard was well trimmed, and was a strange mix of black and grey – not unlike the storm clouds he favoured so much.

The god beside Zeus was undoubtedly his brother, although he was dressed differently in familiar leather sandals, khaki Bermuda shorts and a Tommy Bahama shirt with parrots and coconuts decorating it. Our eyes moved over his deeply tanned skin and settled on his scarred hands from years of fishing. His hair was black like ours, and his sea-green eyes were surrounded with smile lines.

'Guess we know where my eyes came from now.' I joked as we approached the fisherman's throne that our father sat on and knelt at his feet, as was expected of us.

"Father." We greeted, not daring to look up. The tension in the air crackled, and thunder boomed, announcing Zeus' annoyance.

"Should you not address the master of this house first, boy?" Zeus demanded.

We kept our head down, silently.

"Peace brother." Poseidon spoke after a few moments of observing us. "It is only right that he defers to his father."

"You claim him then? As a child you sired against our sacred oath?" The menace in Zeus' voice was terrifying, but we refused to react.

When Poseidon spoke again, anger rose up in our chest. "I have admitted to my wrongdoing."

Wrongdoing. Was that all we were? A mistake of the gods? A night of betrayal by Lily? We scowled at our feet. A mistake.

"Hear him out brother. He has done well." Poseidon carried on.

Zeus grumbled but agreed.

We looked up at Poseidon's request. His eyes were like the unfathomable sea we both cherished. Mysterious and unreadable, with no clear sign of love or approval.


We frowned at being called boy. Had we not yet proved him worthy of being his son? Still, we told our tale, and finally took out the sparkingly metal cylinder, and laid it at our master's feet.

In the silence that followed, only the crackling hearth seemed to support us.
Zeus opened his palm, summoning his master bolt to him. As his fingers tightened into a fist round the weapon the metallic points flared with electricity, until his was holding a five-meter javelin of arcing, hissing electricity that made our hair stand on end.

"I sense the boy speaks true." Zeus grumbled unhappily. "But why would Ares do such a thing? It's most unlike him…"

We were tempted to open our mouth and speak, tell them that we didn't believe our cousin acted alone, tell them about our dreams and the evil that had haunted them, but we didn't. Something warned us that Zeus wouldn't listen anyway, and we were in his bad books already. But… they should know, should they not?

"Perseus?" Poseidon asked. "What's wrong?"

We voiced our concerns about Ares and the evil being in our dreams. Zeus and Poseidon conferred quickly in an ancient tongue – possibly Greek – but they spoke to quickly for us to pick up much. In fact, the only word we really understood was 'father'. It ended up as an argument however, with Zeus ordering Poseidon not to bring up the subject again.

"I must go clean the taint of human from my bolt." Zeus declared standing up. His hard eyes softened a touch as they settled on us. "You have done me a service boy, one that few other heroes could accomplish."

"We had help…" We tried to protest, but Zeus cut us off.

"To show you my thanks, I will spare your life. But don't mistake me – I don't trust you, boy. I especially don't like what your arrival means for Olympus, but for the sake of family peace, I will let you live."

"And our mortal family?" I asked. "Lord, they are of no threat to you or your own. Please, Lord Zeus."

Zeus turned back to us in surprise from the throne room doors. "Dionysus told you that, did he? Very well. They shall be left alone. If just to spare me from Hecate's complaints."

Thunder shook the palace, and with one blinding flash of lightning, our Uncle was gone, leaving us alone with our father.

Poseidon chuckled. "He has a flair for dramatic exits."

"It's Kronos, isn't it?" I asked tentatively. "The evil. He rising again."

Poseidon gripped his Trident tightly, green zaps of energy glowing at the tips. "No! He stirs every now and again in the pit, where Zeus cast him, entering men's nightmares and whispering evil thoughts or wakening restless monsters. But suggesting he could rise from Tartarus is another matter."

"But he intends to, Father." We argued.

Poseidon was quiet for a while, but when he did speak there was a note of finality in his voice. "Lord Zeus has closed the discussion. Do no worry yourself with such things. Your quest is complete. That is all you needed to do."

We growled. "Is that all that we were brought here from England for? To be claimed by you then threatened by Zeus and sent on a quest that could have killed us?"
We apologised immediately after our rant. Throwing accusations wouldn't help here. "Sorry. We will do as you wish Father."

Poseidon gave us a sad look. "I care, you know. About what happens to you. Admittedly I didn't know of your existence until your arrival here, but you are my son. And family is everything."

We narrowed our eyes. "Try telling Lily or James that. Or Kronos."

"Patience, son. Lily is a good mother, if you just let her in. And James is as much your father as I am. You should go now. Your friends are waiting."

Feeling strangely touched by Poseidon's words, we smiled, and nodded. "Thank you. And... bye."

A sad smile crossed our father's lips. "For now. I will see you again, son."

I pulled back into ourself, and our eyes settled on Harry's solid emerald. Poseidon's eyes became unfocused. "I do not regret meeting your mother, Perseus. However... I am sorry you were born to me. I brought you a hero's fate, and a hero's fate is never happy."

We flinched, stung, but Harry kept our head high. "We don't mind."

"Not yet... but one day. One day you might. But it was still an unforgivable mistake on my part."

"We... we'll leave you then." Harry bowed, stiff and awkward. "And we won't bother you again."

We turned and walked away. Poseidon called to us, and we paused. But we didn't look back.

"You did well, Perseus. Don't get me wrong. And whatever else you do, know you are mine. A true son of the Sea God."

We walked back though Olympus in a daze, hardly recognising the satyrs and nymphs and naiads as they knelt in respect to us, as if we were some hero, their faces alight with gratitude.

We were in the same daze and hour later as we reached the top of Half-Blood Hill, and lent against Thalia's tree. Harry put a hand on her trunk and side, looking down at the Camp stretched out below us.

"I think we did well, Thalia. Your father's not a bad god, even if he can be a bit paranoid."

Thalia's branches rustled in the wind, as if in agreement. We smiled. Looks like our adventure for this summer was over.

"Percy! Harry!"

We turned to face the voices and grinned when we saw Annabeth and Luna, and Leo running towards us. A small way behind them Grover waited at the bottom of the hill, grinning at us. Then Leo hit us, tackling us to the ground and sitting on us.

"You did it!" He beamed. Annabeth and Luna stood grinning behind us.

I grinned back. "Yeah. We all did it."

According to Annabeth, we were the first heroes to return back from a quest alive since Luke returned from his quest (she said something about a dragon clawing his face and giving him is scar?)
and according to Camp Tradition, we had to wear laurel wreaths to the feast everyone prepared in our honour. Luna laughed as she grabbed our hand, leading us at the front of a procession to the bonfire in the amphitheatre. We got to burn the shrouds our cabins had made for us in our absence.

Given we didn't have any other cabin members, Clarisse had offered to make ours. Using an old bed-sheet, they'd painted some bright yellow smiley faces with massive 'X' for eyes with the word LOSER painted really big in the very centre. Don't you just love childhood rivalries?

In comparison, Luna and Annabeth's was beautiful – grey silk with embroidered owls. I joked with Leo that it was a shame not to bury her in it. Annabeth overheard and punched us in the face. Hard.

It was a brilliant end to a tiring day. The Apollo cabin led a sing-along, and the magical fire burned brighter and bigger as our spirits rose. We toasted marshmallows on sticks and made s'mores. By the time we all started to head off to bed it was nearing midnight. It was all we could do to change into some pyjamas before we collapsed into bed and fell asleep.
Chapter 30

Harry's Point of View

The following weeks at Camp Half-Blood were relatively quiet. Percy seemed to hang around the back of our mind for several days after Olympus, considering Poseidon's words to us. It seemed that our godly father had only been talking to him, and not to me. I spent some time thinking about it before coming to the conclusion that Dionysus, Hades and Ares must be the only gods who knew about us being twin-souls. Hades could sense our souls, while Dionysus and Ares could sense it in our mental state.

It felt strangely lonely without Percy. It reminded me of when we were younger, and I was in control more. You don't realise how much of a burden it is, to be in control all the time. It sucks at your soul, tiring you out mentally until you can hardly be bothered to think before you speak…

'Harry.' Percy warned me. 'You're blanking people again.'

I looked up, and noticed Luke and the group of Hermes' kids he was coaching in sword-play were all starting at us. I winced, and rubbed the back of our neck.

"Sorry, I was… elsewhere. What was that, Luke?"

Luke chuckled. "Well. Apparently you're quite the sword master. Care to help me demonstrate?"

'Um. Percy?' I asked. 'I don't fight with blades.'

Percy paled and sent me puppy dog eyes. 'Please… I don't…'

I glared at him. 'You don't what? Percy, you've been sulking for days. Man up already! Poseidon is our father, like it or not. And you are going to accept that and help Luke, understand?'

Percy frowned, but agreed. "Okay. What do you want me to do?"

Luke grinned, and I winced again at the slight menace in his grin. 'Something tells me he wants us to get hurt…'

'Possibly.' Percy agreed happily. 'But Hades if I'm going to let him!'

Luke was talking again, and beckoned us up to the front, his sword at the ready. Percy smirked, mimicking him. Luke first demonstrated his move, a series of feigns before a real attack. Percy stood still during the demonstration, moving as Luke expected him to and deliberately failed to block Luke's actual 'attack'.

"Ok, so, pair up and practise. I'll work with Potter. Just shout if you need help with anything." Luke said with a grin, moving to one side of the training arena. We followed, grinning. Time to actually stretch our limbs. Luke was a skilled fighter, we knew that. We also knew he didn't like holding back, even when demonstrating with less experienced campers. Maybe it was time he fought someone his own size.

Our practise what fast and harsh as we exchanged blows, slashing, rolling and ducking. At first Luke looked slightly shocked, but soon his grin matched our own as we fought harder and harder,
desperately trying to get the upper hand. Luke managed to cut our cheek first, but we quickly retaliated with a shallow slash to his right arm.


We looked up in shock to see a furious Luna glaring at us. Behind the blond Athena girl stood the rest of Luke's cabin, staring at us shock and a little awe and fear. We both exchanged looks before retreating backwards away from Luna's tirade of accusations.

"Do you even think? Look at yourselves! You're both bleeding, and you looked like you wanted to kill each other! You are supposed to be setting an example! Mark my words; I have half a mind to tell Chiron about this. If I hear of you ever fighting like this again I will personally lock you out of your cabins after curfew and guarantee that the Harpies eat you!" Luna raged, grabbing Luke's sword and pointing it at us to prove her point. "You stupid, thick-headed, idiotic, boys!"

"Luna, please, we're sorry ok?"


"Luna." We tilted our head. Then flinched and looked back at Luna. "You… haven't told him, have you?"

A sharp thwack to the head with the flat of Luke's sword answered our question. We collapsed to the ground out of shock, and put a hand to our head, looking up at Luna with wide eyes.

"Ouch! We said we were sorry and we didn't think. Please don't hit us?" We pleaded, meeting her flaming grey eyes.

'We're doomed.' Percy groaned.

'Yep.' I agreed.

Annabeth had taken control again. We ran, sprinting towards the forest as fast as we could, with Luke hot on our heels.

"Why did you call her Luna?"

"She's like us. Just… in denial a little. We think she's come more to terms with being a twin soul, but Annabeth is… unpredictable." We replied breathing heavily.

It was midday before Annabeth calmed down and stopped chasing us. All three of us all but fell into the lake in an attempt to cool down and wash the sweat from our exhausted bodies. Leo found us there, and grinned.

"So Percy. I hear you annoyed Annabeth." Leo said tauntingly. We glared at him, waving a hand to douse him with water. Unfortunately, we put a bit too much effort into it, and ended dragging him into the water as well. Luke and Annabeth laughed, ducking the curly-haired Latino under the surface.

We joked about in the water for a bit, having a water fight and swimming around a bit before the horn sounded to call us all to lunch. Chiron told us off for not taking part in our activities, but he didn't seem that angry. Our punishment was to clean up the mess hall after lunch.

Percy and I did so without complaint, quickly picking up the plates and cleaning up the food that had been dropped on the floor. Luke worked beside us.
"You don't seem too bothered by this kind of punishment." Luke commented, raising one eyebrow. We grinned at him.

"Our godfather is the Potions Master at our school. He delights in making us scour the cauldron's clean if we so much as think of setting out of line. And our caretaker is a squib – a pure-blood wizard born without magic – so he takes delight in making student do chores such as cleaning the trophies or owlery by hand. So we've been made to do much, much worse before."

Luke laughed. "So you sleep in a dungeon and are forced to do manual labour in detentions? What kind of school do you go to?"

This time we laughed. "Hogwarts is a pretty good school to be honest. Most teacher's make you write lines, or help tidy up their classrooms, depending on what you did. Other schools – such as Durmstrang – are all about physical punishments."

Over the next week we bonded with Luke and became fairly good friends. As it was, the eighteen year old was good fun to be around, cracking jokes. He was like an older sibling to almost all the kids at camp. Someone to look up to and admire.

'One day,' I promised, 'one day we'll be like him.'

'Agreed.' Percy grinned.

We drew our eyes away from Luke and his training and focused on our work again. We were lying next to the lake with three potions books around us trying to focus on our essay for Sev. One of the younger members of cabin eleven gave our inkpot and quill strange looks.

"Don't you have a pen? Why are you writing with a feather?" She asked, sitting down next to us. We smiled at her.

"Well, our school is a little old-fashioned. As this is our homework, we're expected to use a quill to complete it."

"That's weird." The Hermes Camper pulled a face, making us smile even more.

"A little, I guess, but I guess Witches and Wizards aren't exactly normal anyway." We pointed out, carefully putting down our pen to make sure that the ink didn't leak and ruin our work. We only needed about an inch more, and then we'd be finished for Potions. Then there was just Transfiguration, Charms and Astronomy to go…

'Urk!' Percy groaned. 'Why do they torture us with summer homework again?'

'Because it means they can check we're on top of the work they're setting us.' I replied with a smirk, looking at the notes on Aconite again.

"You guys still working?"

We looked up to see a smiling Leo peering down at us. He motioned as if to pick up our essay and we quickly jerked it out of his reach.

"Oh no, Valdez. We're not letting our work fall into your flaming hands!"

"Hey!" Leo pouted. "That's mean. Aqua-boy!"

"Is that the way you want to play it, Flame-boy?"
"Fish-face!"

"Automaton!"

"Seaweed-"

"DON'T CALL US THAT!" Percy snarled. "It's bad enough that Annabeth calls us that, silly Wise-girl."

"And that, my dear Seaweed-brain, was an oxymoron." Annabeth chipped in from behind Leo. We groaned jokingly and gave her a look of despair.

"Does our torture ever end?"

Laughing, we stood up and picked up our books and parchment, deciding for finish later. A quick glance at our wrist declared the time to be six past noon. We frowned as we noticed the date on the watch behind the moving hands. July 30st. The day our portkey would take up home. We only had about three days left at camp before then.

The weeks had literally flown by. We'd managed to be on the winning team in capture the flag for the past four weeks, and had been involved in multiple fights with the Ares' cabin, mock fights with Luke and Leo and Annabeth and even Luna. Still. All the more reason to enjoy Camp given we have to go home soon.

"Hey Harry, Percy!"

We looked up to see Luke beckoning to us.

"Feel like hunting some monsters in the woods?"

We agreed with a grin, and followed the older boy into the woods, Annabeth and Leo tagging along as well. After about an hour of finding nothing to fight, Leo and Annabeth and Luna disappeared off back to the forges, where they were working on a project with Charles Beckendorf, the head of the Hephaestus cabin.

Luke and Percy and I sat down at the stream, and our older friend gave us a serious look.

"Do you ever feel like we are just the pawns of the gods, used and then thrown away until we might one day become useful once more?" He asked.

We tilted our head to one side, thinking about it. "Either way, we are always just a pawn of something bigger. Back at home, we're all pieces in a grander game between the light and the dark. Here, we are pawns of the Immortals."

Luke nodded his eyes sad. "I had an offer. From someone greater than the gods. If we over-throw them, then we could be free. Free from everything!"

"Kronos." We guessed. "Luke, please don't do this. You're just playing into his hands. You mightn't like the rule of the Olympians, but they are better than the Titans." We reasoned.

Luke just shook his head. "You're young, Percy. One day you'll see what I mean. You'll grow tired of these games and see the truth. We heroes don't live long, and we don't live happily."

"That may be, but we can't change our genes." We turned our wide, green eyes on Luke. "Please, please, please Luke."
Luke faltered for a minute then snapped his fingers. From a hole in the ground a scorpion appeared, creeping towards us. We held our breath and stared silently, pleadingly at Luke. We recognised the creature. A pit scorpion. Its poison could kill us within minutes without the antidote to hand. Luke shook his head.

"I'm sorry Percy, Harry. Really I am. When you see I'm right... get in touch. We could us a good man like you on our side."

'Luke!' Percy shouted mentally, as tears started to roll slowly down our cheeks. We stared at our friend in horror, the words of the prophecy ringing in our ears.

*You shall be betrayed by the one who calls you a friend.*

*And you shall fail to save what matters most, in the end.*

Luke. The one who calls us a friend. We failed to save him. To keep him here a camp, where he belongs.

"The gods betrayed us first, Potter." Luke said as he turned to walk away. "Just look our cabin eleven. Look at all the unclaimed, unwanted campers who their parents didn't claim, or weren't important enough to have a cabin of their own. I'm doing this for them. For us."

"Luke..." His name was but a broken whisper, but it was enough to make the boy turn and run.

We looked back at the scorpion, just in time to see its tail flash and stab us in the hand. The pain was instant fire, burning a war path through our veins. We stood, wavering uncertainly, and began to run as fast as possible towards camp, the edges of our vision started to black out even as we ran.

We were vaguely aware of a couple of wood nymphs helping us, and Chiron standing over us, shouting something that we couldn't quite hear before everything went black, and we knew no more.
Chapter 31

We were standing in a clearing, breathing in the soft morning air as we watched the forest surrounding us. An emerald cloak swathed the forest in green, as bright sunlight filtered through the leaves to bathe the woodland in a pretty green tinged light. We smiled as faeries flittered past us, several tugging a few lock of hair free from our head to add to their nests. A herd of unicorns grazed peacefully a few meters away, several pegasi mixed in among them. Wood nymphs watched us from the shade of their trees, and we waved happily at them.

A rabbit ran into the clearing, and froze when it spotted us, leg muscles tensed, ready to run. Its little nose twitched. Once. Twice. The rabbit then relaxed, deciding we weren't a threat, and hopped into the sunlight, nibbling on some of the grass.

A sudden wave of dizziness overcame us, and the happy scene shifted. A shadow passed over the sun. The unicorns bolted, and the pegasi fled to the sky. The wood nymphs disappeared into the thick of the forest. The faeries let out high squeaks as they too fled the scene. The rabbit froze once more. It sniffed the air again, then thumped one of its back legs hard against the ground, flashing its white tail as it sprinted to its burrow under the roots of a tree at the edge of the glade.

We looked up to the sky and saw dark clouds swirling ominously above, threatening to break and fall. A dark heavy presence hung over the place, and an evil laugh split the air like thunder. We flinched, our eyes flitting around frantically as we too ran, looking for somewhere, anywhere, we could hide. A glance up at the sky however had us freeze much like the rabbit.

There, in the swirling black sky, was a sickly green glow. A sign hung in the sky. A sign we had hoped never to see for a long as we may live. A skull, its jaw dropped open and a snake slithering out. The Dark Mark. His Mark…

Then we were falling, down, down, down into a soft warm darkness that seemed to embrace us fully, far away from the cold, suffocating dark presence and chilling laugh and eerie, glowing mark…

Our last thought before the darkness claimed us was a quote. A quote from a book we hadn't read in years; Watership Down: "All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you, they will kill you. But first they must catch you, digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed."

After a while the darkness faded away, and our dreams lost all meaning. We were back in the forest at Camp Half-blood, but Draco and Blaise and Theo were there. It was raining, but our friends were perfectly dry, and we were on fire. Our face was soaked with rain, but our body felt like it was burning to a crisp. We pulled at our clothes, trying to free ourselves from the horrible heat, but they were too tight, too restricting, and we couldn't get them off.

Then Leo appeared, grinning his troublemaker grin as he set himself on fire too. Our vision kept blurring as flames seems to flare up over our face, and we heard frantic voices in the background. We vaguely recognised Annabeth and Luna's voice, as well as Chiron's and a son of Apollo whose
name we couldn't quite place. The sweet taste of homemade blue cookies washed over our tongue and we signed.

"They can't take much more nectar. They've already had far more than I've ever given anyone! Much more and they'll start burning up." The Apollo cabin member was saying. His voice brought a recent memory to mind, and we smiled as it replayed in our dreams.

We were standing in the archery range, clutching a bow in our right hand as we pulled back the string with our left, closing our right eye to peer down the range. Chiron was standing behind us, correcting our position; slightly bend our right elbow, our back tilted slightly toward the target, the string pulled back to the corner of our mouth… Finally happy with our position, Chiron decided we were ready to shoot.

"Shoot at will."

We aimed for the yellow circle at the centre of the target, silently willing the arrow to go where we wanted it to. Just as we breathed out and let the arrow go, a movement behind us startled us, and we jolted back. Our shot misfired, and hit a blond Apollo camper, who yelped in surprise and annoyance.

Chiron chuckled, shaking his head. The camper was fine, as Chiron had removed the heads from our arrows for now, after seeing our first round of terrible shots.

"When I told you to shoot at will, I didn't literally mean, shoot at Will."

The camper grimaced. "Why, in the name of the gods, did my mom think that it was a good idea to call me, a son of Apollo, Will?"

The rest of his half-siblings burst out laughing, and even as our face blushed red with embarrassment, we couldn't quite help a giggle escaping us. The camper, Will, pouted for a moment before grinning as well.

"I think, son of Poseidon, your talents lie elsewhere."

We blushed deeper, but nodded in agreement.

We wouldn't be able to tell you how long we drifted in and out of dreams, occasionally almost surfacing and reaching consciousness before falling back into the Hypnos' realm. But when we finally did wake, it was night. Cool and silent night.

We glanced to our right, and almost smiled when we saw a mass of blond hair curled up asleep but our side. Annabeth and Luna were sitting on a chair, bent over a bed in what looked like a very uncomfortable position. We carefully swung out of bed, gritting our teeth against the wave of dizziness and slowly, carefully, picked up Annabeth and Luna and placed our friend on a nearby empty bed. They wouldn't want to have to train with stiff muscles tomorrow. We knew from past experience how painful that could be.

After moving our blond friend, we couldn't quite bring ourselves to go back to bed, and so sat on a nearby window seat, staring up at the large full moon, that hung in the sky like a silver sickle, its light burning its way through the light cloud cover with ease. We couldn't help but think that, in another continent, half way round the world, our Uncle Moony would be preparing for his monthly transformation, probably staring up at the sky, just as we were, waiting for the moon to appear and his night of torture to begin… We shook our head. There thoughts weren't going to help us.
A spike of pain from the centre of our palm drew our gaze from the sky to our hand. It was wrapped tightly in bandages, but we had no qualms about removing them. As the red stained bandages fell away a furious red circular cut in the centre of our hand. We winced, whispering a small healing charm, and let out a low sigh as the red swelling reduced, and the infection started to clear up at an accelerated rate.

It wasn't until after we had cast the healing spell that we realised our palm had lit up with a silver glow as we cast the spell. Our glamour we had cast over our hand to hide the unicorn blood stain/tattoo thing had apparently been ripped apart by the pit scorpion. The markings were currently in the shape of a trident, with delicate decorations of fish and waves decorating the mighty weapon. We quickly tried to recast the glamour, but it didn't stick, so we eventually gave up.

Having dealt with the worst of our wound, we sat on that window seat, watching the sky until the warm light of dawn spread her rosy fingers across the sky. We heard hoof-falls on the stone floor, and smiled to ourself as they stopped short, and a small noise of alarm passed Chiron's lips.

'Should we say hello?' I asked Harry with a small smile.

'Nah,' Harry grinned, 'not yet.'

"Annabeth! Annabeth!" Chiron called and we heard the rustle of covers as he shook her.

"Chiron?" She mumbled blearily. "What's going on?"

"Where's Percy and Harry?"

She sighed. "Right her-"

Annabeth cut her reply short, and the bed squeaked as she abruptly sat up. Again we grinned to ourself as we peered round the wall.

"Looking for someone?"

We heard a thunder of footsteps, and saw a rush of blond hair before sharp pain exploded over our cheek. We looked up at her, hurt.

"What was that for?"

"Idiots! You utter idiots! Don't scare us like that ever again!" She demanded, pulling us into a tight hug.

"Understood." We replied, our voice muffled by her shoulder.

Chiron pried Annabeth and Luna off us a few moments later, and picked up our hand to inspect. He raised an eyebrow when he saw how the infection had disappeared and the swelling had gone down. He gave us a knowing look as he commented on it.

"Your hand was in a much worst condition last night."

We looked at him with wide innocent eyes. "Well... we do have a habit of healing quickly when we set our minds to it..."

Chiron chuckled. "I'd say. But I doubt it was just your minds you put too it. I mean, it has healed up miraculously. Like magic, I'd say."

We burst out laughing, winking at Annabeth and Luna. "Wandless magic can't be tracked. The trace
is on our wand, and when accidental magic is used a large percent of the magic soaks into the surroundings, making it very easy for the Ministry to pick up with their machines. Wandless magic, however, is much more precise and controlled, so it's perfectly safe for us to use."

Shaking their head, our blond friend smiled at us. "You little rouges! Deceiving your Ministry like that. Are you sure it's legal?"

I widened our eyes to a comical size as Harry replied with a little too much innocence in his voice. "You mean that circumventing laws is illegal?"

We burst out laughing at Annabeth's disapproving stare, and Chiron's amused smile.

"What's with the mark on your hand, by the way?" Annabeth said suddenly. "I'd never seen it before."

"Oh." We scratched the back of our neck. "We were healing this unicorn, and the blood stained our hands. It lights up when we use magic, and keeps shifting shape, so we cast a glamour over it. Only… The glamour was destroyed by the pit scorpion, and we failed to recast it…"

Before anymore could be said on the matter, however, our Apollo medic walked into the infirmary. He stopped short when he saw us out of bed and on our feet, and narrowed his eyes dangerously.

After being in Madam Pomphrey's care, we knew exactly how dangerous angering a medic could be, and ducked behind Annabeth and Luna, using them as a shield from our furious doctor. He didn't look much older than fourteen, but by the gods was he just as scary as Hogwarts' Mediwitch when you get in her bad books.

"What do you think you're doing out of bed?" The Apollo camper demanded. "I spent the majority of two days patching you up, and for what? For you to just get out of bed and chit-chat when you should be resting?"

We paled when we heard two days had past. "What day is it?"

Our healer's eyes narrowed further, but Chiron interrupted before he could speak. "Calm down, Lee. I checked their hand as soon as we found him. It's practically healed. Harry and Percy are fine. Today is the 30th of July. Why?"

We groaned, covered our face with our hands. "We have to go home tomorrow."

"What?!" Lee exclaimed, looking even angrier. "Don't you even think about leaving, do you hear me? You two are going to stay here, in my care, until I judge you fit!"

"It… doesn't work like that." Harry explained in a small voice. "James – our dad - gave us an international portkey. It's set to take us home on July 31st, for our birthday. We need to get everything ready for next year at school as well so… Anyway, we can't change the day it's going to take us home. International portkeys are tricky to get hold of, and even if they weren't, Lily and James would get worried if we didn't show up."

"Humph!" Lee looked sceptical, but we could tell he was no longer angry with us.

Annabeth touched our arm. "You know, most people would be happy that tomorrow is their birthday, and they get to go home for it."

"Annabeth, Luna…" We shook our head. "Look, you know we love England, and we love our friends there. But our birthdays have never been good days, and besides, we'd rather stay here a
while longer."

"Alright then." Annabeth nodded. "We'll just have to make this last day count then, now won't we?"

'Making this last day count' consisted of several things. Firstly, escaping Lee and getting out of the infirmary. Second was teaching us how to shoot properly, which didn't go so well, to say the least. We ended up shooting anywhere and everywhere but the target. Will Solace, the Apollo camper we had managed to shoot before, had come along to help, and ended up just laughing at us in amazement of how badly we were doing.

Eventually giving up on the archery, we decided to arrange a small game of capture the flag with maybe twelve other campers. We were on a team with Annabeth and Luna, Leo, Will along with Beckendorf and his girlfriend Silena. The remaining two of our team were Malcolm (one of Annabeth and Luna's siblings) and Grover. The opposing team was led by Clarisse, and consisted of several campers we didn't know too well.

It was good match, as our skills were rather evenly spread. In the end however, I ended up having a one-to-one fight with Clarisse as she 'fought for her father's honour'. But, disputes aside, by the time capture the flag had finished both Clarisse, and Harry and I were on stable terms. We at least knew she wasn't going to murder us when we returned next year, which was good.

A lunchtime we took our meal to the edge of the lake, and chatted quietly together as we ate. After lunch, we had a game of water polo (which we rocked at, of course).

By the time the sun was dipping on the horizon we were exhausted, but happy. Annabeth's idea of making this last day count had been brilliant. We grinned as we laid in bed, thinking back on it.

'How many times did we have to flee from Lee?' I pondered with a yawn.

Harry considered. 'Five or six? By Apollo, that boy is persistent.'

'To be fair, we were under his care. And Chiron's...' I shrugged. 'He was only doing what he thought to be the right thing, I suppose.'

'Yeah. I can't wait to return next year. Hopefully it'll be a little less hectic…'

I burst out laughing. 'Harry, we have no chance of that! But honestly, how dull must some people's lives be?'

'True.' Harry agreed with a smile.

Soon we were wrapped in Hypnos' embrace, far too exhausted to dream. This was our last night in our little cabin for a year. We thanked every Greek God under the sun and moon for making it a good one. Tomorrow we'd have to face returning home, and Charles and our birthday. With a bit of luck, it would be a good one.
Harry's Point of View

I woke early the next morning, as if our body was allowing us more time to mentally prepare ourselves for the journey home. I listened for Percy, but I could only see the watercolour images of dreams flashing on his side of the bond, and so left him be. I checked our watched, which was still strapped tightly to our wrist.

I blinked and checked the arms again, just to be sure I didn’t have them mixed up. Nope. It was still reading five thirty. I cursed. Why in the name of the gods did we wake up this early? I groaned, but knew returning to sleep was a lost cause. Rolling out of bed, I threw on some clothes and walked outside. The camp was silent as the sun began to rise over the cabins. The first rays hit the Apollo cabin, and I winced, squinting against the heavy glare of the golden reflection.

Our feet moved at their own accord, carrying us down to the lake. Feeling restless I grabbed a canoe, and pushed off into the lake, the blades of our paddle slicing the water silently. I had a quiet sense of power as I manoeuvred the canoe, moving quickly across the wet surface. I fell into a therapeutic rhythm, and turned my mind to the gifts we had haggled out of the Hermes Cabin.

Shortly after returning from our quest we had discovered that if you wanted anything at camp that could only be purchased outside of camp, then the Stoll brothers were the ones to go to. With the right money, or deal, Travis and Conner were more than willing to slip out of camp and get whatever it was for you. Of course, being sons of Hermes, their business deals were strictly a 'don't ask and we'll tell you no lies' sort of arrangement. Of course, we had absolutely no doubt that they stole the goods.

In fact, on one of their sibling's birthday, the Hermes Cabin had (with a lot of proud grinning) provided a store-bought cake, and gave the boy in question the receipt as a present. It had been a momentous occasion, apparently, and the Hephaestus cabin had even taken a picture of it and framed it. Percy asked for a spare copy of the photo and charmed it to move, and we still laughed every time we saw the photo, looking at ridiculously proud looks on Travis and Conner's faces.

Anyway, we had managed to track down a muggle sweet store, and had asked Travis and Conner to buy us a sample of any and every blue confectionary they had. We had had a bet with Draco before we had left for the summer, on whether or not blue food existed (that wasn't spelled blue) and so we had come to the decision that any form of muggle blue food should match that description. We hadn't quiet been expecting the bags and bags full of sweets that the Stoll twins had returned to up, but laughed and accepted it all the same.

For Charles we had investigated the local Quidditch teams in America, and had managed (for a great sum of money) to purchase a large poster of the four semi-finalists from this summer, signed by each and every member of the teams. We hoped he liked it.

"Harry! Percy! Potter!"

I snapped out of my thoughts as I heard Leo yelling our names. I paddled quickly over to him, noting that the sun as a far few degrees higher in the sky.

"Hey, what's up?"
"You almost missed breakfast. We came to find you. Lee had noticed and looked ready to drag you to the infirmary again, so Annabeth and Luna and I quickly volunteered to find you, being the caring people we are." Leo grinned.

"Thanks mate." I grinned. "I woke up really early, and Percy is still sleeping, so I decided to go on the lake to think for a bit."

'Oi!' I poked Percy, who groaned and mentally shoved me back.

'Get away.' Percy mumbled. I chuckled.

'Come on, Perce. Wake up. We need to get to breakfast and say goodbye to everyone before we have to leave.'

Percy send a flash of confusion across our bond.

I smiled. 'Happy Birthday, Percy.'

'What? No! I don't wanna go home.' Percy pouted.

I sighed in silent agreement. Not that I was going to voice those wishes. If I did, I had little doubt that Percy would try and persuade me to stay. I wasn't going to do that.

We raced Leo to the pavilion where everyone else was calmly eating breakfast. Chiron jerked his head up when he heard us tumble over one another in our attempt to trip each other up as we raced to be first in. We landed in a tangled mess on the floor. Leo, was just outside the columns of the pavilion. We, however, were just within them.

"Yes!" Percy exclaimed, bounding to our feet. "Beat you! Sucker!"

Percy then proceeded to stick out his tongue at Leo like a five year old, resulting in most of the camp bursting into laughter. Leo pouted in an equally childish manner as he picked himself off the floor. Then Leo grinned.

"Man you can run!"

"Well, thanks, we do try…" We grinned back, as the pair of us walked in the direction of our table. Chiron gave us a small look, but decided to let us off. I mean, we weren't really supposed to have non Poseidon kids at our table, but it was our last day here after all.

Annabeth joined us shortly after as well, sending looks over her shoulder at someone. Following her gaze, I caught sight of Lee, his eyes narrowed as they focused on us. We shrunk lower in our seat, trying to escape from his disapproving glare. It didn't work. We could still feel his blue eyes burning into us. Annabeth abruptly turned around and returned Lee's glare. Now, as none of you have probably ever been on the receiving end of one of Annabeth's glares, let us tell you one thing. If she glares at you, then you know you are really in her bad books. Word of advice in that case - do whatever you possibly can to remedy the situation. In Lee's case, this consisted of him scowling, and then quickly turning his attention elsewhere.

We grinned at Annabeth. "Great Merlin! Can we take you to school with us, please! With that glare you could get even Madam Pompfrey to leave us alone!"

Annabeth and Luna grinned at us, but didn't answer. Leo tilted his head at us.

"Who's Madam Pompfrey?"
"Our school medic." We shivered. "She hates us, because either our brother or we seem to end up in her care every few weeks or so."

Percy grinned mischievously. "Yeah, if it wasn't a troll then it was Quidditch, or our magic getting out of control, or us fighting..."

'Don't forget we go swimming with the Giant Squid!' I chimed in mentally.

'Who could forget him?'

Leo looked excited. "Dude! What kind of school do you guys go to?"

Percy chuckled. "A magic one, duh!"

Leo sniggered. "Of course, what else, oh blessed by Hecate."

"I was hoping, favoured son of the Earthshaker, that it might be one demigods could attend." Leo shot back.

When breakfast had finished the three of us trailed over to our cabin to pack. Much to Annabeth's and my horror, Percy's and Leo's idea of packing was dumping everything into our trunk, and hazardously half wrapping our weapons with our clothes. I mentally hit my forehead and groaned. Luna sighed, shaking her head at the boys.

"Even the nargles know that that's not how you pack. Really. Athene only knows how many wrackspurts you've accidentally trapped in there." Even as Luna spoke, Annabeth blushed faintly, still not entirely used to the Luna talking about her strange creatures out loud. Percy flashed them a grin.

"Well then. Looks like we'll be bringing some more pets home!"

'Percy, that's really not the spirit. I know you don't like concentrating on something for more than a few minutes, but seriously? Could you at least try? If Lily hears those swords clattering then we're done for! You know she banned us from touching weapons for the summer.' I begged. Percy paled and groaned.

'I'm going to have to spend the rest of the holiday sneaking swords into the forest to practise, aren't I?'

'Most likely yes. Alternatively, we could read up on next year's texts.'

Percy shook his head, pulling out our weapons and deftly wrapping them up properly this time and carefully placing them in our trunk.

The next hour was spent saying goodbye to all the campers. The Stoll brothers made us promise to at least play one prank in honour of them. Will Solace, the little Apollo camper we had accidentally shot with an arrow, jokingly gave us a bow and quiver of arrows with instructions to practise over the year. We grimaced, but assured him we would when possible. Annabeth and Luna and Leo insisted that we wrote to them, which we said was given, obviously!

Chiron smiled, and told us to have a good year. Percy (admittedly reluctantly) offered him back Riptide, but the old centaur just shook his head.
"No, Percy. You and Harry will need a weapon to defend yourselves. Your scent is strong – even stronger now you know you are a demigod. Use it well, so we can see you again next year."

"Thank you Chiron!" Percy and I wrapped our arms around his waist – the highest part of him we could reach. Chiron bent down and hugged us back, a smile playing at his lips.

When we slipped out of the embrace, Dionysus was standing behind us. His usual sneer was on his face, but the god had a strange look in his eyes. We couldn't make it out. Was it... apprehension? We couldn't quite tell.

"Potters. You're good heroes, I suppose. Don't mess up and die, ok? We gods only know you're good at getting into trouble. Since I doubt mine will, may your father watch over you, young demi-wizard."

Percy tilted his head and I frowned in puzzlement. "Aren't you usually asking us to get killed, not the other way round?"

"Well." Dionysus glared at us. "I think I can trust you to protect Olympus, much more than my father or uncle's spawn."

Before any more could be said, our watch lit up. One minute to go. We grabbed our trunk, and stepped outside the wards of the camp. We waved.

"Bye!"

There was a strong tug, just above our navel before we were pulled away, spinning across the landscape and the portkey took us home. Sea spray softly touched our cheek as we sped over the sea, then green fields and the grey blur of cities past below us as we reached England. Shortly, we were stumbling to a stop in the large field at the back of Potter Manor.

Charles' birthday party was in full swing, it appeared. There was a large marquee in the middle of the field, and a large barbeque was set up just outside. The entire Weasley family was here, judging from the amount of red heads running round, and so were the Longbottoms and Grangers. In fact, much of Gryffindor was here!

Sighing, we started lugging our trunk into the house. Before we reached the patio doors, however, Charles spotted us.

"Harry! Percy! You're home!"

A few seconds later we had an armful of our twin as he jumped on us. We collapsed under his weight, tripping over our trunk and ending up on the floor, much like Leo and we had after our race to the pavilion earlier that morning. Percy groaned, and I fully agreed as we looked up at our brother's grinning face. He looked far too happy for him this early in the morning.

"Hello to you too." We grumbled.

Charles pouted. "Aw, don't be such a spoil sport. It our birthday! Let the elves take your trunk inside and then join the fun."

We paled slightly. "Um... they won't unpack our trunk will they? We'd prefer to do that..."

Charles chuckled. "Why? What have you smuggled in?"

"We just want to get your present, it won't take long. We'll be out in fifteen minutes, please?" Percy
used his puppy-dog eyes on Charles, who quickly relented.

"Fine, but be quick! Malfoy has been bugging me all morning asking when you'll be back."

We froze. "Draco's here?"

Charles laughed. "Of course, didn't you think we'd invite some of your friends for our party?"

Percy and I smiled inwardly. Of course we should've, but we hadn't. It had always been Charles' birthday parties before, even when we supposedly shared them. We didn't have any friends to invite, and tended to hide in corners. We despised the attention being centred on the boy-who-lived and so would hide when the time came to cut the cake. Our parents tried, they really did, but it was the public in the end who decided to cut us away from our birthday.

"We'll be back soon."

We quickly ran to our room, shoving grabbing Charles' present from our trunk before shoving the trunk under the bed to worry about later. We ran back to the party, discovering Charles was exactly where we had left him, tapping his foot impatiently.

"Happy birthday Charles." I declared passing him our present. Charles smiled, grabbing our hand and pulling us along after him to where everyone was milling around. He shoved us into a group of people with a smirk, then disappeared.

"Watch it!"

A familiar voice drawled from above us. The boy we had been pushed into had deftly moved out of the way, and so we had, for the third time that day, ended up on the floor. We looked up into annoyed silver eyes.

"We were. Our brother, unfortunately, was not." We retorted with a wry grin.

Draco blinked, and looked again. "Percy, Harry! I didn't recognise you!"

We laughed, looking down at the rich tan we had manage to earn during our weeks away. Our arms, too, had gained a little more muscle.

"We haven't changed that much."

Before Draco could reply, Blaise and Theo grabbed us and pulled us up into a firm embrace. When we got our arms free we hugged them back, then turned and grabbed Draco in a hug, ignoring his complaints about being in public and ruining his reputation and something about Gryffindors.

"We missed you guys so much!" Theo exclaimed.

"How was the camp?" Blaise pulled a face. "My mother always threatens to send me to one if I keep on 'misbehaving', as she puts it."

We shook our head. "It was alright actually. Lots of active activities – we learnt sword-fighting and had running and boat races, and had a climbing wall as well. Of course, we couldn't use magic, but other than that it was quite fun actually."

"And during the first week when we didn't hear head nor tails of you?" Draco asked with narrowed eyes. We winced. He was angry.

"Um..."
"What do we say?"
'Tell them the truth.'

'No, Percy, we're not supposed to tell them about us being Demigods remember!'
"Well…"

"I'd like to know what happened then as well."

We spun around to see James standing behind us.

"We were doing this survival course thing in the local woods." Percy said, thinking fast. "We had to build a shelter to live in for a week. They would provide food, but we had to cook it. As such, we didn't have time – or the resources to write."

"And you didn't tell us in your following letters?" Draco said, still looking miffed. We ducked our head. We should have known lies wouldn't work.

"Look, we're sorry, it's just…"

"James! Boys! It's Harry and Percy's birthday. It's rude to make the birthday boy cry! Hold off your accusations just a little while longer."

We looked up to see Lily looking down at us all in disappointment. "And Harry, Percy – you know you can tell them, right? You can trust your friends, can you not? I know that Slytherin's are called distrustful, but you are perhaps the most loyal house when it comes to your friends."

We nodded, blinking back the water in our eyes. Lily had sounded harsh, but her eyes were soft with worry. She blinked at us in a sort of understanding. One of her best friends at school had been Severus, and he a true Slytherin. She was right, we decided. And we should tell them sooner rather than later

We grabbed Theo and Blaise and beckoned to Draco with a small nod. "Come on. Let's go somewhere a bit quieter."

Percy led our friends towards the manor, and to our room. They gazed at the additions to our walls – we had added several more paintings during our restless night before heading over to camp. We'd painted our entire ceiling with the night sky, complete with constellations and planets.

"So. Are you going to tell us the real reason?" Blaise asked. His face was blank, but his eyes looked hurt. We pushed down the guilt.

"We are, it's just… we're not sure you'll believe us. I'm not even sure I really believe it…" Percy said.

We spend a good hour telling our tale. Starting with the Fury in the park, and then moving on to talk about Chiron and Grover visiting us, then about Clarisse and Annabeth and Luke before explaining our quest and our meeting of Leo. We finished with Luke's betrayal and the completion of our prophecy.

Draco seemed to catch on the easiest. "So… You're a demigod – a proper little half-blood after all."

Percy tilted our head. "Huh?"

"That's the origin of the term, you know. Mudbloods are decedents of Squibs re-blessed by Hecate,
which is why they are often seen as weak. Some, the more powerful ones are her actual children with muggles, which is why they are half-bloods."

I nodded. "So we're not actually that rare? Chiron told us not to mention our heritage to anybody, however, so would you mind keeping this between us?"

"Of course!" Draco, Blaise and Theo looked insulted we'd even think otherwise. "Snakes honour."

We all chuckled at that. Snakes honour meant nothing if offered to a Lion, Raven or Badger, but to another Snake… if was a less official unbreakable vow.

Still grinning, we headed back to the party just in time for cake. Tomorrow all the Hogwarts letters would be sent out, and we'd have to go shopping. But for now… we just sat in the large marquee, listening to music and eating cake as Charles opened his enormous pile of presents. Percy and I had a small pile, as apart from our friends and family, only the Weasleys and Longbottoms had brought us a gift, but we didn't mind. All our presents were one's that we would truly care for, and that was what mattered.

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_Percy's Point of View_

The next day we woke up really early at the break of dawn. We were wide awake, which I figured was due to being jet lagged. Stupid time difference! Yesterday's party had been brilliant. We had gotten of books, quills and sweets, along with several items of 'fashionable' clothing (from Draco, of course).

I persuaded Harry to use our early start as an excuse to go for a run round the field and forest, saying hello to the various wildlife we hadn't seen in months. The local centaur herd greeted us warmly, despite almost shooting us before they had realised who we were. The were-wolf pack was back, and happy to see us too. James, we was glad to hear, was still ignorant of them. The fairies flittered round our heads, and the nymphs giggled at us from the shadows.

By the time we had finished our morning jog and showered, the rest of our house was awake. James and Lily were cooking breakfast. They didn't often, as the house-elves preferred to do it, but it was one of the occasional mornings when they did.

Our Hogwarts letters came in the post. Our train ticket was inside, with instructions to catch the Hogwarts express as usual at 11 o'clock on the first of September. Also enclosed was our books list.

Second-year students will require:

_The Standard Book of Spells, Grade 2_ by Miranda Goshawk

_Break with a Banshee_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Gadding with Ghouls_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Holidays with Hags_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Travels with Trolls_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Voyages with Vampires_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Wanderings with Werewolves_ by Gilderoy Lockhart

_Year with the Yeti_ by Gilderoy Lockhart
"What's it with Lockhart's books?" Charles questioned. "The new DADA teacher must be a fan."

Lily blushed slightly. "He's a great man, though isn't he?"

'A complete fake, more like.' Harry huffed.

'What do you mean?'

'You don't really think that a little pansy like Gilderoy Lockhart could actually succeed in doing the things he did in his books? They hardly have any real details in them. Beside, how we're going to learn from them is beyond me.'

Concentrating I thought back to when Harry had jokingly picked one up to read when we were ten. Recalling the drivel written in them made me scowl.

"I really hope the DADA teacher is more competent then the man himself!"

Two hours later, I was fuming as my words came back to haunt me. We were in Flourish and Blotts, watching Lockhart at his book signing. He had caught sight of Charles, pulling him forward for a picture. He whispered something to Charles before grinning as the camera flashed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Lockhart declared loudly. I frowned. What was he up to now? "What an extraordinary moment this is! The perfect moment for me to make a little announcement I've been sitting on for some time! When Mr Potter here stepped inside to get a signed copy of my autobiography, he had no idea, that this year, he and his fellows will in fact be getting the real magical me! In September I will be taking up the post of Defence Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry!"

I groaned, hitting our head in dismay. Despite Harry's mutual horror, I could feel a sense of amusement from him as well.

'Not one word. Not one single word.' I gritted out with a snarl. Harry burst out laughing as I scowled fiercely at him.

We escaped outside with Charles and our parents, to where we might find the rest of our school stuff. Mr Weasley and Mr Malfoy were arguing, while Draco was watching with a look of bland amusement on his face. Ron and his younger sister, Ginny, were red in the face as they glared at the Malfoy's.

Malfoy senior had a disdainful sneer as his picked up a battered second hand book from Ginny's equally battered cauldron and said something. He dropped the book back in, and I noticed a black book fall out his sleeve into the cauldron with Ginny's text book. Nudging Lily, I asked if I could tag along with Draco for a bit. A little reluctantly, Lily agreed and we ran off.

"Draco!" We exclaimed, creeping up behind him. Much to our amusement, he jumped almost a foot into the air.

"Don't creep up on me like that!" Draco whisper shouted, as the Weasleys and Mr Malfoy turned to look at us.

"Sorry." We chuckled. "Lily said we could go round with you for a bit. What else do you need to get?"

Lucius Malfoy gave us a small smile. "Why don't you two run along? I have a couple of errands to run myself."
He handed Draco a money bag before letting us 'run along' as he put it.

"Thanks for interrupting." Draco flashed us a smile. "That feud with the Weasley's is kind of annoying."

"What is that all about anyway?" Harry inquired. "I would have thought feuds were beneath Malfoys."

"Nobody is above vengeance." Draco mumbled. "Just father won't tell me why we have the feud. That's what annoys me."

"Ah." We nodded.

We spend another hour collecting potion ingredients, robes and the like before declaring our shopping spree over for the day and waiting in Florean Fortescue's Ice-cream Parlour. A nice end to a good day.

And, although Harry and I missed camp, it was good to be home at last.
Despite the month remaining of our summer holidays, we didn't actually do much. Our morning fell into a normal routine of exercising before breakfast then reading for a couple of hours afterwards. We did get our homework done, and successfully managed to hide it from Charles when he went looking to copy it. Our afternoons were spent seeing friends or sneaking away into the forest to look for potion ingredients or practise our sword fighting or archery.

Oh. And we had to explain our holiday to our parents. Namely over dinner the night we had gotten home. I must say, that isn't one of our fondest memories…

There was an uncomfortable silence filling the dining. In the grand fireplace a fire was merrily burning, filling the room with the sweet aroma of wood smoke and the sound of spitting sparks. We fidgeted nervously in our seat, occasionally glancing up at James or Lily. We moved our food around our plate, pretending to eat it.

"Care to explain to us why you failed to send any letters during your first week away?" James demanding, adding after we opened our mouth, "And the truth this time, if you please."

We groaned. "Well… See, Lord Zeus-" We flinched as thunder rumbled above us – "had managed to accidentally leave his bolt by his throne on the Winter Solstice, and one of the demigod who had been visiting Olympus at the time stole it. For some reason he blamed Poseidon and, being his son, we were the ones sent to go find it.

"Uncle Hades summoned us to him first, after we had escaped Medusa, and explained to us that it wasn't him as we had previously assumed, and if possible he would also like us to return his Helm of Darkness to him. As our choices were pretty much obey or die in the Underworld, we chose the obvious choice and agreed to find his helm for him.

"Electro – the Fury we killed in the park – dropped us off at a nearby hotel, which turned out to be a monster trap and –"

"Ah… yes." James and Lily were pale at this point, although Charles looked fully engrossed in our story. "So you were sent on a potentially fatal quest, am I right?"

"Well, not exactly. See, Lord Zeus had threatened to kill us if we didn't find his bolt, so the quest was obviously the right option to take." I chatted happily.

If you didn't get the clue yet, we really didn't know how to tell our parents that we just risked our lives without getting grounded. Alright, so we weren't exactly grounded, but James certainly wanted to. Especially after he saw our hands…

"Harry and Perseus James Potter! You are far too young to have a tattoo!"

We stared down at our hands, noting that the unicorn blood stain was currently in the shape of wings for some reason. Rubbing our palms together, we searched for the right answer. Charles luckily got there before us.
"What? That's not a tattoo Dad!" Charles laughed. " Didn't Harry and Percy tell you that they healed a unicorn last year? It was really cool! Except there was quite a lot of blood from the unicorn, which dried on their hands staining them. And then it likes to change shape a lot as well so…"

"Why weren't we informed of this incident?" Lily demanded.

"We asked Madam Pomphrey not to tell you." We admitted. "It drained us, and we were unconscious for a few days…"

James was laughing as he took in the unusual circumstances. "Are you sure you're a Slytherin?"

"Harry most certainly is." I assured him. "I, most obviously, am a Gryffindor!"

"Yeah, but you always stay in Slytherin…" Charles grumbled.

"And what kind of welcome did we ever receive setting foot in your common room?" We sneered back.

"Boys!" Lily glared at us all, scaring us into silence. "I have another bone to pick with you, mister. I said no weapons. So pray why were half the swords in the gym missing when you were away?"

We paled. "That… we… We were learning how to sword-fight and use weapons anyway at camp! It was to teach us how to survive in a world that is full of monsters trying to kill us! Why should it matter that we wanted to take a few blades that we were comfortable with?"

"And the new bow and quiver of arrows in your room?" Lily's glare intensified.

I grinned however. "That was a gift from our friend Will at Camp. He's a son of Apollo and was there when Chiron was teaching us to shoot. We accidentally hit him – it was fine though, the arrow heads had been removed – so he made us promise to practise so that next year we won't hit him again."

Charles was giggling now. James was trying to look stern, but we could see his Marauder peeking through as he struggled to keep a straight face. We flashed them a grin.

"You what!" Lily exclaimed.

We scowled as we remembered how Lily had decided that, after our trip to Diagon Alley, we weren't allowed to leave the house for two days. She also banned us from the Gym and Library. For two whole days! Blasphemy I tell you. Keeping us from our rightful places in the house…

Someone bumping into us reminded us of where we were. Kings Cross station was just as busy as we remembered last year. Full of muggles running round, and a few of our classmates weaving through them with their large trollies. We grinned at our new addition – a beautiful snowy owl whom we had named Hedwig. She was observing her chaotic surroundings with large amber eyes, as if she was above all this mess. As a bird, we had little doubt that she quite possibly was.

Before we could reach the barrier, we ran into the Weasleys. As Ron and Charles chatted, and Lily and James caught up with Mr and Mrs Weasley, we couldn't help but watch as the minutes hand on our watch grew closer and closer to eleven.

"Um… Guys." We spoke up. "We're going to miss the train in a minute."

Ron's older brothers ran thought the barrier first, accompanied by their sister Ginny and their parents.
Lily and James went next. However, as Charles went to run at the wall, the strangest thing happened. The barrier sealed shut, and his trolley crashed into the wall. The muggle ticket conductor shook his head disapprovingly at us and sighed.

"Kids these days..." He muttered.

"But... the barrier!" Ron exclaimed. "Does that mean our parents can't get back through?"

We sighed, rolling our eyes. "It'll sort itself out. Or if it doesn't, our parents can apparate anyway, so they'll be fine."

"What about catching the train?"

We rolled our eyes and Harry groaned at our brother's narrow mindedness. "It's fine. Our parents can just apparate us to Hogwarts once they get back here. Failing that, we could always floo to school."

When an hour had passed, and there was still no sign of our parents, Ron and Charles came up with their own plan to get to school, involving Mr Weasley's flying car. Harry tried to warn them that it was a very bad idea, with hundreds of flaws, but they ran off anyway.

"Look, just wait a while longer. Rushing into things is how you get hurt!" Harry argued.

Ron sneered at us. "Well if you want to waste your time here then fine! But we're going to get to Hogwarts, one way or another!"

"Then use the floo!" Harry begged.

Charles shook his head. "Do you see any fireplaces round here? Cause I don't! Especially none connected up. And besides, it's not as if we just carry floo powder around with us at all times, is it? And, you can't take luggage with you either. It's this way or not at all. You coming?"

"No! You two are such Gryffindors!" Harry snarled. "Really. Lily and James will be back soon."

Ron and Charles just shook their heads. "I'm sick of waiting!"

We watched, forlorn, as they ran off back outside. Sighing, we glanced at the barrier again.

'We could try and apparate ourselves.' I suggested. Harry frowned at me.

'But it's wandless, so...'

I argued with Harry until he eventually agreed to give it a go. We grabbed the stuff off our trolley, and stood up, moving to a dark quiet spot. We concentrated hard on our school, filling our body with the want to be there. With a small crack, we disappeared, moving a great speeds down what felt like a tight rubber tube.

Then the tube ended, and we were standing in the middle of Hogwarts' Courtyard. We heard footsteps, and shortly Severus came running see what the noise was. He stared at us in amazement.

"Harry, Percy. You know only the Headmaster is supposed to be allowed to apparate into and around Hogwarts, right?" Severus muttered. We blinked.

"Ops."
'See, I told you we shouldn't do it…' Harry growled.

I shrugged. 'Yeah, but he said 'supposed'. Consider it us checking the wards. They suck.' I stuck my tongue out at him.

Severus coughed and we realised he was waiting for a better answer.

"Yeah um… Maybe the wards broke?" We suggested.

"Why did you even apparate here in the first place – aren't you meant to be on the train now?" Severus demanded.

"Oh yeah! The barrier shut down so we couldn't get through it. Then we waited an hour for Lily and James and Mr and Mrs Weasley to come back, but nobody did, so after an hour Ron and Charles decided to take Mr Weasley's flying car – we did tell them this was a really bad idea – and fly to school. We waited a while longer then decided maybe we could try to apparate. And hence – here we are!" We grinned.

Severus paled. "A flying car. What if muggles see them?!"

We looked at our feet, mumbling about how we had tried to warn them only… they hadn't listened. Of course they hadn't. They were Gryffindors to Merlin's sake! And Uncle Hades only knows how much of a death-wish Gryffindors have.

Severus groaned, but ordered an elf to move our luggage into our dorm and then took us to see Dumbledore and explain things to him. We sighed, but still followed our godfather like the good little students we were.

We explained everything again, and the Headmaster sighed, but didn't seem overly worried about our reckless brother and his best friend. Rather, he seemed amused by their efforts to get to school. He looked slightly worried about how we had managed to apparate into Hogwarts, and decided to check the wards. He returned half an hour later, very puzzled, only to claim they were fully functioning and therefore Hogwarts herself must have let us in. She was a sentient building, after all, from all the magic she had absorbed over the years, making her mysterious in many ways.

While we waited for the other students to arrive, the Headmaster sent us with Severus to the Great Hall to both eat lunch and find something to do to pass the time. We ended up challenging the other Professors to a mini Chess tournament. As good at chess as we were, we were still beaten most of the times.

Finally, five hours later, the students arrived, filling the Hall with chatter as they entered and sat down. We spotted Draco as soon as he entered the room, and weaved our way through the throng of students to his side.

"Hey Draco." We flashed him a grin.

Draco slapped our cheek, narrowing his eyes at us. "Where were you? Do worry me like that, Potter. I thought you weren't coming this year. Your brother wasn't anywhere either!"

"Oh." We quickly outlined our problem with the barrier, and how we had gotten here. Draco sniggered when he heard about Charles' and Ron's solution.

"Oh, sweet Merlin. They actually thought that was a good idea?" He smirked. "Looks like Gryffindor's going to be behind on points from the beginning."
"Yep." Harry nodded with a grin. I pouted slightly, but didn't comment on how that technically Gryffindor was my house. "And we told Severus, so he'll be watching out for them. I mean, as much as I love Charles as my brother, he needs to learn this lesson."

I nodded slowly in agreement, realising that Harry was right. Charles really did need to learn not to go running into things. I mean, look what happened with the Philosopher's Stone last year?

Slowly the hall settled down. As we waited for few minutes for the first years to arrive I admired the Hall just like I had last year, taking in the starry sky and floating candles and the shaped torch holders. A snake, and griffin, a raven and badger, each holding a hanging bowl of fire from their mouths. For grotesques, they were actually pretty cute things.

When Professor McGonagall started calling out the names of the first years, there was one in particular that caught my attention;

"Luna Chase!"

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**Camp Half-Blood, Shortly after Harry and Percy had left...**

Annabeth and Luna Chase were sitting quietly at the Athena table, thinking about their little friends, the Potters. Harry and Percy were quite the conundrum, despite being quiet open with people. They would answer her questions about the Wizarding World, only to create new ones. What was the Floo? Or a portkey for that matter? And how did the wand choose the wizard? Did they really have to write on parchment using a quill?

As they pondered on such questions that had been left unanswered, Annabeth and Luna missed the large tawny owl swooping down to sit in front of them. The rest of her siblings stared in awe at the majestic bird. Annabeth blinked, looking at the bird in a sort of dull confusion.

"Percy and Harry have left, what are you doing here?" She asked rhetorically.

Luna gently nudged Annabeth away, and unbound the letter she had spotted tied to the bird's leg, addressed in spidery green ink to one Luna Chase.

'Annabeth…' Luna murmured. 'It's addressed to me!'

Cautiously opening the letter, Luna read its contents. And then she abruptly fainted, leaving Annabeth to catch their body before they fell to the floor. She squinted at the loopy letters and silently cursed her mother for her dyslexia. Eventually she managed to make it out:

**Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry**

**Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore**

*(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chief Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)*

**Dear Miss Chase,**

We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of necessary books and equipment.

**Term starts on 1st September. We await your owl by no later than 31st July.**

**Yours sincerely,**
"What?" Annabeth mumbled, looking up at Chiron, who had moved to stand beside her. "Can I go?"

Chiron paused, reading the letter. He nodded slowly. "I hope that owl can carry a reply back faster than it must have taken to get here. You need it back by today. Perhaps explain the circumstances of where you live."

Annabeth nodded, poking Luna. 'Luna! Wake up. We need to write a reply, and you know I can't. Not in English, anyway…'

Luna smiled as she regained consciousness, having received a mental image of her pouting sister. 'Ok. What should I write?'

Luna picked up a pen and her notepad from her pocket, and sketched out the note that Annabeth dictated to her before giving it to the owl to return. Looks like she'd be seeing the Potters a lot sooner than expected.

Leo let out a dramatic wail. "No fair! You get to see our little Harry and Percy! And you get to learn magic! I want to be a wizard!"

"You'd have to wait another two years to find out if you're a wizard anyway." Luna pointed out. "Schools only send out letters when you turn eleven."

Leo pouted. "Meanie. Leaving me here alone!"

"Hey!" Beckendorf called. "Stop moping. You've got us, haven't you? And the forge."

Leo immediately cheered up. "Hey Annabeth. I'm going to make you the coolest armour before you leave!"

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Percy's Point of View

Harry and I stared in shock as the blond girls we had befriended over the summer walked to the front of the hall and sat on the stool, ready to be sorted. Professor McGonagall placed the hat on her head, then silence reigned once more.

I sat waiting with baited breath while the hat talked with Annabeth and Luna. Finally it called out, "Ravenclaw!"

We clapped heartily with the rest of the Hall, but still stared at our friend in shock.

"She was asking for you, you know." Draco told us. "She knew both your names as well. So, spill. How do you know her?"

"She went to camp with us at the summer. She was a year-rounder, but it looks like that just changed." We explained.

To us, the feast couldn't end soon enough. It wasn't that we didn't enjoy the roast beef and fried potatoes and all the other wonderful food on the table, but we wanted to talk to Annabeth and Luna. Almost as soon as we were dismissed for bed we got us and ran through the crowd to find her, Draco hot on our heels.
"An- Luna!" We called, unsure if they were going to go by both names or not. Draco frowned at our slip, but didn't comment, presuming it to be some silly nickname no doubt. Our blond friends turned their head, and grinned at us.

"Harry, Percy!"

We hugged each other warmly, much to the rest of Ravenclaw's shock. Being mainly Slytherin, we didn't often show this much emotion.

"How have you been?" I demanded. "How's Leo? Is he ok? You didn't leave him alone did you?"

"Hey!" Luna laughed airily. "The little fire-imp's fine. He's got his siblings doesn't he, and the rest of camp?"

We blushed slightly. Opening our mouth's to say more. Then Luna caught sight of Draco behind us, and her eye's narrowed, sharpening as Annabeth took over.

"You're the rude boy from the train."

"So I am. Are you Harry and Percy's girlfriend?" Draco retorted.

Annabeth blushed slightly with anger. "No w-. No I am not. Goodnight Harry, Percy. We should go find our dorms. See you tomorrow?"

"See you, Wise-Girl." We grinned.

She shook her head in exasperation. "Seaweed-Brain."

Draco teased us all the way to the dorm, but we didn't care. This year looked like it was turning out good. Luna and Annabeth were here, along with our usual crew. What could possibly ruin it?
Waking up in our bed in the Slytherin dorms felt like a dream. The candles flickered gently, freshly lit by the house-elves. The green matt that covered the stone floor was warm beneath our bare feet, and the chill of the dungeon was a shock to our system after the warm blankets that had kept us warm all night.

An eye peered in the window, and I grinned at the sight of our old friend. 'Good morning.'

'And a good morning to you as well, young Lords.' The Giant Squid greeted us. He disappeared shortly after, giving us some privacy to get changed. After spending most of the summer wearing jeans and a t-shirt it was nice to be back in our school robes. They were more restrictive, certainly, but they were also more comfortable somehow.

One thing that we certainly didn't miss, however, was having to wait for Draco, Blaise and Theo to finish their daily morning routine so we could head up for breakfast. Eventually (a.k.a half an hour before breakfast finished) we did make it to the Great Hall. Percy had taken over, and was doing a fine imitation of a happy morning person (despite the rest of our dorm-mates and I knowing better), and generally just irritating everyone else at the Slytherin table near us.

Across the Hall, we caught sight of Charles grinning at us, laughing with Ron as Percy succeeded with his mission to create mayhem on our first morning back. Severus gave us a look through narrowed eyes as he handed out our timetables.

"Nice to see that you four are ready to start this New Year with a bang." Our head of year commented dryly. "And you better hope your homework is up to standard when I see you next."

Theo groaned after our professor had moved on. "Professor Snape's going to kill me! I only mentioned three uses of pegasi feathers…"

"Quick, get it out. Let me look over it." Percy offered. We peered at our friend's neat handwriting, quickly reading though the page. He was right. Theo had failed to reach the five uses requirement, however he had explained the three uses he had in plenty of detail, and reached the three feet mark that Severus had asked for… "You might get away with it. You never know, it's well written. Professor may let you off."

Theo flashed us a thankful grin as Percy passed him back his work. We stood up to leave and head back down into the dungeons when a familiar blond Ravenclaw appeared in front of us. Draco sneered at her, while Theo and Blaise simply looked down at her with a small degree of interest in their eyes. After all, it wasn't often that a Ravenclaw would approach Slytherin. Especially not Slytherin's that were older than them.

"Luna." Percy smiled, recognising that it was, in fact, Luna in control at the moment.

"Percy…” Luna frowned. "Why are you dressed as a Lion in a nest of Snakes? You told u… me that you were a Slytherin."

Draco laughed. "Percy's a Gryffindor, so their robes turn red when he's in control. Harry though, he's Slytherin through and through – enough to keep Percy straight at least."
Luna tilted her head at Draco. "Bad faith… Do you really like your surname?"

"Yes." Draco lifted his chin, though I noticed with a frown that he stiffened slightly. "It isn't about what it means. My name is my name and it's a good name to have, especially in the Wizarding world, so there!"

"Are you alright, Luna?" Percy asked in concern. "Do you need help getting to lesson?"

"Hm? Oh, I expect the nargles can guide me…” Luna winked. "Besides. Our prefects are taking us anyway."

We nodded. "Right…”

'Is she alright this morning?' I asked Percy. 'Luna seems even more out of it than usual.'

'She does doesn't she?' Percy agreed. 'Maybe it's all the magic in Hogwarts. They haven't been in a magical building before…'

'True…'

"Have you spoken with Annabeth recently?" Percy randomly asked Luna.

Luna nodded. "Why?"

"Just interested." Percy frowned. "Is she ok?"

"Well," Luna looked down. "She has been very quiet…”

Before we could continue on this train of thought, the Ravenclaw prefect turned up, giving us dirty looks as he moved to stand protectively behind Luna.

"Luna! There you are. You should keep away from these Slytherin's you know. They'll just end us getting you hurt."

Percy narrowed his eyes. "What about me. I'm technically a Gryffindor and Luna's an old friend."

Luna waved us off with a smile before saying her farewells and heading off to class. We quickly raced down to the Dungeons, arriving mere seconds before Severus let us in.

Potions was pretty much the same as last year. Severus picking on the Gryffindors and scorning our attempts at his essays. Then we got onto the actually potion brewing, and we was paired up with Draco as per usual. We were reviewing the Boils Potion that we had learnt last year, so that Severus could gage how much revision he needed to do on our practical skills. In terms of the Gryffindors, a lot of work was required. Three of their cauldrons blew up. Though, to be fair, that could have been because of the random ingredients Blaise and Draco were throwing at them…

What came after Potions, however, was decisively worst. But really – how could any lesson being taught by Gilderoy Lockhart actually go well? First, he welcomed us in and introduced himself – who actually cares if he's the fifth time winner of Witches Most Charming Smile award? You can't protect yourself from dark magic and creatures by simply smiling at people! Merlin's underwear and Hephaestus' hand-grenades, a muggleborn five-year old would be more qualified to teach!

The final straw however, was when he started handing out test papers.

"Now, just a little quiz to see how many of you have actually read the books I got you to buy.” Lockhart grinned, flashing his white teeth at us.
'You know Percy, I think I want to be sick just looking at him.' I commented to my brother.

Percy gagged back. 'I'm with you there, Harry. Even Apollo's kids don't have teeth quite that white.'

A sheet of parchment landed in front of us. We scowled up at Lockhart. He smiled down at us, then frowned at our tie started shifting between green and red and our badge alternated from snake to lion and I fought Percy to stop him from punching our teacher.

'Percy, really… there's no need to hit him.' I begged between gritted teeth. Percy growled.

'Question 1: What is Gilderoy Lockhart's favourite colour? Really. I'd rather punch him and have anybody else have to step in while he lies comatose in hospital.'

I glanced down at the sheet, quickly skimming the page.

"Your… are you aware you're robes seem to be unaware of what House you're in, Mr…"

"Potter." Percy snarled, then I added. "Surely you've heard of us?"

Lockhart paled. "Perseus and Harry, yes?"

We nodded, holding up the sheet. "Care to explain what this is?"

"A quiz on my books –"

"No." Percy interrupted. "Last I checked, this class was Defence Against the Dark Arts, not Gilderoy Lockhart's life story. So, how is knowing your favourite colour or your greatest ambition going to help us pass our end of year exams, not to mention our OWLs or NEWTs?"

"Detention, Mr Potters." Lockhart stuttered uncertainly. "It isn't up to you to decide how I'm supposed to teach my lessons. Now. Either answer the questions or get out. I won't stand for this level of disrespect in my classroom!"

Draco exchanged a look with us and we burst out laughing. From behind us, Blaise asked. "But sir, he does have a point – how is this relevant to the subject we are learning?"

Lockhart looked around desperately, as if searching for an answer to our question. Finally, however, Hermione spoke up.

"It's obvious isn't it? The answers to these questions are in his books, so if we've read them well enough then we should know the answers and therefore the content of his books." Hermione gave Lockhart a pair of love-sick eyes. "It's brilliant really."

Lockhart nodded, a look of pure relief on his face. Percy glowered at both Hermione and Lockhart. I could sense he was about to do something incredibly reckless, and so quickly pulled him back. I picked up our quill and very quickly answered the questions. The ability to memorise entire books was, after all, a very useful quality. I waved the parchment in the air.

"Your answers, sir." I said in an emotionless voice. Lockhart glanced briefly at the Snake crest adorning our robes and scowled, taking the paper. His eyes widened as he recognised all thirty answers to be correct.

"Y-yes, very well done." He mumbled.

Lockhart wondered off, leaving us sitting there bored for the remainder of the lesson. We amused ourselves by casting random charms at different things in the room. We charmed Lockhart's chair to
start singing if he sat on it, and a triggered happy charm should anyone touch the life-sized painting he had at the front of the room.

Still bored we started looking for the changes in the classroom with our new 'teacher'. A skeleton of a small winged creature hung from the ceiling, and the paintings of various creatures – vampires, werewolves, redcaps, veela, pixies and many more – were hung round the walls. The desks were in columns rather than rows, so that the occupants of the desks could only talk to the person sitting next to them. I was, all in all, extremely dull.

When we were dismissed, Percy all but ran for the door. Draco laughed, following at a much more respectable pace. More than ready for lunch, we decided to grab food and head down to the lake, to enjoy the some of the last sunny days before the cold set in.

Others had obviously had the same idea, and also carried food down to the water's edge. I almost smiled when I spotted the obliterated beach from Charles' and our fight shortly after Christmas last year. Percy scowled seeing it.

'I hate that spot.' He declared. 'And I hate stunning spells as well. They completely block our bond.'

I chuckled as Percy pouted. 'But at least we know that now. You wouldn't stop forcing your way into my mind for weeks after that, checking that I was, in fact, still there.'

'But I thought I'd lost you…' Percy sent me a look of his wide green puppy eyes and I relented with a small grin. It wasn't really possible to be mad at Percy. He was just far too loveable.

It was nice, I surmised, to act our age every now and again, as we chased Draco, Blaise and Theo in a game of tag after finishing our lunch. Which was probably one of the reasons we enjoyed Camp Half-Blood too. Admittedly, the skills and games they taught would no doubt save our lives many times, but they were taught in a similar way to any other summer camp – using fun and high spirits to keep us entertained and ensure we were enjoying ourselves.

As Percy paused for a moment in our pursuit to catch our friends I caught Flint from the Quidditch team watching us with a faint smile on our face. Slytherin's watch out for each other, I remembered. No doubt that also included making sure we got a healthy dose of fun every now and again.

That night we found it impossible to sleep. No matter how comfortable our bed was, or how right it felt to be in our bed in the dorms, Hypnos refused to let us slip into his realm. Agitated and unusually energised, we decided to go for a walk to try and tire ourselves out for a bit.

We kept to the shadows and secret passages, and used a wordless 'lumos' to light our way. We did this wandlessly however, and limited the magic we put into our spell so that the silver markings on our hands only glowed faintly – just enough to prevent us from falling over things, but not so bright that it might attract us unwanted attention. The very castle itself seemed to be on edge as we walked its passages. Occasionally we'd leave a passage and end up exactly where we had entered it, as it the castle was shifting around us. I couldn't help but notice that the castle seemed to keep near to its outer walls, as if it didn't want us near its centre.

We'd read a book on sentient buildings, and it was rumoured that Hogwarts was one, but this was the first proof we had of it possibly being true. I put a hand to a stone wall, feeling the cold stone suck at the warmth in me. Percy poked me questioningly and I let out a sigh, before letting him guide our feet onwards.

It was midnight before we returned to bed, finally exhausted enough to slip into sleep. We dreamt
that night as well.

It was hard to make out, but we appeared to be in some sort of chamber or cave. Perhaps both. The floor was wet and slippery, made out of smooth marble. The walls too were made of marble as well to a certain extent, before reaching a point where it merged with the rough limestone roof. Water dripped of stalactites which hung from the roof. Cautiously, we edged further into the gloom.

Statues of snakes edged the pathway, glaring down at us with their mouths open, poised to pounce. The water dripping from their fangs had an eerie resemblance to poison, and I drew back slightly, not wanting to get too close.

In that typical way that dreams do, the shadows seemed to creep up the walls to loom over us, making this cavern in our dream seem creepier then it really was. Still, we edged our way slowly down the long corridor, mindful of the snakes and deeper in.

At the end of the corridor we found a large statue of a face, one we recognised from our history books to be Salazar Slytherin, founder of my House. Contorted, sibilant words filled the air, too mutilated to full comprehend their meaning, and Salazar's mouth opened wide. Our feet treacherously carried us inside. The passage way within was rounded and large and slimy.

As if being pulled by a magnet, we were drawn to one inner chamber, ignoring the passageways that led off elsewhere. Inside, a dormant slippery presence reached our mind, hissing as it turned in its sleep.

$Soon... Yes, soon the Heir will return... Soon Salazar's noble quest shall be, after long years of waiting, completed!$

The hissing tones of Parseltongue slithering around in our mind, jerking us out of the Chamber. We woke for a moment, our breathing heavy and heart pumping before falling back into more dreams.

This time we were back at Camp Half-Blood with Luna and Annabeth, chasing our female friends round in the forest. Around us, war cries and the clash of steel could be heard ringing through the trees. A flock of birds flapped noisily into the air as they fled from us. From what we could deduce, this must be a Friday's game of capture the flag.

Up ahead in a small clearing a flag was waving. Instead of being one of the usual flags, depicting a cabin's parent, it was the emerald green and shining silver of Slytherin, and the symbolic snake decorating the cloth. We drew to an abrupt halt, our eyes wide as we turned to ask Annabeth and Luna what was going on.

But when we turned back to our friends we were faced by a cloaked masked stranger. A death eater! The battle cries still hung in the air but, instead of the ring of steel meeting still hanging in the air with them, it was the explosions of spells and incantations that accompanied the shouts.

Then, all of a sudden, silence reigned. We turned around, sensing someone behind us. We caught a flash of white before our vision focused and we caught sight of our Unicorn friend watching us with dark eyes as her horn shone in the moonlight.

I blinked. I could have sworn it was day-time a second ago…

Then I noticed that the trees were different. They were more wild and overgrown. We were in the forbidden forest… The sense of something stalking us crept over Percy and I and we began to run, sprinting through the trees as fast as possible in the direction of what I thought was the castle. We ran and ran, but the presence never seemed to fade. It just go closer and closer the faster we ran.
Then a voice, a name cut through to us.

"Harry! Percy! Potter!"

The forest abruptly disappeared, and we sat straight up in bed, clashing heads with Draco, who had been leaning over us. He fell back with a cry, landing on the floor.

"Hey! I was just trying to wake you!"

Percy ignored him, glancing round the room, already on the alert. I was still dazed from our dream. Then I realised that we could still feel that strange presence stalking us. A few seconds later a large orange fur ball sprang at us, landing on our chest.

Alarmed, Percy hit it, sending it flying straight into Blaise's waiting arms. The dark haired boy smiled, petting the large cat fondly.

"Percy, Harry, meet Felix, my new familiar."

The little fluff ball bared its teeth at us and snarled lightly. Percy scowled, and we hissed right back at it. Something told me that that little 'cat' really hated us for some reason. Which was odd, considering that most animals seemed to like us normally. It also must have been the presence in our dream, I realised, and the reason why we couldn't run away from it…

Sighing, we stretched and rolled out of bed, heading for the showers, hoping that a shock of cold water might drive the nightmare from our head. Unfortunately, it didn't work…
Chapter 35

Harry's Point of View

Felix. That gods forsaken cat was annoying! It seemed to have taken on some of Blaise's personality and insisted on being lazy half the time, and then incredibly energetic as soon as it saw something it liked. Such as now, as it chased our poor petrified Hedwig round the common room as she desperately attempted to bring us our letter.

Scowling, we stood up from the green armchair by the fire where we had been comfortably sitting until Felix caught sight of Hedwig a couple of minutes ago. By now, almost the entirety of Slytherin was watching the most bizarre game of 'cat and mouse' ever to have taken place in the dungeons.

"Blaise." I growled. "If you don't call your familiar of our Hedwig then I swear on the River Styx I will, and I can't guarantee that Felix will look the same afterwards."

Thunder grumbled at my oath, and Blaise, who had previously been laughing at the antics of his cat, sighed and got up.

"Felix...." Blaise called. "Here boy. Stop bothering poor Hedwig now. You've annoyed our local Potter's already, don't make it worst."

The cat seemed to pause in consideration, before sending one last regretful look at our beautiful snowy owl and stalking his way back to his owner. Hedwig alighted on the arm of our chair as we sat back down, sending an exasperated look at Draco, who simply grinned back at us. Carefully, so not to hurt our familiar or to rip the letter we untied the envelope Hedwig carried with her.

I squinted at the writing on the front, desperately trying to decipher the handwriting. It looked like it was written in Greek. I sighed, having to ask Percy for the first time in years to read something for me. As good as I was with languages and ruins, Greek always seemed to escape me, despite it being second nature for Percy.

'It's from Leo!' Percy grinned.

'Harry, Percy! How are you two Seaweed Brains? Having fun at school, I hope? (Haha! I don't have to go to one anymore!) Did Annabeth and Luna surprise you at the station? I would have paid a huge number of Drachmas to see your face!

Anyway, to the point. I was hoping to IM you sometime soon. Say... September 2 nd ? Around... Well. Midday here so... evening for you I guess? If possible bring our favourite daughters of Athena
Before Percy could read anything else, a rainbow tinted screen appeared in the air in front of us. At first it was only Draco who noticed, but soon enough the older years did as well. Groaning, we glared at the mischievous face of the one and only Leo Valdez appeared before us in the mist.

"Hey Potters!" Leo grinned, drawing the attention of everyone in the room.

We held up his letter, stroking Hedwig absentmindedly. "A little bit more warning would have been nice. Surely, being the son of The Inventor, you can do some simple calculations to work out that it takes a while for post to travel overseas, and then a while longer for Hedwig here to pick it up from the foreign post office."

Leo just grinned. "Yeah, but I didn't want you to say no!"

"Leo, we only just got this letter, and I can tell you for a fact that there is indeed about fifty of my Housemates currently listening into this conversation." A quick glance round the room proved me correct. Only the 1st years bothered to look embarrassed and glance away. The others just looked straight back at me nonchalantly.

With a sigh and a disappointed look at our warm seat by the fire, we stood up and started making our way over to the dorms, closely followed by the Iris Message. Draco stood up and followed as well, grinning at Leo over our shoulder.

"Who's that following you?" Leo asked, waving.

"Draco Malfoy, best friend to the Potter Twin Souls, pleased to meet you." Draco smirked. Leo pouted.

"Hey! That's my title!" Then Leo grinned. "Though I suppose Annabeth and Luna would be a close second after me…"

"Luna? Like, the Ravenclaw first year? Wasn't Annabeth the girl you did the quest with?" Draco's eyes narrowed as something clicked. "You almost called Luna Annabeth the other day, didn't you? Are they… Like you? A Twin-Soul?"

We nodded slowly. "Don't mention it to them or anybody though. It's Annabeth and Luna's secret, which is why we didn't tell anyone."

Draco looked thoughtful, his Slytherin nature battling with his loyalty to us as his friends. "Fair enough."

"You were considering otherwise." Leo accused, glaring at Draco. On his nine year old face his glare looked more adorable then scary, but it was the thought that counts. "If you hurt any of my friends, I will come over there and hurt you back!"

"Peace, peace, Leo!" I laughed. "Draco's fine. We're Slytherin, the most cunning and ambitious of the Houses, or so they say. If it had been our secret, or even Theo or Blaise's Draco probably would've used it as blackmail. But that's fine, because we do the same to him!"

Leo shook his head. "And I thought that Cabin 11 was crazy. You wizards are even battier than Hermes' kids!"

Draco gave us a 'who's-kids' look, before turning back to Leo. "So are you the kid Percy and Harry found at that Arch?"
"Yeah!"

The three of us chatted for a while, before Chiron pulled Leo away for activities and we decided it was time for bed. Having finished our homework for the day, we snuck into our dorm bathroom before Blaise and Theo came up to shower before bed.

When we returned, showered, teeth brushed and in our pyjamas, we found a mound of ginger fur curled up asleep on our bed. Snarling death threats under our breath, I forcefully shoved the kitten off the bed and pulled the curtains tight, casting a quick ward to repel any animal that decided to join us.

Thankfully, we slept well that night, and felt ready to face anything the next morning. Anything, that was, except an over excited Lockhart at breakfast. Just looking at him as he ran around talking to people, laughing and having fun made us want to throw up.

'How is he such a morning person?' Percy moaned, still half asleep. Shrugging, I sighed, flicking my wand at the Defence teacher and tying his shoe laces tightly together.

Percy blinked and I grinned. 'We promised the Stoll brothers to play pranks, right?'

Two presences appeared suddenly behind us and we stiffened until two familiar and happy voices whispered in our ears. "We saw that."

"Saw what?" Percy asked innocently. "I didn't do anything."

"Well then."

"If you didn't –"

"–then Harry must have."

"Nice work, anyway."

The Weasley twins flashed us a wink, then sauntered out of the hall. Draco sniggered, nudging us. "What was that about?"

"What? Oh, nothing really. Harry may have just tied Lockhart's shoelaces together however."

Before Draco could reply, Lockhart tried to stand up, and fell forward, his face landing in a bowl of scrambled eggs, getting all in his hair and everywhere. McGonagall attempted to help the 'poor' man by trying to use a counter curse, but the laces simply lashed tighter together. We grinned.

"The remaining Marauder's gave Charles a book of Prank Spells they had put together, and Charles let us read it. Marvellous stuff, that book."

Draco chuckled, but before we could further exploit the humorous situation, the owl post arrived, including a dreaded red envelope for Ron. A Howler. We watched in amusement as Ron eased the envelope from his old owl's beak with one trembling hand, and carefully slit it open. Then next second a loud roar filled the Hall, echoing up to the rafters.

"... STEALING THE CAR, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF THEY'D EXPELLED YOU, YOU WAIT TILL I GET HOLD OF YOU, I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU STOPPED TO THINK WHAT YOUR FATHER AND I WENT THROUGH WHEN WE SAW IT WAS GONE..."

The Slytherin table burst into laughter at the sight of the young Gryffindor boy being scolded like a
five year old, by a letter no less! The entire hall was turning in their seats to get a view of the unfortunate boy to have received the howler, but only the very top of Ron's bright red face was visible above the table top as he sunk away from his mother's angry voice.

"… LETTER FROM DUMBLEDORE LAST NIGHT, I THOUGHT YOUR FATHER WOULD DIE OF SHAME, WE DIDN'T BRING YOU UP TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS, YOU AND CHARLES COULD BOTH HAVE DIED …"

By now our brother was bright red too at being brought up in the Howler, and ducked his head too. By now the sound was making our eardrums ring. We could only imagine how the Gryffindors, who were sitting right next to the Howler, must have been feeling…

"… ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED, YOUR FATHER'S FACING AN INQUIRY AT WORK AND IT'S ENTIRELY YOUR FAULT! IF YOU PUT ANOTHER TOE OUT OF LINE WE'LL BRING YOU STRAIGHT BACK HOME!"

Blissful silence fell as the red envelope fell back into Ron's hand and burst into flames, the smoke wafting up to join the candle smoke high above our heads. Slowly, the hall returned to its normal bustling self and people first began to laugh, and then talk.

Draco and we laughed, standing up. Blaise and Theo followed suit. Crabbe and Goyle looked up for a moment before returning to their breakfast. We let them be. Crabbe hadn't managed to get up until about half an hour ago, and Goyle always insisted on waiting for him. They needed the food if they were to survive till lunch time.

We filed out of the Great Hall, then out onto the grounds to make our way over to the greenhouses for Herbology. Professor Sprout grinned in welcome to us as we approached her domain, several magical plants tugging at her wrists as she beckoned us inside.

"Today, class," she began cheerily, "we're going to be repotting Mandrakes. Now. Can anybody tell me the properties of Mandrakes?"

Before anybody else could even consider moving, Granger had her hand in the air, waving it for attention as well. Professor Sprout smiled indulgently at the bright Gryffindor, and nodded her head at her.

"Mandrake, or Mandragora, is a powerful restorative," Hermione gushed, "It's used to return people who have been transfigured or cursed to their original state."

We chuckled, nudging Draco. "Text-book perfect, that one. We better watch out – I think she's been swallowing them!"

Draco sniggered with us, earning us a nasty glare from Weasley, who – despite hating Hermione's superior knowledge himself – appeared to have most recently adopted the position of Granger's bodyguard from any malicious actions or thoughts.

"Aw, would you look at that. The mud-blood's got herself a boyfriend!" Draco grinned at us. The laughter died in our throat, and we turned to glare at Draco.

"Don't call anyone that." We snapped. "Maybe you've forgotten, but our mother was muggle-born too!"

Draco paled. "Sorry Harry, Percy. I… forgot myself."

"Just don't do it again, yeah?" We offered our blond friend a small smile.
"Anything you'd like to share with the class, boys?" Professor Sprout barked, staring pointedly at us.

Draco ducked his head in embarrassment, but we held our head high.

"We were just recalling the old argument of whether or not Mandrakes are conscious, given that they look like us, and are known to have brains. A Roman – one Regulus Black – even claimed to have seen them walking round in the –"

"Alright, alright. But this isn't a lesson on that. Today we are simply replanting out our Mandrakes into larger pots. I can't say if they actually think they like it better with more space, but I can tell you they like it better. So, pay attention boys in future." Professor Sprout scolded us lightly, picking up a pair of grey fuzzy earmuffs. "For now, I'm going to give you an example of how to repot. First, make sure all our earmuffs are on tightly, so no noise can get through – not now, Mr Potter! I haven't finished speaking yet… Firstly, remember that the cry of a Mandrake is fatal. Luckily these ones aren't fully mature, so they won't kill you, but they will put you out for a couple of hours, so be careful. Next, you then grab the bottom of the plant, under the leaves, tightly, then yank it up. So, earmuffs on!"

Professor Sprout double checked we had our muffs on properly before grasping her plant and pulling it up, before quickly shoving it into a new pot and shovelling some dirt into it, covering its wailing mouth. To our left Goyle collapsed, unconscious.

As Professor Sprout began talking we removed our earmuffs. "Silly boy. Just leave him there – we can move him to the hospital wing shortly."

She got us to practise grasping the plant in the right place, so that we could pull it out with the least resistance before actually letting us get to it. Neville Longbottom, surprisingly enough, was the first to get his re-potted, working with an ease that showed experience.

'Looks like we've found a local expert.' Percy grinned. 'They do say you find talent in the most unexpected of places.'

'I don't know.' I responded. 'I'd say he was suited for Herbology. The few times we were in the Gryffindor Common Room last year, Longbottom was usually doing his homework – especially Herbology. If you watch him, he is usually the most excited about this lesson too. So, all in all, I wouldn't say unexpected. '

Percy grinned. 'And that, brother, is why you're in Slytherin, no me."

With one smooth movement, we transferred out Mandrake to its new home. Curiously, Percy petted its leaves as we started shifted soil on top of it. The Mandrake seemed to calm a little, smiling slightly, rather than twisting its face up in agony.

The rest of the lesson passed quickly, with us making notes on the Mandrakes, and discussing the kinds of transfigurations and curses it was most commonly used to reverse. By the time the bell signalled the end, we felt brain-dead.

We passed out brother on the way up to the Castle, and found him cornered by an over-excited Lockhart.

"Charles. Charles, Charles, Charles, my boy. What was this about you flying a car to school? Of course, I know exactly why you did it, and I blame myself. You stood out a mile, front page news again. You've got the bug, haven't you?" Lockhart was saying, his words lightly scolding, but his tone was proud, ruining the effect.
"Uh, Professor, I think you've got the wrong end of the stick…” Charles mumbled, but was ignored.

"Charles, I understand. It's my fault for giving you a taste, but there's plenty of time for that later. After all, I too was a nobody when I was –"

Before Lockhart could finish his sentence we butted in. "Excuse us, professor, but as our brother was saying, you don't understand. If Charles wanted fame… well. He's being giving the occasional interview since he was five, and our parents helped him. So no, it's not at all your fault Charles decided to drive to school. He was an idiot and, when the barrier denied us access, decided to do the crazy thing with his friend. So, if you'll excuse our brother and us, we need to get moving, or we'll miss break."

With a tight smile at our useless Professor, we pulled Charles away, ignoring the spluttering Lockhart we left behind. Draco caught up with us and laughed.

"Oh I wish I could've been the one to say that to his face…”

"Sucker! We got there first!" We stuck out our tongue at Draco, and shoved him, starting a race up to the castle, which Charles recklessly joined in. As we dashed between our year-mates, we felt that same rush we did when we played capture the flag. So, grinning wildly, we ran for the castle, enjoying the sunshine while it lasted.
Chapter 36

Percy Point of View

I am mortified to say that Draco won the race to the castle, even if it was because he tripped us from behind. As a demigod, we should have been aware of our surroundings and Harry at least, as a Slytherin, should have seen it coming. But still, here we are, lying face down in the mud as Draco sped by.

Snarling, leaped up and bolted after our friend, sprinting as fast as our legs could carry us. Despite our morning jogs and daily workout routine, we were stamina runners, and couldn't reach great speeds. Seriously. Even the naiads could beat us. It's humiliating!

Charles shoved us, laughing. "He got you there, brother!"

We shook our head. "Next time, Draco. Just you wait. We'll get you next time."

"Su-re you will." Draco drawled, although he did look slightly scared by the look we shot him. Grinning triumphantly, as if it were we, not Draco, who had won the race (and we hadn't just fallen flat on our face), we raised our head and strode into the castle with Draco scurrying to keep up.

We headed up to transfiguration next with Professor McGonagall. We were starting to transform living creatures into inanimate objects this years, and Harry was buzzing with excitement. Personally, I didn't care much for transfiguration, so I just sat and passively watched, occasionally being distracted by the mouse that was scurrying around on our table, a few wards preventing it from running away.

The transfiguration classroom was rather impressive, to be honest. It was a rather large room, with tiered seating, so that those at the back of the classroom could still easily see our Professor at the front. Considering that the class consisted of no more than about twenty students, there was only three rows of seats anyway. A large window lay behind Professor McGonagall's desk, with a view of the Quidditch pitch, often leaving us distracted by flying lessons, or a few of older years playing a game in one of their frees. From the walls hung multiple cages containing various birds and other animals.

It was a different room to the one that we had been taught in last year, which suggested there was probably a different room for each year, with different equipment with in it. Made sense, I supposed.

"Today class, we shall be turning animals into water goblets." McGonagall spoke up. "Your homework over the summer was to memorise the wand movements and words of the spell."

My attention was drawn back to the front as Harry gently poked me to stop my mind wandering off, and so that he could fully concentrate as well. I regained full attention just at the large tropical bird Professor McGonagall had up the front began to shrink into a goblet, it's black and white colouring bleaching out into clear crystal.

'Ok, that was pretty cool.' I commented.

'Yeah.' Harry grinned. 'Transfiguration is useful, didn't you realise that last year?'

'Well…' I trailed off. 'I wasn't paying that much attention last year. I mean, preforming the spells was
fun, but the theory was repetitive and boring. We knew it all anyway.'

"Mr Potter?" McGonagall was standing right next to us. "Perhaps you would care to practise the spell, just as the rest of your classmates are?"

"Oh." Harry blushed. "Sorry Professor. We got a bit distracted."

Clearing our throat, Harry gripped his wand, flawlessly performing the spell work. Well… It wasn’t completely flawless. Unlike the clear crystal goblet that Professor McGonagall had created Harry’s was made from an obsidian black crystal.

"Interesting." Professor McGonagall mused, picking up the goblet. "Did you clearly picture the goblet?"

"Yes, although I was finding it hard to picture the clarity of the crystal." Harry admitted.

'Budge over, let me try!'

I took out my wand, and cancelled Harry's spell before copying is previous action, and this time the goblet's black cleared to a soft emerald colour.

"Oh." I pouted. "It didn't work."

Professor McGonagall chuckled. "I think the perhaps the pair of you disrupt the other's mental image, causing it to distort slightly, which results in the different material being created."

Harry nodded, frowning slightly at this. "We'll try better." He promised.

"Try better? Mr Potter, it wasn't necessarily a clear crystal goblet I asked you to create, was it? Transfiguration, like most magic, isn't exact. The results vary from person to person. You two are unique and so your magic reacts differently, it is to be expected."

We nodded, but we weren't convinced.

"One thing I did notice, however, was your hand lit up round your wand as you cast your spells –"

We blushed faintly, glancing down at the silver Celtic knot decorating our palms. "You heard about the unicorn last year?"

Our Professor nodded, glancing curiously at our palms.

"Well, the blood seems to have soaked into our skin. It constantly changes shape, but it glows when we use magic – typically the left hand for Percy and the right for me, much like our wands." Harry admitted. "It seems 'willingly given' unicorn blood has properties that are, as yet, undiscovered."

"How come nobody saw this last year?"

"Oh… We used a glamour charm, because Gra- Hermione noticed and we didn't want to have to keep explaining. However we were stung by a pit scorpion last summer, and the glamour shattered, and now refuses to be replaced." Harry explained.

Draco poked us from the other side. "Sorry to butt it, but could you show it to me again?"

Professor McGonagall smiled at us before walking off, claiming that we 'had the situation in hand.' Harry performed the spell once more for Draco, turning my goblet back into a mouse before turning it into his obsidian goblet once more. Draco picked it up shortly after that, having picked up on a
small but vital flaw in his wand movements.

Transfiguration finished just before lunch, and so we all but ran off down to the Great Hall to eat. About ten minutes into lunch Marcus Flint announced that he would try out the second years for the Quidditch team – should any of us wish to join (here he had his sights firmly on Draco and us) – this afternoon, because we had the afternoon off due to our Astronomy lesson this evening, when the rest of the trials would occur.

I decided I'd lock myself firmly in a tiny corner of our mind, but encouraged Harry to go ahead.

'Percy, you hate flying!'

'So? You love it! We perfected the art of meditation of the summer, remember? I'll just… meditate while you fly. Hopefully that should help some.' I assured him.

'Are you sure you're sure?'

'Yes!' I laughed. 'Now, go grab a broom and get up there, stop dawdling.'

Harry flashed me a grin before starting after Draco.

"Are you going to apply?" He asked.

"Of course! I was debating Seeker, but you're better than me at that. Besides, who would miss the Potter twins battling it out on a broom? I'll aim for Chaser instead. Do you have your broom?" Draco mused.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Of course. Percy refused to let me leave it. Apparently I need to take a bigger interest in sports rather than books."

They laughed at that, heading down to the Slytherin Common Room to go grab their brooms. The passageways to the dungeons were well lit, but the flickering touches couldn't keep the cool damp air from reaching us. Harry and I shivered, and Harry cast a slight warming charm on our clothes discreetly. Draco had suggested last year that we get clothes spelled to keep a comfortable temperature, but we hadn't wanted to bother our parents with extra expenses, especially since Charles didn't need them.

By the time we had eventually reached the pitch, there was half an hour left of lunch. As it turned out, there was just Harry, Draco, Daphne Greengrass and Theodore who wanted to trial. Considering that in our year there were no more than about 10 Slytherins, it wasn't exactly a bad turn out.

When Harry kicked off into the air, I steeled myself. Almost immediately the air seemed to all but start spitting static at me. I mean, I knew it couldn't be literally, otherwise Harry would be feeling it, but all the same…

I mentally shook myself. No. These were exactly the thoughts that I was supposed to be ignoring! I squeezed myself back into my tiny corner of our mind and began to slowly let my thoughts stop, so that I could view Harry's try-out like a spectator would – also like watching a movie.

Harry's enjoyment flooded our bond, and I found myself grinning as he darted after the snitch, easily dodging and rolling to avoid the bludgers and nimbly avoiding the other players in the air. Flint had recruited the team's beaters – a pair of strongly built 6th years – to send the bludgers flying at us, and
put us off our game. In what seemed like minutes, Harry had a complacent golden snitch lying in his hand, proudly showing it to Marcus. Terrance, last year's seeker, scowled at us.

"Flint, you can't actually be considering recruiting them. For Merlin's sake, Potter's a second year! The other teams will eat them up for breakfast! You need an older, more experience player to keep a cool head to locate the snitch while keeping out of the Chasers' way and avoid the bludgers." Terrance complained, his eyes cold as they narrowed on us.

I shivered. If Harry didn't get a place on the team, then Terrance would act like a stuck up brat for weeks, belittling us. If Harry did earn his place as seeker, then Terrance would personally ensure our life was living hell. Hard choice.

Marcus laughed at his team-mates indignation. "Were you watching Harry or not? You literally just described him. Besides, it not like I'm just going to boot you off the team to be replaced with fresh blood. You two will swap it out, taking it turns being on the bench."

Harry grinned enthusiastically at this, but Flint added in a tone of warning; "However, that decision might change depending on this afternoon's trials, and whether or not I see you two arguing. A divided team is one doomed to fail. And I won't let that happen."

This last bit seemed to be aimed more at Terrance than Harry, but Harry nodded seriously anyway, his smile never dropped.

"I'll do my best Marcus!"

"You see that you do." Flint grinned. "You know that Percy can't fly at all though, right? The spells on your clothes will pick up on it, and turn them Gryffindor colours."

"I don't think that'll be a problem." Harry frowned slightly. "Percy's terrified of flying. He's fine when I'm in control – he can block it out or something – but he would never take to the air when personally in control."

Flint nodded, concern on his face. "He'll be ok, though, when you're flying? I don't mean to be too insensitive, but he won't interfere with your concentration, will he?"

"I would never!" I exclaimed, moving out of my little corner. Then I blushed. "I meditate, to get rid of the sensation. It feels like I'm going to be struck by lightning, when I'm up there, like every little air current is against me. But when I meditate… Harry is completely in control, and I am just a small part of his consciousness, watching as if though Harry's eyes, but not feeling anything more than his euphoria, if that makes sense."

"I can't feel anything from Percy except from small waves of calm emotions." Harry added. "So yes, no problems there."

Flint nodded again. "Alright then. Might as well investigate our young Chaser's next."

Draco got his place on the team. We grinned in mutual happiness, chatting happily about making the team. Theo looked a bit upset though, so we soon shut up in favour of cheering him up.

"Come on now, Theo. There's always next year. This is the first year they allow us to try-out, and most of the time people don't make the team till at least third year. Besides, I hear the keeper and our other Chaser will be off the team next year – they want to focus on the NEWTs." Draco offered, flashing our friend a smile.
"We'll train with you." Harry suggested. "If a Chaser is what you want, then I'm sure that Draco can pass on tips of the teams strategies onto you, and then come the summer we're always short at home to have enough people for two seven-aside proper teams. I'm sure the Weasleys would love a bit of house Rivalry to add spice to the Games too. Especially Bill and Charlie, given they don't get any of that anymore."

Theo slowly started to cheer up. "Don't you have camp in the summer though?"

"Well, we'll might be back for our birthday, and if not Lily and James had decreed that they must have at least the last two weeks with us. So they'll be plenty of times for games." We laughed. "Who knows, we might even be able to bring some friends back from camp. Some of the children of Hecate we know would love to come play a game of proper Quidditch. From what we saw, they play some strange version back at camp where there's only two or three players on either side – depending on whether they can get other Campers involved – and they have one set of three posts and swap at shooting."

"How is that Quidditch?" Draco scoffed.

"They have to watch out for the Snitch at the same time." Harry clarified. "We offered to play, but then Chiron mentioned how our favourite uncle might just throw a lightning bolt at us for that, especially since we kindly returned his to him."

"Harry?" Our head snapped up to meet Annabeth's sharp eyes bored into us from where she was standing in our way. She shot shifty looks at Draco and Theo. "Are you talking about camp?"

"Um." We ducked our head, blushing slightly at her scolding tone. "Yes? They know everything, its fine."

"Um, no, that's not fine." Annabeth snapped. "You can't just go talking about it to anybody!"

"Luna!" We cast her a hurt look, only just remembering not to call her Annabeth while Theo was nearby. "They aren't just 'anybody', they're our friends. Besides, Camp knows about Hogwarts!"

Annabeth sighed, her eyes softening with apology. "Sorry. It's just…"

"Camp is you're home and you were just protecting it." I finished with a small smile. "It's fine. I get it."

Theo smiled disarmingly at the young Ravenclaw. "So, Luna. I see you know Slytherin's knew seeker."

"Seeker?" Annabeth's eyes narrowed, homing in on us again. "Are you mad? The gods only know what Zeus would do it –"

"Hey." Harry cut in gently. "It's fine, ok? I've been flying numerous times last year and this summer. Provided Percy isn't in control, nothing goes badly wrong."

Luna shook their head, Annabeth's clear eyes misting over as she took over. "That's because you are the embodiment of your magic, like me."

"Whoa." Theo took a step back. "Did she just…?"

"Shhh!" Draco cuffed his ear lightly. "I want to listen."

Luna smiled. "Ah yes, Slytherin's new chaser too. We met before, if I recall. Annabeth really doesn't
have a very fond opinion of you, you know."

"That's hardly my fault!" Draco blushed faintly.

We laughed and shook our head. "You guys should go on down to the Dungeons. We'll meet you there?"

Draco nodded, taking our broom from us. Theo winked at us, as if suggesting we were dating Annabeth and Luna or something.

"Have fun!"

We rolled our eyes, and watched as our two friends disappeared off down the corridor, chatting quietly to themselves.

"How did you know Draco was our new Chaser?" We asked curiously.

Luna smiled mysteriously before cryptically replying; "The Nargles told me."

We just shook our heads, accepting her answer.

"We got an Iris Message from Leo a couple of days back." I said, with a small smile. "We only received his letter requesting to as he sent it. Unfortunately we were in the common room at the time."

Luna chuckled. "Typical Leo. Annabeth isn't impressed though."

I shook our head. "No, I can't see her being. Still. He wanted to talk to you two as well, so… What do you say about a return message?"

Luna grinned, and I could see Annabeth warming to the idea. Her earlier anger hadn't been real anger, anyway. She had just be nervous and worried.

"Can we now?" She begged. Harry and I smiled.

"Why not? We have an hour before dinner. We have astronomy after that, but we had plenty of time now."

We grabbed Annabeth and Luna's hand, and took them towards the abandoned girl's toilets, where Myrtle dwelled. Annabeth gave us a shocked look as we took them inside.

"Really? We didn't have you down as a peeking tom." She stated dryly.

"Peeking?" A dry laugh came from one of the stalls. "What would the Potters be peeking at? Nobody comes here anymore. Not for fifty years now…"

A low wail could be heard before we caught sight of Myrtle. We smiled warmly at her.

"Hey Myrtle. Do you mind if we use your bathroom to message a friend?" We asked politely. The ghost cocked her head at us.

"You're from Magical Blood. You should know muggle devices don't work at Hogwarts." The ghost smiled prettily back. When she wasn't moaning, Myrtle could be really nice actually.

Annabeth and Luna shook their head. "No, not using a muggle device. Just some old forgotten magic. It's quite safe, we promise!"
"Alright... can I watch?"

Easily agreeing to Myrtle's terms, Annabeth and Luna turned on a tap. A quick bit of water manipulation, and a simple Lumos spell and we had a rainbow working. We pulled a drachma from our pocket, tossing it into the rainbow.

"Oh Iris, Goddess of the Rainbow, accept our offering and show us Leo Valdez, at Camp Half-Blood." We intoned, and watched with excitement as an image formed in the rainbow.

Leo Valdez was in the middle of combat training with Clarisse when the image formed. Clarisse actually flinched back in surprise when she spotted us.

"You!" She hissed at us. We shrugged.

"Us. Hey there, flame-boy, how's it going?"

"Harry, Percy! Annabeth, Luna!" Leo grinned excitedly. Then he giggled. "Oh my gods. You actually have to wear dresses to school?"

We sighed, rubbing our forehead, but luckily Luna got there first. "They're called robes, actually. Everyone wears them. Oh, but you should see the headmaster's. Absolutely horrific. He has less fashion sense than Clarisse here – no offense. But even you know that camouflage goes with stuff, and luminous green and yellow are not colours to be worn together."

Clarisse pulled a face, but smiled at her old friend. "It's been strange without you here. You've been at Camp longer than anyone – unless you count the turn-coat, and we are not counting him anymore – and now you're gone too for school. How do you stand reading with your dyslexia?"

We chatted for a while, Myrtle floating around the image curiously every now and again, until we cast a tempus spell, and discovered dinner was half over already. We cursed.

"Sorry guys, we got to go. Dinner's almost over and we've got a lesson after that!"

"Bye! Stay safe!" Leo grinned.

"Or not." Clarisse grumbled good-naturedly. "Bye Annie."

"We'll talk again soon." Annabeth and Luna promised, swiping a hand through the message.

Shouting a farewell to Myrtle, we sprinted to the Great Hall, and quietly sat down at our separate tables. Luckily, amongst the hubbub of students come and leaving as they wished, we weren't that obviously late.

Draco gave us a look, demanding to know what we did. A small nod promised him details, and he grinned, distracting Theo from interrogating us, and we laughed along with Blaise as Draco joked about one of the Gryffindors – Seamus' – attempt to turn water into rum earlier. The poor boy had a tendency to blow things up when his spells went wrong, and this occasion had been no different.

'Draco's a good friend.' Harry said softly to me. I smiled.

'He definitely can read us, and cares about our reactions, much better than most.' I agreed.

We smiled at the pure-blood who we considered an honouree brother and sighed. We weren't sure exactly why, but we had a bad feeling about tonight's astronomy lesson.
Chapter 37

Harry's Point of View

Earlier on, when Percy told me he had a bad feeling about our Astronomy lesson, I didn't believe him. I mean, of all the things that the Potters and Poseidon were known for, Divination is definitely not one of them. And yet, here we are, sitting in the Hospital Wing watching the white ceiling as the clock ticks ever closer to midnight, desperately trying to fall asleep.

In the bed next to us, Charles mumbled in his sleep. We sighed, and turned to face our twin with a soft smile on our face. Charles' shoulder was wrapped tightly in white cloth, and he screwed up his eyes slightly in pain as he shifted in his sleep, still mumbling some nonsense about Quidditch or something.

We heard the soft pad of footsteps, and turn sharply round to see Madam Pomfrey staring at us with sympathetic eyes.

"Can't sleep?" She asked in a soft voice, so not to disturb any of her other patients. We shook our head, and she sighed softly, sitting on the edge of our bed. "What exactly did happen? I have no less than five of your class members in here, and not one person has manage to inform me just what occurred during your lesson to land you all in here."

We grimaced, thinking back to a few hours earlier.

Draco grinned at us as we walked out into the crisp air of the astronomy tower. We were early, and so chose the best places to set up our telescopes and sheets ready for the class to begin. Our classmates trailed in slowly in twos and threes over the next five minutes, until all twenty of us were ready waiting for our teacher – Professor Sinistra – to arrive. Crabbe and Goyle, accompanied by Pansy, were mocking Ron as he set up his rather battered and slightly dented second hand telescope.

"Can't your parents even afford new equipment every other year?" Pansy sneered. "It's a miracle you can even see through that."

Ron blushed red, and ducked his head. It was a point that many Slytherin's chose to mock him on, because Ron rarely ever retaliated, and it gave them a sense of authority over him. But while Ron wouldn't retaliate, Charles had not such qualms.

"Shove off, Parkinson. Just at least the Weasley's understand what a heart is. That's worth way more than money!" Charles snarled.

Pansy laughed. "Oh really? Well, if brains were bread, I can honestly say that you two would starve! You think that everyone doesn't know you copy little miss know-it-all mudblood's homework?"

Percy and I growled slightly at that comment. Pansy heard us and turned to see who had growled. Upon spotting us she paled slightly.

"Pansy." Percy warned, our eyes narrowed to practically slits. "We've warned you about using that term before."

"Percy…" Pansy trailed off, dropping her head. "Sorry."
Charles and Ron shared a look, watching us. Charles looked slightly confused, but Ron burst out laughing, drawing everyone's attention to him. Hermione narrowed her eyes slightly in thought, looking between Ron, Pansy and us. She had nodded at us first, for stepping it as the term mudblood was used, but was now deep in thought over something.

Ron gasped for air. "By Merlin, Potter. If Draco's the Ice Prince of Slytherin, does that make you his pet Lion? Enforcing his rule, but then lashing out when angered?"

Charles realised what Ron was saying and his expression cleared of all confusion. A smile tugged at his lips at the image, but it was soon replaced by a frown at the realisation of Ron was implying.

"A Gryffindor?" Ron huffed. "I think you must have confused the Sorting hat. After all, no Gryffindor can willingly live and get along with slimy Slytherins! You're really just a pet kitten, who only raises his claws when absolutely necessary."

Draco moved to our side, his icy glare on full power, having an almost Medusa effect on all that met it. As one, both Percy and I drew our wands, pointing them directly at Ron. Ron paled, not a hint of his bright red blush remaining in his deathly white cheeks. Our magic was swirling around us as our control on it began to weaken. Papers began to fly up in the air, scattered in all directions. The Slytherin's, who'd seen our loss of control before, quietly made their retreat back down to the floor below.

"Are you implying we can't think for ourselves?" We said quietly, but still only just audible over the waves of energy flying off us. "Are you implying that we are cowards?"

Ron gulped, but nodded, trying to look brave.

"Percy! Harry! You need to calm down!" Charles begged us, diverted our attention off Ron for a second. Our control a slipped little more with our attention, and the heightened energy ripped Ron's already bashed up telescope from where it was clamped to the wall. It flew up, hitting several of the Gryffindor's present before the jagged edge from where it had been ripped sliced deep into Charles' shoulder.

The cry of pain from Charles knocked the anger right out of us, leaving us weak and empty as our magic dissipated. There was a large splash as the lake (which had been rising up to hover over us when we weren't looking) fell back into itself. Draco threw an arm round our shoulders and pulled us into a firm hug and tears flowed silently down our cheeks. I'm not proud to admit we cried, but we did. We cried until Professor Sinistra arrived and sent us all down to the Hospital Wing. I learned a short while later that Pansy had ran off to find her, and had claimed all the blame for herself, landing her in a week's worth of detentions for us. Never let it be said that Slytherin's are heartless.

Madam Pomfrey looked kindly down at us. As we blinked, coming out of our daze from explaining it all to her. For all her reputation for being a strict and fussy Mediwitch, Poppy Pomfrey was a kind young soul, caring for all of her patients, no matter what they had done.

"No wonder your cores were so low. Does this kind of lack of control happen much? This is my third record of it at Hogwarts, but at the start of last year… You mentioned you were sometimes punished for magical outbursts. Did you just mean small slips did you?"

We sat up, drawing our knees up to our chin. "No. It wasn't real punishment. Not truly physical. But the House-elves were trying to help us maintain complete control over our magic. Since the helped raise us, they assumed we should have the control that they have over theirs. So every slip… We would have to… we'd have to clear up our mess, and then… well. They'd usually get us to help with
one of their chores. Usually the washing up. With boiling water or something..."

Madam Pomfrey shook her head shocked. "They can do that?"

"Well... I think they punished themselves for it, but they thought they were helping us, so it's the thought that counts, right? Besides, we'd been... distancing ourselves from our parents around the time and... well. We kept it hidden." Our voice was barely a murmur now as we glanced pleadingly up at Madam Pomfrey. "Please don't tell anyone? They stopped years back, when we gained control. There's only the few occasion we really lose our temper now."

Madam Pomfrey hesitated. "I won't tell unless I see the signs of it happening again. Then I will tell your parents."

We nodded eagerly. We didn't want the house elves to be punished. They had just been trying to raise us, but what do they know about raising humans? It was a fair mistake. The kind Mediwitch beside us began to hum a soft tune to us, and in no time we were drifting slowly in sleep, feeling much lighter for having spoken to Madam Pomfrey. The last thing I remember before the dark of sleep was the light feeling of a hand smoothing down our hair, and the shift of the bed as Madam Pomfrey stood up.

The morning dawned far too bright and early, the already bright sunlight dancing around the white walls of the hospital wing to stab our eyes as we hesitantly opened them. Beside us, Charles was still snoring softly in his own bed. We grinned and slowly shifted out of our bed to sit on the edge of his. Percy begged me for control, so I shifted aside and watched gleefully as Percy levitated the water out of the glass by our bed and dropped it over Charles.

"Ah! What?" Charles moaned, clawing his wet hair out his eyes. "Percy!"

We glanced down at our white hospital gown. "How did you know I was Percy?"

"Your eyes." Charles blinked. "I've been watching for a while now, to tell the difference when you're at home. The change colour slightly."

'Hades!' Percy cursed playfully. 'He's figured us out.'

'We could always get coloured contacts.' I suggested. 'Then our eyes would stay the same colour.'

'Or use a glamour charm.' Percy chuckled. 'We have magic to use as well.'

Charles struggled to sit up, stifling yelps of pain as he jolted his hurt shoulder. We winced, and Percy sent him an apologetic look.

"Sorry about that, Charles. We really lost it."

Charles waved us off. "I was annoyed too. I just couldn't exactly fly off the handle like that. I have Gryffindor's Golden Boy image to uphold."

"While apparently we're just Draco's pet kitten." Percy scowled. "I'm going to pay Ron back for that. Get a potion to turn him into a kitten for the day!"

Our brother laughed softly. "That would be quite funny actually. I could tie a ribbon round his neck and have him follow Hermione round all day like a love-sick puppy because she's scold him if he when anywhere else."
"Well then Charles." We said triumphantly. "Looks like we're partners in crime."

"Just this once, though." Charles warned. "And only because he insulted you."

We nodded, holding out a hand for Charles to shake. He took it and laughed as we tried to imitate Draco’s 'I'm-plotting-evil-deeds' look.

Madam Pomfrey entered the medical wing then from here little office, smiling when she saw us talking to Charles. She sent us an irritated look upon spotting Charles' wet head, but she didn't look annoyed for long as she checked up on her other patients, all of whom were still peacefully sleeping.

"You shouldn't be out of bed yet, young misters." She rebuked us gently, guiding us back to bed. "Your core isn't half full yet, so you should rest up so it will refill faster."

We pulled a face and looked pleadingly up at the Mediwitch. "Please, Madam Pomfrey. Bed rest is horrible."

Charles nodded in agreement, but Madam Pomfrey still tucked us firmly into bed, shaking her head. "Just until dinner, then I'll let you go."

We sighed, but resigned ourselves to a boring day in the hospital wing. Luckily, in the short hours after breakfast but before lessons began, Draco, Theo, Blaise and Marcus came to see us, carrying a small stack of waffles for us. We grinned at them.

"Thanks guys."

Draco nodded, leaning down to hug us. "When are you to be released?"

"Tonight." We replied, sniggering at his choice of wording. "Then we may be 'released' into the Dinner Hall for our revenge…"

Blaise and Theo burst out laughing, nudging each other and grinning. Marcus grinned to. "There's already a betting pool on your choice of revenge. My money's on some kind of set up."

Draco shook his head. "No. Percy might have thought of that, but they aren't that cruel. I'd say some kind of potion making its way into Weasley's drink or food."

We kept a poker face, letting nothing tell. Charles looked surprised at how well Draco knew us, but luckily Marcus wasn't looking at him.

"You'll be up for our match come Saturday, yes? We're playing Gryffindor." Marcus grinned viciously. We laughed, spotting Charles' terrified face out the corner of our eye.

"We should be." We said. "And if not, there's always Terrance."

Marcus nodded his acknowledgement and his expression softened slightly to that of minor concern. "Be careful, yeah? I witnessed two of these little 'slips' of yours, and I know they certainly aren't pretty."

I nodded, Percy mentally grinning alongside me. "Will do Capt'n. Never fear!"

Marcus paled a tiny bit but quickly hid it. After all, he had been the reason for one of our 'slips' as he put it. We laughed, and Draco punched the fifth year's shoulder.

"Ah, Harry and Percy will be on their feet in no time!"
Theo and Blaise nodded in agreement. "Exactly."

"Percy's got his revenge to plot and execute."

Charles looked from Slytherin to Slytherin, trying to work out what he was seeing. He rested his eyes on us, blinked, and then looked between us again. He sighed, then shook his head.

"Just as soon as I think I understand you snakes again, you come out with something like this. Firstly, you're actually showing public affection for my brothers, and then you seem to be able to read his mind." Charles blurted out, quickly slapping his hand over his mouth as four pairs of hard eyes turned to start at him.

Draco glared for a second, then burst out laughing. "Ha! Told you he was planning a potion not an ambush!"

Flint groaned. "Why did I ever bet against you?"

"Because you didn't yet know better." Blaise and Theo chorused. They smiled widely at each other.

"Of course," Theo continued, "we did and therefore seconded Draco's bet."

Suddenly the doors swung open with a large bang, and we caught sight of a streak of blond. Leaping up, we cowered behind Marcus, ignoring the taller boy's amused look as we hid from the terrifying menace that was an angered Luna and Annabeth Chase.

"You stupid idiot!" Annabeth snarled, trying to reach round Flint to get to us. "As if getting stung by a pit scorpion wasn't enough for you last month, you decide to go and do this! Don't think I don't know you were behind this Percy! At least Harry has some brains to speak off when it comes to thinking! On that note, Harry, care to explain why you didn't stop you're brother! As for you Charles!"

Annabeth spun around to face a previously sniggering Charles. His smile soon fell from his face, however. "Don't you dare think I'm above blaming you as well! We may not know you, but you should've shut you friend up! I don't care if it goes against you're little feud against Slytherins – blood is all! You better learn that sometime soon!"

Flint raised an eyebrow at us. "Were did you meet a girl like this, Potter? And where can I find an older one?"

'Bad move,' we mouthed to him, seconds before Annabeth jumped on our bed to slap Marcus round the face. Their protective fury was burning alongside their disgust for such derogatory comments.

"How dare you?! My sister's wouldn't so much as look at you, let alone consider dating you! We require our friends to at least have half a brain, preferably a fully functioning one." Luna and Annabeth had merged now, their eyes almost glowing with an other-worldly light as they glared down at the taller boy from their advantage point on the bed. We noticed their hand reaching round their back, inside their robes, grasping an object concealed there, and decided to step in.

"Luna." We warned in a quiet voice. "I strongly advise that you don't go there. You are in the medical wing – I highly doubt Madam Pomfrey would approve of you spilling blood in here."

Luna and Annabeth sighed, but released their dagger. They then pulled us into a deep hug, their breathing slightly unsteady. Pulling away, Annabeth slapped us.

"We were so worried!" She said. "Don't ever to that again."
We shuffled out feet. "Well, we can't promise, but we'll certainly try."

Madam Pomfrey poked her head round her office door and that moment and sighed. "Off you go all of you! Shoo! Get to class and let my patients rest, you can see them all later."

Groaning, our visitors all trailed out slowly, grumbling slightly to each other as they left. Percy laughed as Charles let out a sigh of relief as the last of my Housemates left the medical wing.

"Merlin, you two. Luna could probably talk Voldemort into agreeing muggles were good if she used that tone!"

We nodded in agreement and laughed, before settling back into bed for a boring day of waiting.

Dinner couldn't arrive early enough, but by the time it had, we (along with Charles) had already managed to owl our father, who had owled us back the appropriate potion. Why he had it to hand was a mystery to us, but we were grateful none the less.

If Madam Pomfrey noticed us receiving the potion, then she didn't mention anything. And so, when we were released just before dinner, Charles and we got changed, and then our brother pocketed the potion and we headed our separate ways for dinner.

The Slytherin table was especially fidgety tonight, constantly passing glances at the Gryffindor table. Professor Snape noticed this and sent us an inquiring look, his eyebrow raised. We shrugged nonchalantly, to signal that we didn't know. Oh, we had our suspicions but that was something different entirely.

'And in three, two, one…' Percy giggled as a loud screech came from the Gryffindor table, and a new ginger kitten sat on the table, caterwauling its despair to the high roofed ceiling. Our housemates all burst out laughing, and we joined in. Draco nudged us with a wide grin.

"Nice. It's fitting."

"We thought so to." Percy replied. "Now he can be our brother's 'pet kitten' for the next twenty-four hours. See how he likes it."
Chapter 38

Ron made an excellent cat. In fact, most teachers would say he undoubtedly made a much nicer kitten than pupil. Ron, on the other hand, disagreed, though he had yet to get back at the Potter Twin Souls. The fact that Charles had had a hand in the prank told him that he had really outstepped his bounds, and so he sulked quietly for a few weeks.

By the start of October, unfortunately, Ron was back to badmouthing Slytherins, and picking on Harry and Percy in particular. Hermione and Charles tried to stop their hot headed ginger friend, but Ron really wasn't having any of it.

Harry and Percy, Draco, Blaise and Theo, were having a right old time making Defence Against the Dark Arts as painful as possible for Lockhart, without losing them any points or being caught. Oh, Lockhart might know they're his culprits, but due to his lack of evidence, he was far from capable of stopping them.

Annabeth and Luna were slowly settling in. They had numerous friends in Ravenclaw, and even a few with the first year Slytherin's, after they're seen Draco – the Ice Prince of Slytherin – talking amicably to them. They hadn't told anymore people about them being a twin soul, but suspected their Ravenclaw and Slytherin friends may have started to guess.

Marcus Flint had kept Harry and Percy back at the end of an exhausting Quidditch practice to question them on Luna Chase. He had guessed after their slips when shouting at the Potters and him in the hospital wing, so Harry had little choice but to confirm his suspicions (Percy was still off in lala land from Harry flying on his broom).

Back at Camp Half-Blood, Leo Valdez was working on inventing magic and monster-proof technology, after Luna mentioning in passing conversation that the huge amounts of concentrated magic at Hogwarts and other Magical hubs for Witches and Wizards blew the circuits in modern technology. Leo figured that if he could invent a couple of phones, then hack them into all possible mobile networks to get almost a complete signal access anywhere on Earth then keeping in touch with Luna and Annabeth and Harry and Percy would be much easier. His wizarding friends had grinned at his idea, and encouraged their young friend to at least try, even if it took him a few years to get a working prototype.

And meanwhile all this fun and excitement was going on, everybody failed to notice a lonely little first year Gryffindor become more and more obsessed with a black Diary that would talk to her when she wrote in it. Nobody noticed as she started to lose a little weight and become paler and more tired with each passing week. Nobody noticed as she began to panic a little as she fell victim to sporadic periods of memory loss.

Percy's Point of View

Halloween was both our favourite and least favourite day of the year. It was brilliant, because of all the excitement and sweets and chocolate that was involved with celebrating it. It was awful too, however, because something bad always seemed to happen of Halloween. On our second ever Halloween, Voldemort attacked. The year after that the nursery in Potter Manor burned down when Charles experienced his first accidental magic. We got stuck in with the flames for a good few minutes, and only our magic kept us from dying. When we were five, a clan of Vampires decided to
come fight with the local werewolf pack, and their Alpha died. When we were seven, someone managed to poison Charles' Trick-or-Treat chocolates. Last year the Troll was let into the school… Plenty of other things happened on all the other Halloweens, but those five are scarred the deepest into our memory.

So, we had asked ourselves, what's it going to be this year?

And the fates, being the melodramatic bored immortal goddesses that they are, decided to play with our lives even more. Because apparently we haven't been tormented enough!

'Where's Charles, Hermione and Ron?' I asked Harry, suddenly noticing their absence. Harry groaned.

'Up to no good no doubt.'

"What's up?" Draco asked us, having heard Harry's groan. We glanced over the buckets of sweets and chocolate to where our blond friend sat across the table from us.

"The Gryffindor Golden Trio are missing." Harry replied. "Merlin only knows what trouble they've managed to get themselves into this time!"

Draco grunted, turning back to his pumpkin pasties. "I'm sure they'll be fine. You guys worry too much!"

We snorted, but decided to follow his advice and enjoy our meal without worrying too much about our brother and his friend.

The hall was decked out similarly to last year – rows of pumpkins lined the isles between the tables, and a swarm of bats hovered above our head, just below the enchanted sky. Cobwebs covered the iron candle holders placed on the tables, and every now and again the horrid stench of burning cobweb would reach our nose, making us wrinkle it. Other than that, most of the ghosts were missing compared to last year. We wondered with a passing thought just where they had gone, then paid it no mind as we turned our attention to other matters.

Up at the head table, Dumbledore had persuaded most of his staff (excluding out godfather) to dress up in typical muggle costumes, like a stereotypical witch or werewolf or vampire. We snorted when we noticed Lockhart's rather feeble attempt – he was dressed up as a fairy. In all honesty though, it looked like a horror movie, the 'hot' man dressed up in a pink fairy costume.

Draco noticed where we had been looking and grinned as well. Why we hadn't seen Lockhart before was beyond us, but the rest of the Slytherin table took interest and soon were all bellowing with laughter after the joke had been explained. I had little doubt our DADA professor was going to earn himself a new nickname from this – fairy.

It fit Lockhart well – glistening white teeth, a "gorgeous" smile and perfect fashion sense all hiding the fact he was secretly a coward who attempted to hide it by throwing metaphorical fairy dust everywhere. We sniggered at the image it formed. Yep. Suits him just fine!

Maybe half an hour later we had all finished eating, and heading out into the large entrance hall to make our ways to our separate houses when a certain scene grabbed everyone's attention. Our brother, accompanied by Ron and Hermione, were starting at some red writing on the wall that we couldn't quite make out in the dim flickering touch-like. Hanging from a bracket on the wall however, was Mrs Norris, Filch's cat.
A faint hissing noise reached our ears; $...I smell blood… I SMELL BLOOD!$

We shivered and moved closer, shifting the crowd aside as Draco followed in our wake. The writing was suddenly brought into sharp focus, and we flinched back into Draco.

THE CHAMBER OF SECRESTS HAS BEEN OPENED.

ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE.

The ground beneath the floor was wet, reflecting the message high up on the wall. Charles' trousers were wet, like he had slipped in it already. Behind us we felt Draco stiffen as he too read the message. From behind us, we heard someone shouting.

"Enemies of the heir, beware? You'll be next, mud-bloods!"

Terrance Higgs, the other Slytherin Seeker, shoved his way forward, casting a spiteful look and Hermione and the other known muggleborns in the crowd. We snarled, stepping forward and ignoring Draco's warning hand on the back of our robes.

"Don't use that term, Higgs!" I snarled, our tie turning a fabulous red as I took control and ignored Harry. "It's not as if you can speak – Higgs is hardly a pure-blood name, is it?"

Terrance blushed at the slur against his father's blood purity. He glared at us, his dark eyes glinted as they promised revenge. We didn't care, by this point. We just wanted Higgs to shut up and look past people's blood purity to what they can actually do.

A patter of footsteps clattered down the hallway as Filch, obviously drawn in by the heightened voices, ran past the students as they parted for him. The still and silent air became so tense you could all but cut it with a knife as we all waited with baited breath for the old caretaker to notice his limply hanging cat.

Upon noticing his beloved feline, Filch fell back, his eyes widened with horror.

"My cat! My cat! Who hurt Mrs Norris?" He screeched, his voice reaching new pitches that no student had ever heard before. Eventually, his eyes fell on Charles and his friends, wavering for an instant before locking on our brother.

"You! It was you, wasn't it? You murdered my cat! You killed her! I'll kill you! I'll –"

"Argus!" Dumbledore's calm voice broke through Filch's accusations. The entire school turned to face their headmaster and the other teachers gathered at his back.

"Come with me Argus." Dumbledore turned to leave, then turned back, remembering something. "I think you should join us as well, Mr Potter, Mr Weasley, Miss Granger."

Dumbledore stepped forward and quickly detached Mrs Norris from the bracket on the wall and strode off in the direction of his office, the teachers following behind and Lockhart causing a racket as he boasted about knowing what to do for Mrs Norris after hearing Dumbledore identify her as petrified, not dead.

The crowd gradually faded away after our brother, Ron and Hermione had disappeared after the teachers round a corner. Higgs sent us one last look of disgust, then turned and stormed off. Draco moved to stand beside us, letting out a shaky sigh.

"He's not going to change that quickly, you know." Draco commented. "None of us are. Start with
the younger years – at least by seventh year you'll have them trained."

We stiffened at that. "We aren't trying to train them. We just want them to widen their view of the world." I snapped, still full of hot air.

"Besides, we told you Charles was causing some mischief!"

"You genuinely believe that Charles Potter, Gryffindor Golden boy, did this?" Draco sniffed. "Harry, Percy, you read it. The Chamber of Secrets. The mythological chamber Salazar Slytherin built under the school. The 'Heir' was a reference to the heir of the Slytherin line. Last time one of them turned up… Well. That was fifty years ago. A girl died. I honestly wouldn't call your brother the culprit here."

We sighed. "No. But he did find it, didn't he? And why wasn't he at the feast? Maybe it's just some elaborate prank of his, inspired by our father."

Draco turned away our suggestion. "No. With Granger there? She's such a teacher's pet she wouldn't just watch him break the rules and cause perfect chaos in the school she's trying to learn at. After all, such things are worse than death!"

We both burst out laughing at that, realising what a stupid idea my suggestion had been.

'But if not our brother,' Harry murmured, 'than who?'

'Or what?' I chimed it. 'You never know. If could be the old Heir doing some voodoo possession trick on someone.'

'Percy!' Harry laughed. 'This is the real world. Voodoo possessions don't actually happen in real life.'

'Spoil my fun, why don't you.' I sulked.

Draco and we turned to leave when a small tug on our robe made us pause. Annabeth and Luna stood on our right, their eyes wide and a little scared. We pulled them in for a hug without even thinking about it, seeking to comfort our younger friend. Gods! We hadn't even thought about how bad this must seem to the first years. To us it looked like a prank. A bad prank, but a prank all the same. To Luna and Annabeth who had no deep understanding about our world… This must be terrifying.

"You alright, Wise Girl?"

They hummed in consideration. "Depends what's in that chamber to cause such a racket amongst the teachers. After all, how many creatures do we know that can petrify people?"

"Medusa?" I offered, then shook our head, Harry taking over. "No, she turns people to stone."

"I need to do some research into this." Annabeth muttered. Luna smiled. "We could always ask the snake in the plumbing. You've heard him haven't you Percy?"

We smiled slightly. "Luna, what are you talking about this time? There isn't a snake in the plumbing. Besides, why would only we hear one anyway? Anyone else could too."

Luna shook their head sadly. "Just wait. You'll see."

"Still here?"

We snapped our heads up to see Argus Filch had returned with a bucket of soapy water and a
"Unless you want to help, get lost! You kids have caused enough work for me today… Poor Mrs Norris..."

We quickly left the scene, leaving Filch to his scrubbing duties. Nobody willing helped him. It wasn't because we didn't feel bad for him having to clear up after us. It was more due to the fact that Filch was too moody to spend any length of time around without getting either very annoyed, very bored, and on the brink of murder.

We shook our head, clearing our thoughts. Draco had told us the real reason behind Filch's aggressive behaviour to students last year – he was a squib, and jealous of our magic. We could only imagine what it must have been like for him, to watch children flourish and nurture their magic while he couldn't access his own. For that really, is the only difference between squibs as us: we can access our magical core; theirs is blocked.

Annabeth and Luna said goodbye to us shortly after we left the corridor with the writing to head up to her dorm in the Ravenclaw tower. Reluctantly, we headed down to our common room. Higgs, by now, had probably turned our entire house against Harry and me.

Sure enough, the wall rotated to reveal the entirety of Slytherin house sitting in icy silence, waiting for us. Draco slipped past us. As good of a friend as he was, he wasn't about to face our entire house for us, and we weren't going to ask him to.

Our godfather slipped into the room behind us, a disapproving look on his face as he sighed. "Potter, what is this I hear about you fighting with Higgs in the corridor? First rule of Slytherin – we stick together and all grudges are settled in private! A united front against our prejudice school."

"Sir! He called the muggleborns mudbloods! Insults to ourself, we can take. But insults to our mother? That hits the line, sir!" We protested, watching as Severus Snape's own eyes darkened with fury.

"Higgs!" He barked. "Is this true?"

Higgs nodded slowly, reluctantly. Professor Snape growled. "Ten points from Slytherin and detention with me for the next week! I will not stand the use of that term."

The seeker nodded, knowing better than to protest his fate. Professor Snape turned his gaze back to us.

"You're motives were good, but I will not stand for a show of weakness. If only as an example of what happens if you disobey these orders, I must punish you." Our godfather was in full head of house mode, designating the punishments to the rules that the house had set down. But his eyes were apologetic, pleading with us to forgive him. We blinked.

'We forgive you.' We spoke as one in our head, catching his eye and letting him in. Severus' lips twitched in a half smile before he schooled his face back to an emotionless mask.

"As it is a House rule broken, the House decide the punishment." Higgs pointed out, an evil smirk on his face.

Flint rubbed his face. "Well. Normal rules call for isolation, or removal from the Quidditch team. And I'm sorry Higgs, because I know what you want, but we're not letting him go like that!"
Higgs snarled, but Draco came up with an alternative.

"Why not exile him to Gryffindor for a week. Given Percy is a Gryffindor and McGonagall's been asking for it since the sorting ceremony, why not humour her? They have to eat, sleep and spend their evenings in Gryffindor while not being allowed back here for the duration of the week."

Severus nodded. "If you all agree, I'll mention this to the Headmaster as a peace treaty so he'll stop badgering me about it. McGonagall will be ecstatic for the week, and I get some peace and quiet."

The thinly veiled threat didn't go unnoticed in the Head of Slytherin's voice. Severus saw his advantage in this scheme and grabbed it. Similarly, we would be stuck with the Lions, which was punishment enough, but it wasn't for a long period of time, and we weren't isolated or removed from the team. For one, I liked Draco's idea.

'Do you have to be so happy?' Harry groaned. 'They're going to tear us to pieces!'

'Charles won't let that happen!' We grinned. 'Besides, we get to spend time with our brother!'

'True.' Harry grinned. 'He'll be happy. And I suppose we can endure Granger and Weasley for that.'

"Not to sound to clique, but what say you all?" Draco asked with a wry smile.

The vote was unanimous. We were to be exiled to Gryffindor. We could still talk and hang out with Draco, Blaise and Theo, however we weren't allowed back into any of Slytherin's official territories for the week. Nor could we attend the Quidditch practises for the week.

Severus worked quickly, and our stuff was quickly moved to the Lion's tower and we were soon booted out of the common room after it. We trudged slowly up to the tower on our own, Draco having stayed behind to finish his potions essay due in tomorrow.

The fat lady raised an eyebrow at us when she spotted us, but didn't comment as we gave her the password. The whole of Gryffindor was in an uproar when we walked into their common room.

"What do you mean there's an extra bed in your dorm?"

"I mean there's an extra bed in our dorm and new luggage to go with it!" Dean shouted back at the first speaker.

"What?" "Why?" "Whose?"

"Excuse us." We said quietly. The whole of Gryffindor turned to face us, somehow having heard us over their dim. "I believe we can explain this conundrum to you. See. We're you're new dorm-mates for the week."
Chapter 39

Percy's point of view

The Gryffindors stared at us in some sort of incomprehensible shock. I giggled slightly, nervously. Our brother was the first to move, pulling us into a hug with a large grin on his face. Slowly the other's got over their shock as well, and began muttered amongst themselves. We flinched slightly, knowing this wasn't going to go down that well.

"Finally seen sense then?" Charles joked. "Decided the snake pit wasn't for you?"

I laughed, sensing Harry was feeling a bit lonely and out of place here. "Not so much. We broke one of the house rules, and since Marcus wasn't going to kick us off the Quidditch team we were exiled from the 'snake pit' – as you put it – for the week."

"Broke a rule?" Charles tipped his head to one side.

We nodded sheepishly. "Remember Higgs badmouthing muggleborns earlier? Yeah, we… I spoke up then and there, rather than in private. We stick up for each other in public at least so… House banishment."

Hermione frowned. "I didn't realise that the Houses could have their own rules, punishment and reward system."

"Well, it's not official. Officially we're here because I'm a Gryffindor and Professor Snape relented and gave into Professor McGonagall's nagging to let us 'join her House and experience the benefits of Gryffindor for ourselves." I chuckled a little.

Ron scowled. "We'll maybe we don't want a slimy snake here. You're not welcome!"

Ron was immediately cuffed over the head by his older twin brothers, who pushed him aside to grin at us welcomingly.

"Ignore Ronnikins here." Fred said with a mischievous grin.

"He's just angry about your well placed revenge." George continued.

"Nice one, that." Fred complemented. "We've now got enough blackmail to last us a lifetime!"

Charles burst out laughing and despite joining in, we didn't really feel like we had achieved much apart from gaining Ron's unwavering hatred for many years to come. We also paled at the thought of having to share a dorm with him for the next week. We had no doubt that our brother's hot headed friend would do as much as he could to make our lives Hades. And given we were in enemy territory, so to speak, there was probably a lot he could do.

We groaned and gave Charles a pleading glance. "Charles… He's really going to kill us, isn't he?"

"Well…" Charles considered it. "Maybe. But hey! You've somehow managed to get the twins on your side."
We grinned. That was true.

'Well. We have about a twenty percent chance of survival.' Harry calculated. 'Considering our brother and the twins are backing us, even if nobody else seems to like the idea of us staying here.'

Charles grabbed our hand and pulled us up to our new dorm, giving us a quick tour on the way. Apparently the staircase through the door on the left was the girls' dorms, which the right was the men's. He warned us that the stairs were charmed to prevent any boys from entering the girl's dorms, despite the girls being allowed to enter the boy's. We didn't see the logic in this but, rules were rules so we didn't question it out loud.

Our dorm was the second door travelling up the stairs. It appeared the older you got, the higher you're dorm got. As it was, the view from the second year's dorm was enough to make me feel nauseous, though Harry seemed unaffected by the height.

Our bed seemed to be shoved in a corner, but we didn't mind too much. It gave us protection from two sides. Add in a few wards to protect us from any pranks... We nodded with a smile.

'Maybe this won't be too bad.' I offered. 'We are also right next to the bathroom, so water will always be to hand.'

'Is that all you think of? Seaweed brain!' Harry teased.

I pouted at him. 'I was thinking it would be a good advantage if Ron attacked us.'

'He wouldn't openly attack us!' Harry laughed. 'Besides, we're meant to hide any wandless or Demigod powers remember?'

I pouted again. 'Spoil sport!'

Charles left us to unpack, retreating downstairs to where Ron and Hermione were waiting for him. We didn't unpack much, just our school robes, which we neatly folded into the provided chest at the bottom of our bed, and a few books – and our toiletries of course.

Looking round at the rest of the dorm I grinned at the disorder in it. It wasn't that the Slytherin dorms weren't this messy on occasion, but we did have weekly inspections to prevent the washing and other rubbish building up. In the Gryffindor's dorm the beds were arranged in a square formation around a central heater, with chests at the end of each bed. A small bedside table sat next to the bright red king-sized beds, where most of our new room-mates had discarded various homework projects or Quidditch magazines. The muggle-raised half-blood – Dean Thomas I think his name was – had hung a muggle poster of some sporting figure above his bed, whereas Ron and our brother had Quidditch posters above theirs. We grinned when we noticed Charles had hung the poster we had gotten him from America – the signed one – next his one of the Chudley Cannons.

The floor of the dorm room was littered with old robes and clothes yet to be cleared by the House-elves, and various pieces of parchment that looked like lost homework tasks or letters from relatives and friends.

The bathroom, we discovered after walking into it, wasn't much tidier than the dorm room. Towels were hung to dry of a large wooden clothes horse in one corner, and we noticed with some distaste that a pile of muddy Quidditch uniforms had been abandoned in a pile near the shower stalls. There were two shower stalls, each containing various pots of shower gel and shampoo. The toilet was set next to the showers, with the sinks opposite and a large mirror set above them.

We showered quickly and then changed into our on-going bed-clothes – a set of black silk pyjamas
Draco had gifted us on our birthday with warming charms to ward of the cool of the dungeons – before leaving the bath room to get into bed.

Ron was sniggering with Dean and Seamus when we entered the room, and we didn't realise why until we sat on our bed. A bucket of water fell on our head the moment we settle our weight on the red bed sheets. We were too shocked to even get soaked by the water as Ron had no doubt expected us to be. Instead we were just hit by the bucket.

Our nerves were shocked away by both the shock and the water that had cascaded over our head. We had felt every single drop hit our head and travel down our body, but it hadn't left us soaking, just our bed. We removed the bucket hanging on our head and glared at our shocked roommates.

"Oh, we bet you feel oh so clever now, don't you?" We growled. "Soaking our bed just because Harry's a Slytherin. Well. Two can play that game, so watch your backs this week!"

Charles walked in at that moment with Longbottom, his laughter falling short when he caught sight of us.

"Ron! Dude! He just moved in. Couldn't you at least wait till tomorrow?" Charles hit the back of his red-haired friend's head.

Ron scoffed. "Their own house sent them here as punishment. Why should we make it easy for them? Besides, they turned me into a cat!"

"And I helped! For Merlin's sake Ron, you deserved it. You weren't just insulted my brothers and Harry's house, you were insulting Gryffindor as well. You sunk as low to insult all of us to snap back at Percy when he told his own class mate not to use the term Mudblood, which, if you haven't noticed, it the exact reason why he's here!" Charles growled.

We sighed as they quarrelled and I grabbed my wand to use the pretence of casting a spell as I manipulated the water out of our bed and down the sink. We then crawled under the covers and pulled the drapes closed, casting privacy charms and repelling wards to keep our roommates away, and casting an alarm to wake us up in time for school tomorrow.

I woke up later than Harry the following morning, and groaned as a deep red colour filled our vision. It made me want to curl up deep under our lovely green covers… Hold on, what? Why was our previously green bed red?

'Harry…' I moaned. 'Did Draco curse our bed red, cause can we return the favour if he did?'

Harry laughed at me, sitting up and moving the red curtains aside to reveal a room that was definitely not our normal dorm room. 'Sorry Perce, but it wasn't Draco. An exile to Gryffindor ringing any bell?'

The memories flashed through our link, and I moaned again. Then I brightened quite a bit. 'If it wasn't so red, this wouldn't be so bad, you know?'

'Oh really' Harry scoffed. 'What makes you say that?'

'Well,' I grinned, 'not being in Slytherin dorms means no Blaise and no Blaise means no Felix and no Felix means we don't wake up to him pouncing on us with his sharp claws…'

A sharp grin spread slowly across our face, drawing the attention of our new roommates who were sleepily appearing from their beds.
"What's got you so bloody pleased this early in the morning?" Charles mumbled. "It better not be a plot to prank us."

"It's not actually, but thanks for the idea." We smiled and Charles groaned. "No, we were actually applauding our escape from Felix the fearsome feline for the week."

"Felix the fearsome feline?" Ron laughed. "Don't tell me you're scared of cats?"

We scowled at him. "No! Not just any cat. Just Felix. So would you if you'd been waking up to his claws inches from your face for the past six weeks."

Ron snorted, but didn't say anything else. We fetched our uniform for the day and watched as the Gryffindor's followed a little routine of going through the bathroom as we got changed. It appeared most of them showered in the mornings rather than evenings. Of course, we were the same in Slytherin, but it was interesting to see how the mundane things – such as morning routines – were similar.

We walked down to the common room alone, and saw Hermione reading a battered copy of 'Hogwarts: A History' as she waited for our brother and Ron to appear. We walked up to her, reading the title of the page upside down – "Mythology of Hogwarts Origins'.

"You won't find the answers in there." Harry told her, startling the young witch to the point of her dropping her book.

"W-what do you mean?"

"The Chamber of Secrets." He said promptly. "'Hogwarts: A History' only mentions the Chamber briefly, quickly dismissing it as a myth."

"But…" Hermione pressed.

"But of course that's codswallop! It's only written mentioned because there have been past openings of the chamber, and the school governors don't want to scare people off sending their children here."

Harry answered. "Draco told us last night – the Chamber was opened fifty years ago. There were similar attacks on the students – at least twenty muggleborns ended up in the hospital wing. Then one girl died, and the school was threatened to be shut. But then the attacks stopped – the head boy at the time, one Tom Marvolo Riddle, caught the culprit and school life carried on as normal."

Fifty years ago… A memory suddenly sprung up in our mind, of when we had been in the abandoned girl's toilets with Annabeth near the beginning of the term. "Nobody comes here anymore. Not for fifty years now…" Myrtles' words ran softly in our head.

'Harry… the girl who died… did Draco say where?'

'No… why?' Harry narrowed our eyes in thought.

'Just something Myrtle said.' I replied. 'She said nobody really used her toilets for fifty years. Why would they stop unless…'

'She started haunting the toilets then?' Harry concluded. 'Plausible. We don't know when she died, or how, but we could ask her…'

"Potter! Potter!" Hermione waved her hand in front of our face. "You blanked out on me!"

A familiar chuckle ran out behind us. "Don't sound so accusative, Hermione. They're two ends of
your three way conversation."

Charles shuffled us to one side, joining us. "They often blank out when talking to each other. Did you too remember something important in that large brain of yours?"

We shrugged. "Maybe. It could be nothing, but we'd prefer to check it first."

"But the legend?" Hermione snapped. "Do you know the legend?"

Harry huffed. "It's an old kid's tale – do you remember it, Charles, or did you fade out as soon as Sirius started speaking as usual?"

Charles blushed. "How do you know that?"

"We were watching from the rafters." We admitted, before catching a glimpse of Hermione's impatient look on her face. "Anyway, the tale dates back to the founding of Hogwarts – as you know, it was created over a thousand years ago, though nobody knows the exact date. It was a time of suspicion and discrimination against magic and its users, so Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff and Salazar Slytherin decided to create a school, a safe haven when magical children could learn how to use their magic in safety.

"Unfortunately, Salazar Slytherin apparently wanted to be more refined about the students they chose to let in. He wanted only pure-blooded children to be allowed access to Hogwarts and the teachings provided here. He believed that due to their muggle ancestor, muggleborns were untrustworthy, and would sprout all our secrets to the muggle world. The other founder's disagreed, and slapped down Slytherin's idea, but he wasn't going to be deterred that easily. No, according to legend, Slytherin created a chamber, hidden it the depths of the school where, before a fight between him and Gryffindor resulted in Slytherin leaving the school.

"The story goes, that the other founders knew nothing about this chamber, or the monster that was supposedly sealed inside. Apparently only Salazar Slytherin's heir can open the chamber, and release the Horror within upon the school to 'route out the bad blood'."

We grimaced. "Looking at the legend in term of historical evidence, the whole thing is a fanciful story for children, but, in every year, there are a least a few Slytherin's that spend their years at Hogwarts searching for it. And Hecate only knows we Slytherin's don't waste our time on fanciful stories."

Hermione huffed. "Well, good for you – is there anything on the location of the chamber though?"

"If there was anything on the location, don't you think it would've been found years ago, probably by a teacher and permanently shut off for good? Or perhaps a few dozen more Slytherin's would've found the chamber and released the 'Horror within' upon you 'untrustworthy muggleborns'?"

Hermione scowled, but didn't reply as Ron had decided to grace us with his presence. We sent the muggleborn one last meaning full look before heading off downstairs alone.

The hall was full and bustling when we arrived. Spotting Draco, we waved before sitting at the far end of the Gryffindor table, where the first years, and those at the bottom of the pecking order on the Slytherin table would normally sit. No matter what house, if you wanted to be left alone then it was the place to sit. Charles gave us a concerned look as he passed, but we waved it off. We were fine. We just wanted to think about things for a bit.

If Myrtle was the girl who died, then why would she haunt the girl's toilets? Unless she had some sort of emotional attachment to the toilets when she had been alive… or if she wanted to scare people
away from them. No, that wouldn't make sense. If she was trying to scare people off, then why would she be so happy for us to spend time in there with her? None of this made any sense. If only we had a bit more information...

And the petrification. It wasn't like anything we'd ever seen or read about before. Medusa turned her victims to stone, and Mrs Norris certainly wasn't a rock when she was found. Oh, there were spells to petrify people, but none of the students at school would have the skill to cast them. They were Master level Defence Against the Dark Arts work, and even then you wouldn't learn how to cast one, just combat the effects. So a Dark Lord then… Oh wait. Charles destroyed the last one didn't he?

I snorted, and Harry laughed at my thought pattern.

'You're thinking too hard about this. Just… relax a bit, won't you? It could all just be a prank. It's not impossible to get potions than mimic the effects of petrification, and any well connected student could get their hands on one of them.' Harry calmed me. 'Just wait a while and see if anything else happens. Then we'll act, alright?'

I could see Harry's reasoning and sighed. 'Alright. I just don't like sitting still when we could be under attack!'

Harry nodded in agreement. 'I know, Perce, but we need to make proper plans, not just charge in unprepared and find out it was just a waste of our time. School work comes first, yes?'

I bit our lip, but agreed.

'We'll go swimming tonight, yeah?' Harry offered. 'Talk to the merfolk and Giant Squid. They might know something.'

I brightened at the idea. 'We haven't seen Nerissa in ages!'

"Harry! Percy! Guys!"

We glanced up, confused, to see Draco standing over us and the hall half empty.

"Breakfast is over. You ready to get moving?" Draco asked with a discrete comforting smile at us. We nodded.

"Ready as ever. Oh the joys of Defence."

Draco laughed as we joined Theo and Blaise.

"Say," I said suddenly, "what do you think Lockhart would do if we charmed his robes luminous green?"

Theo lit up at the idea. "Do you know the spell?"

"Surely it's just you average colour changing charm, picturing the robes luminous green?" Draco offered. "That's what I used on you last week."

"What?" Theo looked insulted. "It was something that simple?"

"The best pranks are the most simple, because the 'victim' fails to think of the most obvious solution." Harry crowed victoriously. I laughed at Theo's disgruntled look, and Blaise's amused smirk.

Feeling much lighter, and less worried than before about the ominous message on the wall, we
headed up to Defence, plotting to charm Lockhart's robes luminous colours for the duration of the lesson.

Chapter End Notes

Hey! Sorry for the rather random updates. I have this story on 3 different websites, and sometimes I leave it a bit late in the evening to put it up on all three so it only gets onto Fanfiction.net. So yeah... Sorry. I'll try to keep updates more weekly than randomly whenever :)
Lockhart's lesson was as much of a joke as we'd all been expecting. When we arrived he was standing proudly behind his desk, where a large rattling object hidden beneath a large lilac cloth stood. Lockhart was almost too happy, not even bothering to send us more than a tiny glare as we entered the classroom. I pouted mentally to Harry.

'He's no fun when he doesn't get annoyed at us.'

Harry laughed. 'You're such a child.'

We sat down at the front of the classroom, abandoning our usual place at the back of the classroom for a better vantage point to hit Lockhart with colour changes charms. Lockhart did narrow his eyes at us for that, much to my amusement, but still didn't react beyond that.

"Today, class, I have something special for you!" Lockhart announced with glee after the last stragglers had sat down. "As you know, it is my duty to prepare you for some of the foulest creatures to walk this Earth. I must ask you not to be alarmed however, and to stay calm. No harm shall befall you for as long as I am within this room with you."

Blaise grinned triumphantly while Lockhart was posturing heroically at the front of the room. He cautiously drew his wand and moved it discretely in as he cast his spell. The class burst out laughing as Lockhart's gold and pink robes turned an obnoxiously bright luminous orange.

Lockhart looked down at his robes in a sort of petrified horror, his eyes sweeping the room desperately to find the culprit. His eyes eventually came to land on us, and narrowed dangerously.

"Detention Potter!" He snapped out. "My office at seven!"

Exclamations of protest sounded from all the way round the room. We were surprised to hear Gryffindor voices mixed in with the Slytherin's.

"Sir, you can't do that!"

"Where's your proof?"

"It obviously wasn't Potter, he's in enough trouble with Professor Snape as it is!"

The last protest came from Pansy, who shut her mouth quickly, and flashed us an apologetic look as everyone turned to stare at her. The Slytherin's gazes were accusative, the Gryffindor's curious. Lockhart all but pounced on her.

"And why might that be, Miss Parkinson?"

"Sir, I believe you'll find that is between our godfather and ourself. Now, if you don't mind, we'd like to hear your terms for our detention." We said in a dead voice, warning Lockhart off. It was true Severus wasn't impressed with us for breaking the House rules, but to say we were in trouble with him was a bit far… Unless he was annoyed with us for some other reason. No! We shook ourself.

'We haven't done anything to annoy Severus have we?' I asked Harry.
He shook his head. 'Not that I'm aware of.'

Lockhart shook himself. "Godfather huh? Well, that explains some things… You're in detention for casting spells on a teacher without permission."

We glared. "It wasn't us. Our wands are, and have been since we entered your classroom, sheathed in our wand holsters."

We pulled back our sleeves to momentarily reveal the beautifully carved leather holsters that held our wands. Lockhart shook his head.

"I'll talk with you later. You're interrupting my lesson! Now, as I was saying, I have something special for you today."

Lockhart whipped the lilac cloth off the rattling object to reveal a cage of small malicious looking blue fairies.

"Indeed." Lockhart said dramatically. "Freshly caught Cornish pixies!"

The room burst out laughing again, drawing a frown from Lockhart.

"Cornish Pixies? They're hardly dangerous, are they?" Charles gasped out through his laughter.

Lockhart looked thoroughly annoyed – so annoyed, in fact – that he failed to notice Draco had changed his robes to a Slytherin green. "Let's see what you make of them then!"

Lockhart opened the cage's door, letting the pesky pixies out. They attacked almost everything in sight, throwing paper at us students and throwing Lockhart's paintings out of the windows, and even lifted a squirming Longbottom up to be hung by his robes on the chandelier. Ink splattered the walls, and the air grew thick with flying books, ink pots and bags.

Most of our classmates fled from the mischievous little devils shortly after the pixies started hitting them with their own books, Draco, Blaise and Theo among them. Charles and Ron weren't doing a bad job and fending off the little blue creatures, but they clearly had no idea what they were really doing.

We turned to glare at Lockhart, raising an eyebrow at him questioningly. "You're the teacher here. Stop quivering under the desk and teach us then!"

Lockhart paled further at our demand, but brandished his wand. "Peskipiksi Pesternomi!"

We groaned at his so called 'spell' and sneered as the 'Professor' retreated to his office. We both grabbed our wands, pointing them at the flying miscreants and yelled "Immobulus!"

The air seemed to freeze and the pixies froze in mid-air, before falling to the floor like stones. A simple 'accio' charm later, and they were safely locked up in their cage once more. Hermione gave us a curious look.

"That spell is in the fourth year textbooks."

We grinned, flashing her our teeth in a mocking imitation of Lockhart. "Simply amazing, aren't we?"

Hermione scowled. "Don't mock our Professor. He is a great man."

We rolled our eyes, but couldn't be bothered to argue with her. We abandoned our brother and his friends, deciding to wander down to the dungeons early to ask our godfather about what Pansy
meant. The other Slytherins gave us wary looks, which grew slightly hostile as we neared, and walked past, their common room.

Professor Snape didn't see as pleased to see us as we had expected when we had knocked on his classroom door.

"Come in!"

I grinned at our godfather's exasperated voice which would have sent almost any other student fleeing from his foul mood.

"Hi Professor!" We greeted him cheerfully, not expecting the glare we received from him.

"Potter..." He drawled. "I had higher hopes from you than this. Surely one night in Gryffindor wasn't enough to turn your colours."

We frowned, our mood plummeting. Pansy was right, Severus was angry at us. I shivered and hid behind Harry, who flashed me a brief sense of his amusement of the 'bravely lion' hiding behind the 'cowardly snake'.

"What do you mean, sir?" Harry asked, sticking to the formalities we upheld with our other school teachers. "We didn't do anything!"

"So you mean to tell me that it wasn't you who tripped the alarm on my storeroom last night? Because that alarm is set to recognise both Draco and you two as family." Severus said, a hint of betrayal in his voice. We frowned at him.

"Sev- Professor! Every time we've made a potion outside your lessons we've asked you, even if it was to help our housemates get back a teacher. Why would we stop asking now?" Harry reasoned. "Could it not have been our brother? As – for the most part – identical twins, Charles and we had very similar auras, which could have confused your alarm. It's one of the reasons we had as much access to rooms round Potter Manor as we did when we were younger. When our parents decided to open up a room to Charles – such as the gym with all its weapons – we managed to gain access as well."

Severus tilted his head. "Indeed? Well, in any other circumstances I wouldn't have believed you would steal from me. Find out why – and if – your brother has stolen the ingredients for a polyjuice potion and I will believe you."

"The polyjuice potion?" Harry and I were horrified. "Sir, if that potion goes wrong..."

"I know." Severus looked frustrated. "But without proof there is nothing I can do about it."

"Well, we might as well make use of our time in Gryffindor then, mightn't we?" We grinned.

Our godfather send us a grateful look, and pulled us into a hug. And even though he didn't say the words, Severus' embrace seemed to scream his apology to us.

I couldn't have been more grateful for the day to have finished. Considering that Lockhart had failed to specify exactly why, and provide proof for his accusations, we decided that his detention could be overlooked without further punishment. If the teacher brought it up next lesson, we would take the matter to one of our heads of houses, or the headmaster himself.

The rumour mill had been working overtime, we noticed, having had almost twenty four hours to
build up. The most popular murmurings were about who the 'Heir' was. Popular choices were both Charles and ourself, or Draco in our year. Of course, each year had its own candidates, but Charles and we seemed to pop up in rumours through the entire school. Charles was picked upon because he was already famous, and therefore was doing it for more attention and fame (as if he wanted or need any more!) whereas we were being chosen because, as the brother to the Boy-Who-Lived, it was obvious that we would be jealous enough to petrify someone's cat and threaten the entire school to gain an inkling of the attention Charles got on a daily basis.

Determined to get away from it all, we slipped down to the lake. In hind-sight, perhaps disappearing off the grid for several hours after a threatening message had been written on the wall in blood the night before wasn't the best of ideas, but we need to get away from the school for a while. And since the Slytherin common room was out of bounds, we decided to get even closer to the water that we felt so at home in.

As per usual, we stripped out of our robes and trousers before plunging into the icy lake. Despite the freezing waters, the lake seemed just the right temperature to us. We squinted into the darkness, trying to make out shapes in the murky shadows. The sun was already setting at up on the surface, and the lake was by no means a light place by day, so trying to see anything now…

'Young lords!' The joyful voice of the Giant Squid ran through our head. 'You're back!'

'Hi!' I grinned at our good friend. 'Sorry we haven't been down in a while. School's been busy…'

We swam deeper into the lake with the Squid, talking to him about how we found out about our godly heritage and our quest over the summer. After a while, the warm green glow of the merfolk's village came into sight. The merfolk started to bare their teeth at us before catching sight of our face, and recognising us as friends.

:: Young lords. :: The familiar voice of our favourite mermaid princess rang out behind us. We spun around just in time to be hit by the playful mermaid, sending us tumbling head over tails – quite literally in Nerissa's case.

:: News from the salt waters are you have discovered your heritage. :: Nerissa grinned. :: Did you see you father? Is Lord Poseidon nice? I've only ever heard you father speak at the yearly merfolk gatherings. ::

:: He's… Well. We only met him at the end of our quest. :: We admitted. :: He wasn't a bad guy, I guess. We were only an unexpected factor that wasn't exactly welcome. ::

We sighed. :: It's not all that bad really. Poseidon is a fair leader. Which was to be expected, I suppose, considering he's had years of experience. ::

Nerissa smiled. :: And you will prove his 'unexpected and not exactly welcome' sons something to be proud of, or my name is Nerissa! But, come, father wants a word with you. ::

We swam in silence, watched from above by the Squid. King Irvin was waiting for us as usual.

'He always knows, doesn't he? Do you think he has spies in the Lake so that he knows everything?' I asked Harry.

Harry laughed. 'Well, he probably just speaks to the creatures of the lake. He and the Giant Squid seem to be good friends.'

:: Blest of Pan, welcome. :: Irvin smiled at us.
:: Pan… As in, Greek god of the wild? Why would he bless us? ::

:: Why did Hecate bless you? You are special, boys. More so than you will ever know. Though, I do believe Pan's blessing might have been due to a lost bet with Poseidon some years ago – I doubt either of them really remember. It was a good fifty odd years ago know… more, even, since your siblings have been few and far between over the last few centuries. I believe Amphitrite has been settling your father down. ::

We smiled at the thought. :: You wished to see us? ::

:: Yes! Danger stirs in that school of yours. ::

Before Irvin could finish telling us his, a familiar female voice cut him off.

"Harry! Percy! Here you are. Draco said you'd be here."

"Myrtle? What are you doing down here?" We flashed the King an apologetic look, turning to face the ghost. She tugged on her hair, and shifted uncomfortably.

"The headmaster is looking for you two… You missed dinner and everyone was getting worried, what with the message from last night and all… Well. Everyone but those Slytherin friends of yours."

We sighed regretfully, and turned back to King Irvin. :: It seems our time is cut short. May we speak again soon? ::

:: Of course, my young Lords. Take care, and beware Chamber of Secrets.; it's not just a myth, you know… ::

We hugged Nerissa goodbye before making our way back up to the surface with the Giant Squid and Myrtle. A grumpy and cold Professor McGonagall was waiting by our clothes, and bustled us back into the castle quickly, banning us from leaving the common room for the rest of the night. We let her poke us a bit, checking we were alright and not harmed before leaving her at the Fat Lady's portrait and heading inside.

It wasn't until we were safely in bed that we realised we had totally forgotten to talk to Myrtle...
Chapter 41

Harry's Point of View

The Gryffindor common room couldn't be more different from the Slytherin one. The colours were obvious – red and gold rather than silver and green – the people were very different as well. We'd never noticed it that much before, as we mainly had only visited during the day when put in a partnership with some Gryffindor for homework but the evening was a lively time in Gryffindor. Not to say that it wasn't in Slytherin, but we had different unspoken rules. Each year had their own place in the common room usually, and we kept to quieter activities – chess or reading or homework – while the Lions seemed to be all about exploding snap and loud card games. Ron and Charles were having a loud game of chess that seemed to involve Ron winning and Charles swearing. The Weasley twins were plotting something at a table in a shading corner with their friend Lee Jordan. The Quidditch team – excluding Charles – were gathered round a board, presumably talking tactics.

"Harry! Percy!" Charles called, catching sight off us. We smiled, walking over to him. We cast our gaze over the board, noticing it was Charles' turn. We quickly moved one of his knights for him, deftly ruining Ron's strategy.

Ron glared at us. "Hey!"

"What? Just levelling the field a bit."

"Where have you been anyway?" Hermione demanded from where she was sitting writing a potions essay.

We shrugged. "Swimming in the lake. King Irvin wanted to speak to us, but Myrtle interrupted him so we'll have to go back at some other time."

"King Irvin?" Charles shook his head. "I really wonder what you're talking about sometimes."

Hermione frowned at us. "King Irvin is a myth. A pretty tale about the King of the mermaids."

"Oh?" We raised an eyebrow at her. "Feel free to tell him that sometime then. Does the myths talk of his daughter Nerissa to?"

"Nerissa?" Hermione shook her head. "You're talking nonsense now."

"Are we though?" We laughed. "Besides, that's rich coming from the girl who believes in the Chamber of Secrets."

Hermione twitched. "So what? There seems to be more fact about that right now than there is than mystical mermaid kings exist."

Ron giggled. "Mermaids? Is that some Muggle superstition? Not all the merfolk are maidens you know. Or female!"

Hermione scowled. "Yes, thank you for your input Ronald!"

We shook our head, then lost our playful teasing. "We don't know what you're up do, and to be honest we don't want to, but you three are messing with polyjuice potion. And believe us that is
dangerous at best when you know what you're doing."

The golden trio gave us wide eyed looks of panic, looking round shakily to check if anyone else overheard. Charles gave us a pleading look. "Harry, Percy… don't tell anyone please! We just want to find out who this Heir is."

"Using polyjuice?" I raised an eyebrow. "What are you planning on doing, seeking into the Slytherin common room to try and find answers?"

The three looked at us blankly and we slapped our forehead. Ron glowered at us.

"Why should you care anyway? You're a snake like the rest of them! Going to rat us out or something?" He sneered. "Besides, how did you find out anyway – spying on us?"

We stared down at our brother's hot headed friend with despair. 'Does he every shut up about house rivalries and prejudices?'

Hermione hit the back of Ron's head and gave him a look, pointing her wand in his face. "Ronald Weasley! I warned you to be civil, if not because it is the right thing, then for Charles' sake. Percy is a Gryffindor and Harry most certainly isn't evil! Now, be polite or I will curse you."

Ron paled, and nodded keeping his mouth securely shut so not to further anger the bushy haired girl. We offered Hermione a nod of thanks, which she returned with a small smile.

"Ron does have a point though," Charles said, "how did you find out about the Polyjuice?"

We sighed. "You were stupid and tripped Uncle Severus' alarm on his cupboard. Due to our similar aura's, his spells detected you as us, and so confronted us upon the matter earlier. He accepted that it wasn't us eventually and asked us to stop you otherwise he might have to intervene, and the things would get messy for everyone. Severus doesn't have any proof, so there is nothing he can currently do about it. Besides, if he did then we'd have to explain why he thought you were us, and you'd be in trouble for brewing a dangerous potion and Severus might get in trouble for not reporting it earlier. So, please stop."

Charles looked guilty. "Harry… we can't."

I glanced down, noting our green tie and sighed. "Try. For us. Please."

We headed up to our dorm room after that, leaving Charles to ponder over our parting words. A quick spell sent to our bed proved it to be spell free, so we changed for bed quickly and fell into it with a heavy sigh. Sleep was quick to claim us, much to our relief. We really needed a good night's rest.

We dreamed of the chamber that night. The same chamber as before. This time we took more notice to the details. More than just the large coiling snakes poised to strike, we looked at the snakes on the large doors, the patterns on the floors and the life-force that seemed to hum in the walls. It didn't seem malevolent, just… dark. Like some dark orientated creature dwelled here.

As stood before the large statue of the man's face at the end of the main chamber we noticed a flickering figure hovering in one corner. It was a boy, no older that sixteen, dressed in Slytherin robes. We blinked at the sight of him and sighed.

"Who are you?" We called.
The boy looked up and around, but it appeared that he couldn't see us.

"Who's there?" He demanded, but we gave no reply and he flickered into nothing, leaving only shadow's in his place.

But that boy… we'd seen him before. Somewhere… somewhere…

The sound of grating stone caught our attention, and spun around to see a pair of large yellow eyes in the gloom…

We woke with a start, our hands glowing as our magic started to lash out before we pulled it back under control. We shivered, and sat up.

'Percy.' I murmured. 'Percy, do you remember that dream we had while at camp.'

'The one of the boy… And Myrtle's bathroom.'

'And that snake with those sulphuric yellow eyes…'

We shivered again, thinking back to the dream…

We were sitting in Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom, though the ghost was no-where in sight. From one of the cubicles we could hear a girl sobbing, and the shifting of her feet on the floor. The door opened and a tall boy walked in, looking about the age of sixteen. He had fine facial features, with the same aristocratic look about him that the Malfoys had. His hair was dark and neat, much like his uniform. Clear green eyes flittered round the room curiously. They skipped over us before resting on the locked cubicle door. Shrugging, the boy turned to the sink.

$Open.$ The boy hissed in a familiar language, apparently to the sink.

The cubical door creaked open an inch behind us, but we ignored it, watching in shock as the sinks slowly moved apart, the top floating off it. A large snake waited inside, it's hide a sickly green and its eyes… they looked an almost sulphuric yellow, and had a freezing power. I felt positively sure that, had this not have been a dream, we would have dropped dead after looking into that gaze. We shivered.

A sickly thud echoed round the room, originating from the cubical behind us, where the crying girl had been. A triumphant smirk lit up the other boy's face, and we shivered, forcing ourselves to look round.

We saw the pale hand first. Limp, as if she was unconscious. They we saw the rest of her, from where she had fallen out of the cubical. Her messy black hair covered her face, but I had a strange sense of certainty that she wore glasses, and her round face was patterned with freckles. Myrtle. Moaning Myrtle.

'That feeling we had about Myrtle dying due to the chamber being opened… That wasn't just a feeling, was it?’ Percy muttered, not really wanting an answer.

I shook our head. 'No Perce, I don't think it was.'

We sat there a while longer, until a shifting in the curtains surrounding our bed caught our attention. We stiffened as they moved aside, but relaxed when Charles’ concerned face came into view.

"Hey. Are you alright? You've been twitching a lot for the past hour and then I saw the light and…"
I shook our head. "Bad dream."

Charles offered us a sympathetic look. "Do you want some company? I find it chases them away faster."

We nodded, suddenly feeling much younger than we really were, and moved aside to make room for our brother to slip under the covers next to us. Charles wrapped his arms around us, holding us comfortingly, and mumbled nonsense in our ears until we fell asleep, the feeling of warmth and comfort easing our passage into Hypnos' kingdom.

When I woke again, Ron was staring down at us in surprise, and Charles was still asleep next to us. The blur of colourful thoughts from Percy told me he wasn't going to be awake anytime soon either. Ron tilted his head at us.

"Bad night?"

I nodded, our brow creasing in confusion of how he had guessed that. Ron noticed and offered me a small smile that was almost gentle.

"Bill and Charlie used to let me sleep with them if I had a bad dream. I guess it's a sibling thing."

I nodded and rubbed our eyes, sliding out of bed gently so not to wake Charles.

"How long till classes start?" I asked, searching for a clock in the room that simply didn't exist.

Ron rubbed the back of his neck. "About 45 minutes."

I nodded, absentmindedly shoving all our homework and books in our bag for the day, then doing the same for Charles, and leaving his bag at the bottom of his bed. I quickly showered and dressed before breezing out the room and down to breakfast, barely taking in Ron's confused expression as he watched us float about getting ready, as if we weren't what he expected us to be.

Out of habit, I almost headed over to the Slytherin table, but changed course at the last minute, sitting at the same end of the table we had the day before, and mulling over our dream silently in my mind as I pushed a piece of toast round my plate. The Gryffindor first years send me odd looks, sneering at my green Slytherin tie, but not seeming to want to actually confront us about it.

Charles brushed a hand over our back as he passed on the way to his seat, giving me a smile when I looked up. I smiled back, before turning back to turn sullenly back to my cold toast.

Draco looked concerned when he tapped our shoulder to remind us we had lessons. He stared deep into our eyes after I had stood up.

"Harry are you alright? I'm guessing you had another bad dream? Percy tends to sleep after you've had them. But I've never seen you this bad, Harry. Honest to Merlin, are you okay? You haven't eaten and you always eat." Draco was saying things but I had to keep refocusing my attention on them. I slapped our cheeks and shook our head.

"Sorry, Draco. Bad night… We woke us at some point, but Charles found us. He… he helped us back to sleep. But the dream… It… I don't know. We dreamt of a chamber full of snakes, and a Slytherin boy and bright yellow eyes… We need to check this out but… Draco. Draco I think we dreamt of the Chamber of Secrets. I… I think we might know where it is too but…"

Draco stared at us.
"It was just a dream, Harry. Don't let them get to you like this, yeah? We've got lessons now. If it's still bothering you after class I'll help you but… Father taught be not to put a lot of stock in dreams. Some people plant them deliberately to fool you."

I nodded, but sighed all the same. Draco could think what he wanted. But our dreams about camp had been real, so I had almost convinced these ones must be as well.
Chapter 42

Harry's Point of View

After lessons had finished our dream was still bothering us. Percy had slept most if not all of the morning away, and when he woke in the afternoon he was skittish and on edge, not unlike I had been earlier at breakfast. Our teachers noticed as well, commenting on it from time to time, and asking if we were ok. Our answer was dull and repetitive.

"Fine, Professor. Just a bad dream."

Draco pulled us away after class, Theo and Blaise accompanying us as we headed for the abandoned girl's toilets. Draco had vaguely told them about our dream, so they were full of questions, none of which we particularly felt like answering.

"You dreamt about a toilet? Really? Why would the Great Salazar Slytherin put his secret chamber in the girl's toilet?"

Draco sighed. "Well, if he did, it was a good idea. Only one person's found it yet, haven't they?"

The boys grumbled, but relented. We sighed. "Do you mind if we do this alone? We'll report back if anything happens, but…"

"If nothing does – which is more likely – you won't have to suffer the humiliation of it happening in front of us?" Draco joked. We winced, and he shook his head. "Sorry, that was harsh. Go on. We'll guard the door, and keep any prefects away."

"Thanks." We flashed Draco a grin before quickly glancing both ways and entering the toilet.

The first thing that hit us was the smell of potion fumes. The second were the shrill tones of a distressed Myrtle.

"I don't know why you had to choose my toilet for your smelly little potion. There's plenty of other's you could use!" Myrtle was wailing.

To our surprise, it was the cross tones of Hermione who replied sharply: "Yes, but none of the other toilets have you to keep everybody else out, do they?"

We groaned, walking further into the toilets, rounding the first stall to see Ron and Charles sitting outside the stall Myrtle was hovering over and glancing inside where presumable Hermione was tending to the potion.

"Really?" We demanded. "We warn you that the potion is dangerous when incorrectly brewed, and there are a hundred things that could go wrong, and you still do this?"

"Harry! Percy!" Three dismayed voices and one delighted one exclaimed together.

We flashed Myrtle a smile, "Please excuse us while we lecture our brother on the stupidity of his actions."

At the word 'lecture' Charles paled. "Brothers, please. Can't you see that we're trying to save lives? We're trying to stop the monster before it kills anyone."
"No Charles. Can't you see that there is no way in Hades that you should be doing this?" Percy snapped, lightly nudging me aside. "This? This is something for Dumbledore and the other staff to deal with. Not you three. Don't you get that?"

"Oh, that's rather hypocritical coming from you, brother dearest." Charles retorted. "Especially since you spent this summer doing what, exactly? Oh yes, battling Gods and Monsters to try and stop a godly civil war. It's in the name isn't it: godly. Not your business."

We flinched. "Except that was our business, give our Uncle was personally pointing fingers at us and threatening to kill us if we didn't return his bolt to him. So yes, Charles, that time it was something we had to do. And besides, even if it wasn't we are a demigod. Therefore most, if not all, godly wars affect us."

Ron opened his mouth to say something, but a kick from within the stall stopped him.

"Rules exist for a reason, Charles. And that reason isn't to break them. Don't think we won't write to Lily. She send you a howler or worst, mark our words."

"Are you blackmailing me?" Charles snapped.

We were blinking back angry tears now. "If it will keep you safe, then yes. Of course we are! There's no way we are going to lose you. Not now. Not ever!"

Charles just stared at us uncomprehendingly. We shook our head angrily. "You know what? Do it. Get hurt. Just don't expect us to help you or protect you from Lily when it all goes to Hades."

We ran out the bathroom, still fighting back tears. Draco took one look at the tears threatening to spill and hugged us, Blaise and Theo joining in from the sides. Draco pulled back after a minute and put his hands on our shoulders.

"What happened?"

"Charles and Weasley and Granger were in there." Percy told him. "We had a fight, because Charles was doing something stupid. He never listens to us! It's as if our opinion doesn't matter to him!"

"Percy…" Draco sighed. "Your brother is a Gryffindor, so I can't even pretend I understand what goes on in that head of his, but I'm sure he cares about you. He just hasn't ever had a brother to worry about him before. He'll come around. You'll see."

Percy nodded, and we began to walk downstairs to the Great Hall for dinner, all thoughts about Myrtle's death and the chamber forgotten, for the time being.

We ate alone with our own thoughts again for a short while, before dessert arrive, and Charles came to sit next to us. We sat and ate in silence, stubbornly refusing to acknowledge his presence until he apologised to us.

"Percy… I'm sorry," Charles mumbled. "It's just last year… well. I somehow managed to forget your entire existence for six, seven years, and then you came back and we knocked heads more than a couple of times. And now you are so protective of me… I don't know what to think, and then I get angry. Forgive me?"

Charles looked at us with wide apologetic eyes, and we couldn't help but melt at the sight of them. We ducked our head.

"Does this mean you'll stop messing around with dangerous potions?"
Charles blushed. "I can't! We've come this far already and…"

We sighed, but nodded, a plan forming in our head. "Fine. But don't get hurt!"

With those few parting words we briefly hugged our brother before standing a leaving the hall, heading for Myrtle's toilet. The young ghost-girl seemed happy to see us, drifting in lazy circles above our head as she chatted to us. Upon reaching the topic of her death she seemed to grow ecstatic.

"Oh, it was simply dreadful." She lamented dramatically. "I died in that cubical. I remember very clearly. I was hiding because Olive Hornby had been teasing me about my glasses, and I had locked the door, because I was crying. Then I heard someone come in, and they said something funny in a different language – but that wasn't important. The thing was it was a boy speaking. So, I unlocked the door so I could tell him to go away, to use his own toilet and then…" Myrtle flashed us a teeth filled grin. "I died."

"Just like that?" Percy chucked nervously. "How?"

"I'm not sure." Myrtle blushed. "I just remember a pair of yellow eyes over at that sink." She pointed to one of the sinks, one with a chipped rim, and a broken tap. "My entire body seemed to seize up and then I was floating away…" A dreamy look entered her eye. "But then I came back. I wanted to haunt Olive Hornby, see. Oh, was she sorry she ever laughed at my glasses…"

Percy stood from where we had been sitting against one of the stalls to inspect the sink. The tap was stiff, as if it had never been used. A strange bump under our fingers as Percy trailed them down the side caught our attention. A snake adorned the side of the sink.

'This is it, isn't it?'

'The Chamber of Secrets…'

$Open. $ Percy hissed at the small snake decorating the tap. The entire tap shifted forward, and then sunk into the floor to reveal a slimy pipe. Percy ran our fingers over the rough edges of the pipe, and they brushed over something. A small green scale. Curious, we picked it up.

Before we could examine our find any further, voices sounded from the corridor outside. With a quick hiss of $close$, we retreated to our former seat, and glanced up at Myrtle.

"We found the chamber of secrets, Myrtle. I don't think it is just a Legend."

Myrtle smiled. "Clearly not. Though I presume we'll be keeping this a secret, with attacks going on?"

"If you would, that would be nice." Percy smiled shyly up at her. "Just in case anyone finds out though, we swear on our magic, that we haven't and won't ever, use the monster down in the Chamber of Secrets to attack or harm a fellow inhabitant of Hogwarts school."

Our ghostly friend widened her eyes. "I didn't suspect you –"

"We didn't think you would." Percy reassured her with a smile. "But at least if the teacher's find out you can vouch for us that we didn't do any of it, and we'd swear on our magic again it we'd need to."

Myrtle nodded in agreement. Curious for a moment, we stood once more and made our way over to the potion our brother and his friends were brewing in the toilet bowl of one of the stalls. A single glance was enough to know it wasn't being brewed correctly. It needed stirring already, and there was no sign as yet of Hermione, who we'd expect to be on top of the timings for their potion. With a
heavy sigh, I picked up the stirring rod and began to turn it. Once clockwise. Three times anticlockwise. A figure of eight movement. And repeat.

I soon got lost in the rhythm, and didn't notice somebody else enter the bathroom until Percy practically shouted at me.

'Heads up Harry! We've got company!'

I snapped our head up to meet the furious gaze of one Hermione Granger.

"What in Merlin's name do you think you are doing?" She snapped. "Just because you disapprove of us making a potion, doesn't mean you can or should sabotage it!"

I sneered at her. "Why should we answer to you if you're so blind the obvious escapes you? Good night, Granger."

I pushed past her, grabbing our bag off the floor. "Night Myrtle. We'll be back soon, yeah?"

A genuine smile lifted the corners of our mouth.

"It was nice talking to you."

The ghost smiled back at us, her head high and a smile adorning her face. "Do come back soon! It gets lonely in here…"

We flashed her a grin back and swiftly moved down several flights of stairs to the Slytherin Common room, knocking on the wall. Unfortunately for us, Higgs had been placed on guard duty tonight, and glared at us as he opened the door in the wall.

"What do you want, Potter?"

"A word with Draco would do, thanks." I said sarcastically, glowering at him. "We're not asking to enter. Just a word with Draco about an extra-curricular project we've got going on."

Higgs narrowed his eyes, but called for Draco all the same. We beckoned our blond haired friend, calling him away from the prying eyes of our fellow Slytherin House mates.

"Harry?" Draco hissed. "What are you doing here?"

"We're not hanging out in the dungeons, or trying to enter the Slytherin common room or dorms." I pointed out. "There for, our punishment has not been broken, only bended so that we could talk to you. We were investigating Myrtle's bathroom. And look, Percy found this!" I held out the scale for Draco to see. He took one glance and gasped, taking it out of our hand and placing it delicately in the palm of his hand.

"Do you have any idea what this is?"

"A scale. Most likely from a snake, and a very large snake, judging from its size. As to the species… Well. I haven't read about a snake with scales that colour before." I said, wondering what had Draco so wound up.

Draco smirked. "I doubt you would. Any information of Basilisks wouldn't be found in a Light family such as the Potter's library."

"Basilisk!" I cursed. "Of course! It's gaze if fatal to any who meet it. Catch the reflection of it however, or see it through something… Well. Then you're left petrified."
Draco looked disappointed. "Where did you read about Basilisks?"

"School library last year, when we had a pass to the restricted section for my extra-curricular projects. Oh! On that note, if Higgs asks we're doing a project on whether there's any truth behind the Legend of the Chamber of Secrets for Magical History. I told him we needed to see you for a project, so you might as well keep up the pretence."

Draco nodded, reluctantly handing us back the scale. "I'd give that to Uncle Severus."

"And tell him what? Oh, I think a supposedly extinct basilisk lives in the school? Look, I have a scale as proof!" I shook our head, Percy humming in agreement.

Draco sighed. "We can't just do nothing though!"

"For all we know, the basilisk could be dead. This scale is hardly fresh, and there's no proof as yet that it was a snake that petrified Mrs Norris. I'll go check tomorrow." Percy was all for the idea of investigating the chamber. I was curious, if only because meeting a basilisk would be interesting, but the risk involved… Still. Percy wasn't stupid. We both knew that with him in control we'd survive any situation.

"How exactly are you planning on checking?" Draco looked worried. "Don't go off and do something Gryffindor on me, Percy. And Harry, I'll hold you responsible if he does! If you two kill yourself I will haunt your afterlife from the living!"

We laughed. "We'll be fine Draco!"

Our mind was made up. Tomorrow after class we'd go down the tunnel, and hopefully find the Chamber. And if it truly was what we expected, we would tell Draco. Demigod dreams were powerful things. Exhausting, but useful.
Chapter 43

Camp Half-Blood wasn’t exactly boring without Harry and Percy and Annabeth and Luna, but it was definitely missing them, Leo decided as he sat at the edge of the lake where the three of them used to sit after activities were over for the day. He sat watching the canoes bob idly in the water. Apart from Harry and Percy, nobody used the canoes for fun in their free times. The archery range, combat arena, Hephaestus forges and climbing wall were rarely ever empty during waking hours – excluding meal times. But it had become a regular and comforting occurrence during his first month and a half at camp to see the Sons of Poseidon paddling over the lake in the early mornings while they puzzled over something, or were mad about something.

Leo smiled sadly as he thought of his older friends and their chatter. As if his thoughts had summoned them, a rainbow spread out in front of him, and Annabeth and Luna's fuzzy face came into focus in it. Leo's head snapped up and he beamed at his female friends.


"Wow!" A fond smile spread over their face, and Luna gazed dreamily at the boy she'd come to think of as her younger brother. "Hold up there, Flame-boy. One at a time yeah?"

Leo blushed, and patted out the flames dancing in his hair, looking sheepishly up at Luna. "Sorry."

"Have you heard anything from Harry and Percy recently? They've been too busy for us to grab their attention round school. They've been upset, sitting at the Gryffindor table the past week. I can't work out why! They haven't so much as been near the dungeons except for lessons either." Luna's usually happy expression was creased with a frown in worry for their mutual friend.

Leo chuckled. "They talked with us briefly on Monday, moaning at lunchtime where you are that they were stuck with the Gryffindor's for the week because as punishment they'd been exiled from Gryffindor. They were also complaining about their brother doing something stupid as usual."

Luna laughed, her worry set aside for a while, letting Annabeth take over.

"How's business down you end, then?" She smiled.

Leo pulled a face, and childishly stuck out his tongue. "Less fun without you four here. I'm almost the youngest here, and nobody else wants to hear of my creations."

Annabeth grinned at Leo's pout. "Owl us some and we'll read over them and offer some tips – from the architectural side, of course!"

"Please? Would you? Thanks Annabeth!" Leo grinned, leaping up and dancing around madly.

A figure appeared on the top of the gentle slope behind the excited nine year old, and a loud voice called to him.

"Leo! Get come on, little dude, it's almost time for activities to start again! You can talk to Annabeth and Percy later!"

Annabeth grinned at the tall dark skinned demigod at the top of the hill. "Hi Beckendorf!" She yelled
back, earning herself a smile from the normally withdrawn son of Hephaestus.

"I should go." Leo said sadly. "Talk again soon?"

Annabeth and Luna smiled and nodded. "Sure thing. See you round!"

Leo wiped a hand though the Iris Message, causing it to dissolve into hundreds of sparking particles before running up the slope to follow his brother to the combat arena, to practise sparring.

Thousands of miles away, Luna and Annabeth sat in their dorm room, quietly smiling as they thought of their little Latino friend, safe at their home, Camp Half-Blood.

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**Percy's Point of View**

I sighed as I stared at the large slimy hole in front of us. Harry was cowering (not that he'd ever admit it) at the back of our mind, leaving it up to me to jump down the pipe and discover the secrets within. I patted our pocket, double checking we had our broom (shrunken down to fit), a mirror (just in case the Basilisk was, as we suspected, alive) and Riptide (in case that Basilisk decided we looked like a tasty snack.) Reassured I had all there necessary precautions and both our wands, I shot Myrtle a smile, before ducking down to fit into the pipe, and abruptly falling straight down approximately fifty meters, to land in a pile of small bones, littering the floor of a small cavern. I grimaced.

'Animal bones. Nice.'

Harry chuckled nervously. 'Onwards?'

'Oh, and the many horrors that await us.' I joked.

We followed the passage along in the only direction we could, and stopped short upon entering the next cavern, after being met with a twenty foot snake skin. I shivered.

'Damn that is a large snake.' I muttered to Harry, who nodded in agreement.

Gingerly stepping around the snake skin, we moved on, passing though several caverns before a circular iron door halted our movements. The locks consisted of eight snake heads sticking out just beyond the door, so that it wouldn't swing inwards. Their tails coiled round at the other side of the door, creating the hinge.

$Open.$ I commanded, watching with interest as a snake that I had previously failed to notice slithered out from the centre of the hinge, forcing the snake heads to jerk inwards before coming to stop back in its original position. The door then swung inwards to reveal the by now familiar chamber that we recognised so well from dreams.

Climbing through the door, I had to turn backwards to clamber down a short ladder before I could reach the floor. Standing in the chamber for real, I was struck by the size of it, feeling similar emotions from Harry. Grinning, I strode out into the centre, feeling the walls around us hum with magic, and the snakes looming over us, poised to strike.

We got the feeling that they had been enchanted with some sort of animated spells, similar to the Pyramids in Egypt, to actually strike should any attempt to force an entrance to the chamber occur… A cold shiver travelled down our back at the thought.

'Let's just hope we don't damage anything…' I mumbled to Harry, who nodded in agreement.
A flicker of doubt passed though me, making me wonder whether or not we should have told someone where we were going – such as Annabeth and Luna, who would have scolded us most severely, but at least have understood why we needed to do it, and why we needed to do it alone. I pushed the doubt away quickly, however. There was no point on dwelling on what we should have done. The past was done now, so it was up to us now to ensure we had absolutely no need for any such precautions. After all. If we died here, we died alone with nobody to know where we were…

After slapping the morbid thoughts away and refocusing on the here and now, I noticed we were standing in front of the large face at the end of the hall. Salazar Slytherin, the great founder of Harry's House. As if in a trance as we met the huge stone eyes of the stone Founder before us, I opened our mouth and hissed, almost not hearing the words as I spoke them.

$Speak to me Slytherin, Greatest of the Hogwarts Four.$

With a sound of stone rubbing against stone that grated our ears, the large mouth of the statue opened, and the sound of slick scales sliding smoothly along the stone reached our ringing ears. Thinking fast, I shut our eyes as the first glint of lurid green at the edge of our vision.

A dry hissing laugh rattled out around us, and a reptile tongue tickled the top of our forehead lightly, making me squirm, and Harry metaphorically hold his breath.

$Speaker, Heir of my Great Master… Do you fear my sight?$ A feminine voice accompanied the tongue. Our eyes flew open in shock, quickly meeting the yellow orbs that gently watched us. The cold was there, tingling around our senses, as if just subdued by the sheer will of mighty Queen of Snakes before us.

$Fear… Yes. All the sources we have read about your kind say nothing can stand before your gaze and live… And yet we are still standing. Alive. Huh. Funny that.$

Another hissing laugh rang out, echoing round the cave. $I like you, younglings. But Speakers never need fear the gaze of my Kin, as we hate to kill of any of the few who understand us.$

I nodded, slowly reaching out a hand, cautious of her venomous fangs, and stroked lightly at the soft scales on her nose. A smile spread across our face, and I felt Harry creeping up so I wasn't so solely in control. Like me, he seemed drawn to the large snake before us.

$You remind me of the Giant Squid in the Lake – he's so ferocious at first sight, by really a gentle fellow when you get to meet him.$

The Basilisk hissed in what we assumed was pleasure. $The Squid lives still? He is an old friend… But like me, hard to befriend, though more protective than I of you hatchlings during your first seasons here.$

$More protective?$ We tilted our head. $Legend says you were placed here to remove the muggleborns.$

Our new friend pulled back, an aggressive hiss spitting out at us. $Tell me you are not like the false Master, who binds my will to his! Tell me you aren't a pureblood supremacist!$ 

$No! No!$ We pulled back in horror. $As half-bloods ourselves that would be very hypocritical. We were just asking because we have received a threat, in the Castle, that the Chamber has been opened and the 'enemies of the heir' should be wary, leaving no doubt that whoever it was intends to use you to kill them off.$

Placated, the basilisk hummed as we scratched under her chin. $The fiery-haired imposter speaking...
with the false Master's voice came down, a few weeks ago, releasing me to feed. I almost caught a
cat, but I missed, and it ended up petrified instead.$

I drew back. The fiery haired one? A Weasley? No! They would never betray Charles and the
muggleborns. But speaking with the voice of the false Master? So… they were possessed?
Plausible… But what by? And how?

Sighing, we shook our heads. This was Charles' field, not ours. Threats were fine. If anyone started
getting physically hurt, then we would step in and intervene. But for now, there was no sign of any
real danger as yet. Just some messing around. We hoped.

With one hand we absentmindedly stroked the white spot we'd noticed on top of the basilisk's head.
In our dreams we'd been too distracted by the deadly eyes to notice the rest of the patterns on her
scales. Our new friend seemed to shiver as we stroked the small white scales on the crown of her
head, and butted her head deeper into our hand, like an affectionate cat. I chuckled quietly at the
thought.

Harry was struck by a sudden realisation, and cast a quick tempus charm. We scowled at the
realisation we'd been down here for one and a half hours already, and had a mere half hour until
breakfast started. We had gotten up at five to investigate the Chamber, and realised that being missed
from breakfast wouldn't look good. Especially with murmurs about us potentially being the Heir of
Slytherin already circulating round the school.

$We must go, or we'll be missed.$ Harry told the basilisk sadly. $But we'll be back as soon as we
can, don't worry!$

The basilisk nodded, slithering slowly back into its den, and the large mouth closed loudly behind it.
We all but ran back to the pipe we had fallen down to get here, and resized our broom. Harry took
over from me, zooming us up and out into Myrtle's bathroom once more.

Myrtle greeted us with a large grin, and a slightly disappointed look on her face as we appeared. She
pouted jokingly, and half seriously offered that: "If you had died down there, you would've been
more than welcome to share this toilet with me."

 Unsure how to answer that we had smiled awkwardly. "Um. Thanks, I guess?"

She smiled, then waved us off, ordering us to tell her about it later, but to run along to the Great Hall
for breakfast first, before anyone noticed we weren't there.

Halfway to the Great Hall, a pair of raised, shouting voices caught our attention, and we slowed our
break-neck pace as we rounded a corner, watching the fight unravel before us.

"You mean to tell us, that you ignored the fact that your best friend was troubled by his dreams, and
let him go off exploring with the mere comment that "Dreams aren't actually real" or some other such
Hippogriff dung? Well, here's a reality check. Demigod dreams are as real as you and I. And what
was it that your best friend discovered he was this summer? Oh yeah. A demigod!" Annabeth and
Luna were both in full rage mode at Draco, causing the older (and taller) boy to cringe and shrink
before them.

"Well, I had expected Harry to be much more sensible than running off to explore a forgotten
Chamber that may or may not house a living Basilisk, no matter how Gryffindor Percy is!" Draco
snapped back. "Besides, I'm not their keeper. In fact, I'm sure Percy would break my nose at the very
suggestion of such a thing. They are more than capable of taking care of themselves, and have
proved it numerous times!"

"Well put, Draco, we couldn't have put that better ourselves." I couldn't help but announce, grinning at our friends. My grin quickly slipped off our face, however, when we were met with two angry and worried faces, coupled by several slaps to the face as more loud shouting ensued our arrival. "Ow! What was that for?"

"That was for making us worry, both because you failed to tell us why you were in Gryffindor this week and deciding to slip out of your dorm at five in the morning!" Luna and Annabeth snapped.

"Annabeth, Luna, we're sorry, it's been busy…" We shook our head. "Hold it. How in Hades did you know about us slipping out our dorm? Because we made sure everyone in our dorm was fast asleep when we got up, so you certainly didn't hear from one of them!" Harry argued.

"I had dreams OK? Now care to inform me how you survived the humongous snake with the deadly eyes that can kill you with as little as a look?" Annabeth demanded, backed up by a noise of agreement from Draco.

We squirmed. "Well, she didn't want to hurt us because we're Parselmouths, and she was actually quite friendly, getting rather vexed at the idea of attaching the 'hatchlings' as she called us students."

Annabeth shook her head in exasperation at us. "Only you two could possibly manage something as stupid as entering the possible lair of a deadly animal, only for that animal to realise that they really don't want to kill you."

I sighed. "Just because we have some rather excellent good luck with animals…"

That struck a bell in our memories. The chimera, and the merfolk… they mentioned a blessing of Pan, and Irvin had talked about a lost bet with our godly father.

"Annabeth, Luna, what do you know about Pan?"

"God of the Wild? I don't know. Not much. He went missing centuries ago, after the wild places he sort to protect started dying out due to the spread of human cities, both muggle and wizarding." Luna spoke softly. "Why?"

"Ever since we started visiting the Merfolk, they've been calling us Blessed of Pan. The Chimera at the Arch said the same thing. King Irvin of the merfolk said it was something to do with a lost bet with Lord Poseidon, about fifty years ago, but if Pan's been missing several centuries…" We trailed off.

"The gods know where to find their own, Percy, Harry. Perhaps the Fates suggested that Pan's blessing would help his next son, so he sought him out to win such a bet."

We nodded, absentmindedly.

"We should get to the Great Hall. Breakfast will be over if we don't move quickly." Draco said, putting a hand lightly on our shoulder. "We will talk about this soon, but the castle's waking up too. We need to move, yes?"

We nodded, pushing aside all thoughts of Pan in favour of discussing Basilisks with our friends. Hopefully anyone over hearing would just assume it was Harry's new project for the week, as he often chose one to investigate over the span of seven days.

"Any idea what the first written records concerning Basilisks could be? Of the few books we found
last night and had time to skim over, the oldest recordings were in the times of the Greeks, but I can't find any written sources…"

"I'm sure you're aware that the Greeks rarely recorded anything, for the large part of their era." Annabeth pointed out.

"Well, yes, but if there's recordings of them present all the way back then, then surely someone must have written something down." Harry responded eagerly.

Draco laughed. "Well, it's certainly not Greek, but in the times of the Roman Empire Pliny the Elder wrote down a small bit on them."

He passed us a book. "I figured you'd be interested after your find last night, so I got this out the library for you this morning. There's a passage about half way in on them – here!"

We stared down at the page, and I groaned as the squiggles of written danced round the page.

'Harry…' I complained. 'The letters keep moving.'

'I'll read it out. No doubt Annabeth and Luna are interested as well.' Harry flashed me a mental grin.

"The basilisk is produced in the province of Cyrene, being not more than twelve fingers in length. It has a white spot on the head, strongly resembling a sort of a diadem. When it hisses, all the other serpents fly from it: and it does not advance its body, like the others, by a succession of folds, but moves along upright and erect upon the middle. It destroys all shrubs, not only by its contact, but those even that it has breathed upon; it burns up all the grass too, and breaks the stones, so tremendous is its noxious influence. It was formerly a general belief that if a man on horseback killed one of these animals with a spear, the poison would run up the weapon and kill, not only the rider, but the horse as well. To this dreadful monster the effluvium of the weasel is fatal, a thing that has been tried with success, for kings have often desired to see its body when killed; so true is it that it has pleased Nature that there should be nothing without its antidote. The animal is thrown into the hole of the basilisk, which is easily known from the soil around it being infected. The weasel destroys the basilisk by its odour, but dies itself in this struggle of nature against its own self." Harry read, flashing a look at Annabeth and Luna, who nodded.

'Sounds familiar, accurate to the myths, at least.'

"But our friend the Lady Basilisk down in the chamber is far longer that twelve fingers in length, and wouldn't say she oozes poison from her skin to kill anything that touches it." Harry puzzled.

"I know!" Draco grinned. "If you turn over the next page, it uses more recent studies, quoting a book called 'Most Macabre Monstrosities.'"

We flicked over the page, and Harry once again began to read:

"Of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or more deadly than the Basilisk, known also as the King of Serpents. This snake, which may reach gigantic size, and live many hundreds of years, is born from a chicken’s egg, hatched beneath a toad. Its methods of killing are most wondrous, for aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the Basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death. Spiders flee before the Basilisk, for it is their mortal enemy, and the Basilisk flees only from the crowing of the rooster, which is fatal to it."

'The basilisk in the chamber must thousands of years old, if she was once Salazar Slytherin's familiar. Maybe, due to her age, some of her features have changed and adapted. Say, for example, the poison
skin was a temporary defence mechanism that all basilisk hatchings have, and grow out of several hundred years later.' I suggested with a smile.

There was a small silence from Harry as he mulled the thought over. 'That would make sense…'

We glanced up, noticing we were standing right in front of the large wooden doors to the Great Hall. We walked through them, and paused, staring in confusion at the rest of the hall. The Slytherin's were charmed to be wearing bright red and gold colours, while the Gryffindors were hunched down in their seats dressed in green and silver. Similarly, the Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs had swapped colours as well.

We glanced down at our robes, and grinned when we noticed they kept swapping from gold and red to silver and green, as if confused what colours we were supposed to be dressed in. Our eyes met Draco's, who looked physically pained to be dressed in Gryffindor colours, and laughed.

The Weasley twins bounced up to us, frowning and poking our clothes. "It didn't work!"

"What didn't?" Harry asked, laughing. As soon as he took charge, our clothes settled on red and gold. Deciding that it was boring when our robes stopped changing colours, I stepped up again and started tapping our hand gently against our leg in some random rhythm, and grinned when the colours started getting confused again.

"Don't tell me you set up this entire prank just to hit us with it." Harry continued, his laugh ringing out louder.

Fred pouted. "The powder falls down on people as they walk in the door. The aim was to see if we could charm it to work like your tie, and change colours depending on whether Percy as a Gryffindor or Harry as a Slytherin was in control."

"But it can't work it out." George continued, also pouted, "So clearly it didn't work…"

"Oh, it worked to a certain extent." I offered them. "Just more often than not nowadays Harry and I are both in control, but our tie is slightly more sensitive, so it can pick up which one of us is more dominantly in control, I guess."

The twins grinned, crowing "Yes!" loudly, drawing more attention to us.

Draco huffed. "Well. If your experiment is over, perhaps you'd like to reverse it?"

Harry smiled at our friend, and pulled out his wand, casting a quick cleaning charm. His uniform reverted back to normal immediately once the powder had disappeared. Draco grinned at us slyly, before moving to sit at his usual spot of Slytherin table, where he was immediately ambushed for the rest of our housemates to find out what we had done to reverse the prank.

"If you want to improve it, add in some form of semi-permanent sticking charm to it, spelled to release after a few hours or days." Harry told the twins as we sat down with them, watching as the red and gold Slytherin table slowly began to revert back to their normal black uniforms. "I would be funnier and more effective."

As we sat down to eat, joking with the twins and our brother, we decided that Basilisks and godly blessings could wait for another day. For now, all we really wanted to do was to relax and enjoy the day like we normally would, without worrying about threats to muggleborns or anyone else.
Chapter 44

Percy's Point of View

The few remaining days we spent with the Gryffindors past swiftly. The Sunday – our last day of exile – kind of sucked. The good part was that we had a Quidditch match – Gryffindors vs Slytherin. The bad news was that despite being able to play against our brother, I had to face my fear of heights, and we knew that no matter how this ended, tonight was going to be torture. Either we would win, and would have to suffer cruel comments and probably be kicked out of Gryffindor to sleep in the corridor, or the Lions would win, and we would had to sit in a corner and watch their victory party. Which we had watched the preparations for the previous day.

Flint was waiting for us in the Great Hall for breakfast. Gryffindor had been dead silent around us all morning, as if scared we might catch wind of their strategies. Because we would care to cheat like that. Just because Harry was a Slytherin didn't mean... Well. Actually no. Any other Slytherin would have. But that was beside the point! They should trust us by now!

Flint walked us over to our normal seat at the Gryffindor table for the week, after a quick curt morning greeting, and shovelled food onto our plate with the firm instructions to eat it. I could sense Harry's nausea as he so much as looked at the food, and so shoved him into the furthest corners of our mind, and started eating. Marcus had chosen a full English breakfast – sausages, bacon, eggs, black pudding... toast too. I almost laughed as I watched Charles push his toast around his plate. With confused hazel eyes, Charles shook his head at us.

"How aren't you worried? It's your first match isn't it?"

"Well, yes." I grinned. "And I must say Harry is just as nervous as you are. I, on the other hand, shall only be watching, not flying, so I don't really see how this is any other morning for myself."

Charles shook his head in exasperation. "Clever... I still can't believe you two are allowed to fly, due to being part of both Houses."

"Percy won't, at any point, be allowed to be in control." Hermione said. "I looked it up. Thousands of years ago, when an early version of Quidditch was put in place, and a twin-soul wished to compete, they were only allowed provided that one – and only one, was in control during the match. They couldn't switch at all during the game."

I nodded happily. "Such are the rules. And to make sure that they more than definitely cannot be breached, our uniform is coated with a modified version of that rather lovely dust that Fred and George created and pranked the entire hall with earlier this week. So much as a hint of me thinking of taking over, and the flashes of red won't be missed, don't you worry."

"You checked they didn't put itching powder in with it, did you?"

The slow drawl of Draco's voice sounded practically in our ear, making us jump. Turning and quickly hitting our blond friend before he could flinch away, I rolled our eyes at him. "That would be quite the achievement, considered the dust was brewed – and modified – by Hogwarts' very own Potions Master: Professor Severus Snape."

"Are you sure you should be throwing my first name around like that, Perseus? Merlin only knows I could put you in detention for it as easily as snapping my fingers. Or deduct points from
Gryffindor… What do you say?"

I gulped when I noticed our godfather had also been standing a short few feet away from Draco. Widening my eyes innocently, I pleaded my case. While I wasn't too bothered whether or not Gryffindor lost points, they would have my head for it. Considering that I'd lasted this long, I prefer to keep it just until our exile ended.

"You would take points for a causal slip of our godfather's name while singing his praises? I must say, Professor Snape that would be rather cruel of you…" I begged.

I could all but see our godfather's resistance crumble under the force of my puppy eyes – which Annabeth had once compared to as seal-eyes, as a joke on our heritage. Hah! Nobody could withstand them for long…

"Well then. Catch us the snitch, and I will forgive your 'causal slip' as you put it."

"Consider it done, sir." I joked. "I'll urge Harry on myself, and will leave him no peace until he catches it."

'Please don't.' Harry moaned piteously. 'The crowd I can drown out, but you perpetual voice? If you want me to catch the snitch, I assure you that not encouraging me non-stop would be the best support you could offer.'

'I'm joking, Harry! I'm not that annoying am I? Besides, you know I do my best not to think and to thin the connection between us to the bare basics while you fly.'

'True…' Harry agreed. 'I'll win us that snitch, yeah?'

'YEAH!' I yelled wholeheartedly. 'Let's go win us a match!'

The changing rooms were a bustle of noise as the team go ready to fly. Green, silver and black flashing in my peripheral vision as our teams mates disrobed and got into their uniforms. Flint was yelling encouragement at the team in general, mixed in with death threats should we lose. Higgs joined in, hissing malicious threats to dismember us or drown us in the lake as penance. I was trying to slip into my mediation, but Terrance's last threat had me in hysterics, and it took me a while to calm down again enough to phase out the rest of what was going on.

When Harry marched out onto the pitch, I was watching everything that was going on as if through a screen. Like I knew what was going on, that it was indeed happening to us, but I had cut off my senses of touch, taste and smell, so that was left was the sight and sounds.

The first half an hour of the match went perfectly. Our Slytherin chasers scored goal after goal, quickly doubling any score the Gryffindor's reached. The snitch stayed stubbornly vacant, much to Harry's disappointment.

The Gryffindors called time out for a short while, in an attempt to ruin our streak and regain their footing in the match. Flint's pep talk during the time out was short, blunt and effecting. He put on a malicious grin, one that neither Harry nor I had any difficulty imagining containing pointed teeth and simply commanded that we "Crush them."

"Gladly." Draco grinned the same malicious grin right back at Marcus, and I idly wondered if it was a talent passed on down the Slytherin pureblood lines. I mean, the bloodlines were so intermingled, most purebloods were practically inbred, so if would hardly surprise me if it was…

Then we were back in the air, and a bit of trouble started. One of the bludgers decided to take a
rather strong liking to our brother, trailing him like a baby duckling after its mother... Or perhaps more like a lion after its prey. Either way, it was fair enough to say that both Harry and I were beyond annoyed at the idiot who spelled the stupid bludger. Especially since it seemed to be locked onto Charles' magical signature rather than him himself. Considering that our magical signatures were pretty much as identical as we were (with the exception of our eyes) as soon as we flew close to Charles to try and help him, the bludger latched onto us.

Charles and Harry flew in circles round the bludger in what must have looked like some strange dance to the spectators.

"Trying some ballet, Potter?" Draco joked. Harry rolled our eyes. "Oh yeah, Draco. Really mature! Can you please get this cursed bludger off us?"

I wasn't sure whether to be relieved or worried when Fred came to our rescue. That relief abruptly turned to worry when he hit the bludger away with as much strength as possible and it skimmed our head, abruptly knocking Harry out and cutting a deep gash in our forehead. If it wasn't for my quick reflexes taking hold of the broom we would've fallen about one hundred meters to the ground. Shouts of shock and outrage sounded from the spectators below as our robes flashed red, but I didn't have long to worry about them, because a moment later the bludger was back, and bashed straight into the back of our head.

The world immediately slipped out of my grasp. Then we were falling down, down a long way, buffered by the wind. Vaguely I was aware of yells and screams from the spectators, the commanding voice of Dumbledore as he started to cast a spell, but then pain seemed to erupt from every point in my body, and then nothing. Just a blissful darkness, and the feeling that I was floating in thick dark waters...

I didn't wake up for days after that. I'm not sure if Harry did, but I couldn't sense him in my dreams, so I presumed so. My dreams were spent floating round different places; Camp Half-Blood, watching Leo training and inventing, at Potter Manor, watching my mother all but pulling her hair in worry (that really wasn't very reassuring), or in the Chamber with the Basilisk. Or I was in the infirmary, watching Madam Pomfrey as she fussed over us. I occasionally caught glances of the Daily Prophet, and so could count the passing of time.

The most recent one I saw was a whole week after the match. I had become aware of our brother leaving the Hospital wing shortly after we had been admitted, maybe the following morning, and other patients coming in and leaving. There was one – we didn't see them come in, and they were hidden behind a screen – that didn't leave.

It was that Sunday that I was sitting on our bed in the hospital wing when I saw Harry wake up. He didn't endure such a knock to the head as I did, I figured, and so he recovered faster. Annabeth and Luna walked in a few moments later – no doubt down to Luna's incredibly accurate instincts. Worry was written all over their expression, but it cleared almost as soon as they caught sight of Harry struggling to sit up. I could dully feel the pain as Harry moved our body, but it was clear he was feeling it at least ten times worse than I.

"Harry!" Annabeth visibly held herself back from launching herself at him with a hug, well aware of the pain we were in. "Thank the Olympians you're alright. How's Percy? Anything from him yet?"

Harry shook his head, despair entering his eyes. More than anything else just then, I really wanted to pull his into a tight warm hug and tell him that everything would be ok. Of course I couldn't. Not even mentally. I was... kind of in spirit form, floating round as I waited for my mind to heal enough to re-join our body.
"He hasn't even been in my dreams. I feel… It's like there's a large black hole that someone's ripped in the side of my head. Percy's annoying half the time, but he's my brother and part of me…" Harry looked nothing short of miserable. It reminded me of last year, when Charles knocked him out during their fight, and there was then horrible emptiness and rage that Charles had stolen him from me…

Annabeth and Luna nodded, grasping Harry's hand comfortingly. Her eyes misted and Luna smiled at Harry. "I have an idea, do you trust me?"

Harry nodded, and her eyes fell on me. "And you Percy?"

"Yes! Yes! By all the Gods of Olympus, yes! Just… bring me home." I begged.

Luna smiled, bringing out a small flask that we recognised from our Quest with her. Harry eyed it warily, as if it might explode at any moment. I laughed nervously at the thought. Considering it was The Drink of the gods, only the Olympians knew what it could do...

"Is this safe?" Harry checked. Luna nodded.

"When taken in small quantities, Nectar had positive healing properties. Of course, we could try chucking you in the lake too, but something tells me you're not up to that right now." Luna assured us.

Harry took the flask, but before he could sip it, Madam Pomfrey came storming in. I groaned at our misfortune. The fussy Mediwitch grabbed the flask out of Harry's hand faster than you could say Hogwarts.

"Hey!" Harry complained. "I was just about to drink that!"

Madam Pomfrey sniffed it, and wrinkled her nose. "Alcohol is not permitted on school grounds, especially not to those who aren't yet legal to drink it! And especially not my patients!"

'She smells alcohol? Dear Lord. The Mediwitch is an alcoholic!' I mumbled. I noticed Harry perk up and look around.

'Percy? By Zeus and the Olympians, please tell me that's you.'

'Unless you've gained another brain buddy in my absence…' I teased. 'Is there any other than I?'

'The Nectar must have helped, even a little bit, just smelling it…' Harry mused. 'That or it's psychological – we think it's going to help, so it does…'

"Madam, I assure you that isn't alcohol." Luna promised. "Please! As if I would poison my sick friend with that soul destroying substance."

I heard her mutter something under her breath after that, which I think was along the lines of "I'm sorry Mr D, please, please forgive me and don't make me spontaneously combust..."

Luna then beamed innocently up at Madam Pomfrey. "It's a natural remedy that our summer camp uses to help people get better. It's spelled to smell and taste like the drinker's favourite food or drink."

Madam Pomfrey blushed slightly, and narrowed her eyes in suspicion. "Be that as if may, forgive me if I trust the local Potion Master's input over yours."

As if her words had summoned him, our Godfather entered the Hospital with at that moment it time, his robes billowing out behind him like large black wings. He froze when he saw Harry awake, and
a genuine smile lifted his lips, relief shining in his eyes.

"You're awake! Thank Merlin. Don't you ever do anything like that again!" He scolded us.

"Do what?" Harry retorted. "Play Quidditch, or get attacked by a cursed bludger trained on our magical signature? I thought I make it a hobby, considering how fun that was."

Severus rolled his eyes fondly, before training a mock (but fairly convincing) glare he had trained on us. Before they could barter anymore words, Madam Pomfrey intervened.

"Professor, I caught our little Raven Luna here attempting to give this to Harry and Percy here. She claims it is some sort of healing potion, but it smells awfully like alcohol to me."

Our godfather took the flask from the Mediwitch and sniffed it cautiously, a small smile on his lips. "I wouldn't call it a healing potion, exactly. This is Nectar, a rare and difficult potion to brew. As I have no doubt young Luna here told you, it imitates the taste and smell of the drinker's favourite food or drink. Anything you'd like to own up to?"

Madam Pomfrey blushed, looking down but Severus shook his head before she could say anything.

"Never mind. I was wrong to tease. Merlin knows you most certainly are not someone who indulges themselves in drink. I myself am quite partial to a glass of firewhisky every now and again. But back to the matter at hand, Nectar works specially heals cuts and wounds – it also has a similar affect as the pepper-up potion. However, it only works on certain individuals, and can cause other's to grow very sick. However, I happen to know this is not the case with my young godsons here. It will help them."

Severus winked at Harry, handing him the flask. Quickly, Harry took a small sip, and sighed as the warmth travelled through him. I could feel it too, summoning me back.

I shut my eyes, and suddenly I was seeing everything from where our body was lying on the bed. 

'Ah.' I sighed happily. 'Hey again.'

Harry grinned. 'Hey to you too, stranger.'

Luna grinned at us. "Welcome back, Percy."

Severus gave her a worried look. "What do you mean?"

I sighed, and blinked a few times happily. "I was… drifting, slightly, I suppose… But he's back now!"

Harry finished my sentence, the same feeling of happy contentment flowing through the bond from him as I felt. Our bond was wide open, as we didn't want any form of barrier separating us. Not now, and not for a short while, either.

A slightly miffed Madam Pomfrey and our godfather helped us sit up, bring the rather huge pile of sweets and chocolates piled at the end of our bed into view. Severus grinned at our expression.

"I do believe that every Slytherin contributed to that pile in some way, as did a few of the friends you've made in Gryffindor over you time with them."

"But… why?" We shook our head in confusion. "We lost the game. Surely Slytherin's slightly mad at us?"

Annabeth and Luna burst into giggles. "Harry, Percy… when you fell, the snitch got caught in your
sleeve. After you Percy blacked out, your robes flashed back to green, so Gryffindor had absolutely no grounds to claim that you didn't win the snitch. You won fair and square. Not the most heroic way to win a match, perhaps, but it worked."

We laughed with her. "Indeed… Any other important school news? Merlin knows we always seem to miss something…"

Nobody in the room was smiling anymore. Even Luna's cheerful look was grave. We stiffened, terrified at what the news might be now.

"The Heir of Slytherin has… acted on their threat." Madam Pomfrey told us quietly. "Colin Creevey was petrified the same night you were brought in here."

We paled. But no! The basilisk wouldn't… she wouldn't! Unless… unless the 'fiery-haired imposter with the false master's voice…' No! That wasn't worth thinking of.

"Do you… do you know what – or who – got him?" We asked with a shaky voice. Everyone shook their head. "Unfortunately not. He was taking a picture at the time, but it fried the film on his camera. We have absolutely no evidence to go on."

We had pretty much just one thought to go with that. Well Hades. We're all dead if our reptile friend is being controlled by the 'false master'… again. That or without a school.
Chapter 45

Harry's Point of View

Having Percy back really sped up our recovery. His presence was like a balm, soothing and healing the raw hole his absence had caused. Normally we'd end up shield most of our thought from each other, if just to grant the other a small amount of peace and quiet, but the past four days – since Percy came back – we'd been leaving pretty much everything open to each other. We both had a few secrets, but the main thing was that we could feel that each other was there. You're probably thinking it's really sappy, but hey. It made us feel better, so there!

The school was still in turmoil after the attack Creevey fell victim to when we were released from the Hospital wing, a full two weeks after it had occurred. Rumours were flying thick and fast. Maybe Draco had lashed out after his friend got hurt, maybe Charles had had enough of Creevey and his flashing camera. Perhaps Flint was paying back Gryffindor for injuring his seeker (no idea how that rumour started). Our favourite, we think, however, was that while we were unconscious the monster slipped out of our control and attacked. I mean, seriously? Theoretically, if we had opened the chamber to set the Basilisk on the school because she was a mindless beast, we would at least shut the chamber when we weren't in it to protect ourselves, if nobody else!

Entering the Great Hall for the first time in two weeks, we found the Weasley twins had performed another prank, spelling the Great Hall upside down, so that you would walk onto the cloudy-spelled ceiling, bobbing and weaving around the beams to your table to eat. Glancing out the window was really disorientating. Have you ever considered how odd the world would look if you saw it upside down without twisting your body and that horrible feeling of blood draining into you head while you saw it? I tell you. It is strange.

Since the ceiling was spelled to reflect the weather outside as well, utter chaos started when the storm outside starting boiling up around us as well. The rain wasn't real, but watching the allusion float upwards was strange. And the tingling zaps of lightning and rumbling thunder echoed around us as well. We laughed, sitting down at the Slytherin table, and glancing round the hall in awe.

"We must say, this is a pretty cool prank!" We grinned, sitting next to Draco. Most of our housemates grunted neutrally. Draco sighed and rolled his eyes.

"Most of that thought that as well at first. But after two days, it does start to get a bit dull and repetitive. Especially since none of the teachers – not even Flitwick – can work out how to revert it back to normal. And before you suggest it – that have tried the basic reversal charms. We have tried them too." Draco cut us off as we opened our mouth with a smirk.

We laughed again. "Considered asking the twins?"

"There's no proof that they did it, so why would the teacher's ask them?" Draco sighed.

"Well, other than them, the only other prankers in the school that we have come across as yet is our brother. Considering that Charles doesn't know this kind of advanced spell work that leaves the twins to be the culprits. Furthermore, I happen to know that Uncle Sirius gave them an advanced prank book for their birthdays this year, so no doubt it's something from in there." I reasoned, grinning slightly when we felt a double presence at our back.
"Very good, Potters. Strange. Apart from you, Charles was the only other person to work that out. Do you two just think weirdly, or do you think the teachers are scared of asking?" The twins chorused over our shoulder. Draco turned to glare at them.

"Can you please stop boasting and reverse this? Boring and annoying doesn't even begin to describe this by now."

Severus walked over to us slowing, his normal stride lost as he fought his way over the uneven roof. The twins smirked, winking at us as if they'd somehow gained a massive victory by summoning his attention. We laughed and simply grinned up at our godfather, who nodded at us in reply.

"So. Rumour travels down this table that my godsons believe asking you two would solve our little problem here." Snape bit out. "Care to explain, or should I just dock points now?"

The twins shrugged, not particularly bothered by the threat. Fred spoke first.

"Well, with Creevey in the hospital, we decided to cheer people us with a few pranks, that's all."

"We did get a bit curious, however, after the first day when you couldn't get the hall back to normal, and so decided to see how long it would take someone to figure it out."

"It would appear," Fred grinned, "that a lot longer than two day's would've been used up without the Potter twins. Honestly Professor Snape, we had no idea you trusted their theories so well that you'd come running at the first word of their idea."

Severus scowled, ushering the grinning twins up to the head table to talk to the headmaster. We ducked our head and giggled, glancing at our friends, who were trying not to smile.

Needless to say, when our Monday morning of potions with the Gryffindor's began our godfather was certainly not in a good mood. I think he beat his record, docking a total of one hundred points from Gryffindor in one lesson. And none of us Snakes had done anything to sabotage our rival house's potions either. Admittedly it was probably because we were concentrating so hard on not messing up, but still. Skele-gro was a hard potion to brew, and we had a sneaky suspicion that it most certainly wasn't on our syllabus this year…

Neville has somehow manage to make his explosive, earning him a week detention with one irate Professor Snape – any Gryffindor's worst nightmare. Somehow we managed to brew something that looked very similar to how the book described the potion to be with Draco. While we both had to brew our own potions, we shared the labour, cutting up double the amount needed of every other ingredient to provide half to our partner. It worked best that way too, because we weighted out the ingredients after they had been cut up, providing the most accurate amounts.

Both of us hung around at the end of the lesson, providing our godfather with a hug as soon as everyone was out the classroom. The dark haired man smiled at us wearily.

"It's been a long weekend." He sighed. "I don't care if they're trying to lighten the situation, those Weasley twins are really driving me up the wall."

I felt a slight flicker of annoyance from Percy at the mention of the twins, and frowned, making a mental note to ask him in a little bit. I did send him a burst of concern however.

'I'll tell you later.' Percy promised, a slight darkness to his thoughts that I hadn't noticed, but had definitely been there this morning as well. It was almost as if he had a slight grudge against them… which was odd, considering that Percy couldn't hold a grudge for anything, much less against someone who we were relatively good friends with.
Severus shook his head. "You two should go. And Percy – keep revenge to a minimum, if possible. I don't really want to have to tidy up after you as well."

Percy nodded. I mentally shook my head confused as Percy and Draco walked out of the dungeons and up towards transfiguration.

For the rest of the term I transfiguration, we had been set projects to do. Our task was to transfigure the materials to make something. I could be anything, really, but we had to create something. To make sure we had enough time, Professor McGonagall had put us in pairs. As this year the class was made up of Gryffindor and Slytherin, Professor McGonagall had decided to pair us up across houses, to try and save arguments and vandalism from happening. After all, nobody was going to risk angering their own classmate just to get at the other house. We all wanted to at least pass, after all.

Our partner, was Hermione. We both had mixed feelings about this because, on one hand, she was a very good witch, and definitely one of the brightest in the year. On the other hand, she didn't like us too much, after thinking that we had messed with their potion. Of course, she had probably realised that we hadn't soon after, and so her grudge was mainly to keep up appearance in an attempt to save face, but that really didn't make us like it any more.

Hermione had decided that we were going to make a miniature model of Hogwarts while we were in the hospital wing. Well… maybe miniature wasn't the best word to use. After all, Hogwarts was a large building complete. It helped, of course, that we had managed to owl James to ask if he had the famous Marauders Map that constantly came up in his stories. Turned out that Filch had confiscated it in their seventh year. We asked the caretaker, but it turned out somebody had nicked it last year. Realising only a Gryffindor would have the courage to steal from Filch, of all people, we asked Charles, who asked the twins to ask around. As it was, the Twins were in possession of the map, and luckily for us, were willing to lend it to us.

A quick word with Annabeth and Luna had provide us with a stack of parchment Annabeth had compiled on the architecture of the building, and we were pretty much set to go.

We decided to first construct the different floors out of wood, then transfigure it to stone. Naturally, the choice of spells to use brought a bit of an argument.

"No, no, no!" Hermione snapped, stealing Percy's wand. We glared at her, snatching it back. Hermione rolled her eyes. "You're doing it all wrong! Your wand movements are supposed to flow, not look like an idiot trying to swing a sword."

We scowled. "For your information, we know how to swing a sword! Besides, I think we know how to cast a spell!"

To prove our point, Percy cast the spell, flawlessly recreating the stone that made up Hogwarts. We'd never admit it, but he did smoothen out his movements a bit. Hermione simply sniffed, turning back to her floor of the building.

In theory, if we could just have transfigured the castle out of one solid block of wood, but it looked better when you added a bit of life to it. Our end masterpiece was going to be amazing. We'd debated transfiguring and animating some dolls to act as students and teachers, and maybe ghosts. Hermione might think it was a bit over the top, but I'm sure Leo or Annabeth and Luna would agree that it was all about the details in the design, even if it took longer to create.

Draco groaned as he approached our desk. Somehow he'd been partnered with Neville. Unfortunately, their project wasn't going so well. Draco refused to tell us what it was, probably so we wouldn't laugh at him for it looking quite so… unusual. At the moment it appeared to be a
misshaped wooden centaur with feathers. That was certainly quite interesting to look at.

"Harry, Percy! Save me from Longbottom. I swear, he could get a spell wrong if someone had cast an imperius curse on him to force him to do it correctly!" Draco moaned.

We chuckled. "Aw, it can't be that bad. I mean, you could be partnered to our brother. I bet you'd both be working on different projects after the first half-minute."

Hermione huffed. "If you don't mind. Harry and Percy and I have work to do. So please return to your own project."

"Lay off it, Granger!" Percy snapped. "We swear to Hades, if you don't stop trying to take control and forcing us to work every single free minute on this project we will bail and explain to Professor McGonagall that we simply cannot work with you breathing down our neck every other second!"

Hermione recoiled, as if stung. "Fine! I'd work better by myself anyway!"

Draco winced, tactfully retreating. I sighed, and got back to work. Percy silently fumed as I worked on transfiguring the dungeons. It was slowly taking shape. We had the dusty empty rooms all sorted, it was just some of the secret corridors, Slytherin common room and dorms to sort out now, then we could get to work on the ground floor. We'd decide it might work best if I worked from the dungeons up (as I knew that territory the best) and Hermione worked on the towers down. The Great Hall was going to be fun. We were half considering putting the tables on the ceiling.

'Alright.' I sighed. 'Talk. What happened with the twins?'

'Well, you know Fred hit the bludger that knocked you out?' Percy mumbled.

I nodded. 'Duh! But that wasn't his fault exactly. I'm pretty sure he wasn't aiming for our head, and besides, Fred is a Gryffindor beater.'

'Yeah, but the bludger came back and hit us fully on the back of our head, knocking me out as well. I think that was partly why my consciousness went walk-about.' Percy admitted. 'I know it wasn't his fault really, it's just so annoying!'

I chuckled. 'Be fair, both Fred and George have been very nice to us since we woke up last week. I presume that was to make up for it. I mean, they let us borrow the Marauder's Map. Admitting to having that when it rightfully belongs to James, Sirius and Remus is pretty brave.'

'Yeah, but…' Percy grumbled.

"Harry! Percy! POTTER!"

We snapped back to the present to see Hermione staring at us in exasperation.

"Watch what you're doing, idiots!"

We pouted, feigning hurt at her winged words. Glancing back down at our work, we realised we'd possibly gotten a little carried away. Our dungeons was completely finished now – it even had torches with little flames flickering in them. It was awash with magic and had responded to every single memory we had of the typically Slytherin part of the castle, complete with finely woven little tapestries uneven flag stones and potion stains on the desks. However, we'd accidentally also started transfiguring the desk to stone.

"Ops!" We blushed slightly. Our palms glowed a faint silver as we both waved our wands over the
Hermione rolled her eyes, inspecting our work. She grinned and looked at us in a slight awe as she took in the fine details.

"You know it well, I'll give you that." She offered, before passing us another block of wood, and the floor plan for the ground floor. "I suggest you get started on the next floor, we've got a way to go yet!"

The rest of the lesson passed in blissful peace, and we both managed to finish our second floors, melding them together to produce as base and top of the building. Now we just had the six floors in between to complete!

The day passed in a similar way, full of classes and teachers and small spats with the other houses. After dinner we slipped away to visit Myrtle and our basilisk friend down in the chamber.

Myrtle was delighted to see us after our two weeks in the hospital wing. She spent a few minutes fussing, then filled us in on the annoying Gryffindor who kept expelling her from her own bathroom by flushing her into the lake.

"It's unacceptable!" Myrtle moaned. "Gryffindor have no respect for the dead these days. None at all!"

"Do you know what they look like?" I asked.

Myrtle looked even more annoyed and depressed. "No. All I see is a flash of their Gryffindor shield and then it whoosh down the plumbing! Really though, I'd love to show whoever it is how nasty it is to be flushed down a toilet. See how they like it."

After spending a good twenty minutes assuring our dead friend that we would find out who it was, we ventured down into the Chamber. The basilisk we coiled up in the pool water outside of the statue of Slytherin, hissing in complaint of the cold. Percy smiled, casting a warming charm of the water. The basilisk hissed, first in warning, then in contentment and thanks when she noticed it was us.

$How are you today, our good friend?$ We asked, coming to sit beside her.

$I am well.$ She hissed slowly. $Today, at least.$

We winced. $Two weeks back, shortly after we first visited…$ She nodded. $The fiery haired girl came, commanding me to seek out the first mud-blood I came across and look it in the eye…$ A slow hissing chuckle passed her lips. $I may have been unable to disobey, I she didn't specify direct eye contact. The poor hatchling had a strange device he looked through. It weakened by gaze, much like a reflection.$

We grinned. $Would you be able to continue such work?$

$Yes.$ She hissed victoriously. $I will not harm the hatchlings! But…$ Her voice turned pleading. $Could you open the back entrance – it leads into the forest so I might feed.$

$Of course!$ Percy was shocked she hadn't asked before. $Show us.$ Our friend nudged us to sit behind her large head, and wove her way through several pipes to a solid
I knocked on it, and laughed when it echoed back. Hollow!

$Open!$ I commanded, watching with satisfaction as the wall retracted down. The basilisk nudged us off, hissing a thank you as she turned to go. A sudden thought hit Percy before she could leave however. $Wait! We failed to ask your name!$ 

She hissed in amusement. $The Great Master, Lord Slytherin, called me Alyssa once, though each new master over the centuries have brought me a new name. Sophia. Cephira. Kiyoshi. Vipera. Few thought to ask me for my name.$ 

$Alyssa it is then.$ Percy and I declared happily. 

We followed Alyssa out into the Forest, and she was all too happy to give us a ride to near the edge. We were careful to sneak out, and spent about five minutes sitting, enjoying the scenery on the root of a tree at the treeline of the forest. Hagrid shortly found us, however, and after passing a slightly distrustful look over us, sent us on up the castle, warning us to stay away from the forest. 

Hagrid may be a family friend, and envious of our friendship with the beings of the lake and forest, but after years of pranks being played on him by our House, he was instantly wary round Slytherins, so we didn't blame him for distrusting us. 

Luna and Annabeth were waiting for us at the castle doors. The girls embraced us, smiling. We swapped quick greetings before they dragged us up to our Transfiguration room, begging to see our project. Smiling, we indulged them. 

Annabeth cooed over the parts we'd done. "You included the secret passages! How did you know where they are?"

"We have our sources." Percy boasted, before laughing. "Our father was part of the infamous Marauder's group. They mapped out the entire castle, and discovered pretty much every secret passageway there is to find."

"Amazing…" Annabeth grinned, and I could see a hint of a happy Luna in their eyes too. Checking the time, we noticed we still had an hour before curfew. 

"What do you say for a little while canoeing on the lake?" Percy asked. Annabeth tilted her head thoughtfully, moving away from our model. 

"Like we used to with Leo?" She asked. "Where do you know nearby that can get us canoes though? Hogwarts certainly don't have any."

"In the summer we're sometimes allowed to borrow the boats used to carry the first years on their first night." Percy said thoughtfully. "But I was thinking more along the lines of transfiguring some."

"It'll be cold though." Luna frowned. 

"That's what warming charms are for! Come one, it'll be fun." We begged. 

They sighed. "Tomorrow. You can hold us to it if you like. We need to get our homework done…"

A snigger caught our attention from the entrance of the classroom. Strangely both Charles and Draco stood there, laughing at us as we pleaded to go canoeing with our friend on the lake. Annabeth and Luna gave them scathing looks.
"Real mature, both of you. I though purebloods had better decorum then that."

Draco blushed. Charles looked insulted.

"My dear Ravenclaw, I am a half-blood, not a pureblood. My, the very thought insults me…"

"Charles. James is a pureblood." We pointed out with a grin.

Draco snorted "And look how that turned out. Not only is he a muggle lover, but Father says he spent more time messing around then on his studies. How he gained the OWLs and NEWTs to get a job is incredible."

"Draco." We shook our head. "We are his son. Kind of. Half his son?"

Annabeth and Luna burst out laughing, and Charles joined in. Draco smirked and shook his head.

"You might want to work on that and sounding slightly more convincing than that." He jested. "Maybe it's your half-blood genes I should pull fun at."

"Hey!" We complained, even as Annabeth ruffled our hair fondly, claiming we were a "right seaweed brain."

Laughing, we all headed down to the library to find a table to work at. It was a good evening really, once the horrors that plagued the school in the form of a fiery haired girl were forgotten for a while.
Annabeth and Luna did actually go canoeing in the Lake the following day. Draco, Blaise and Theo sat on the shore, dressed warmly against the slightly frosty air, yelling at us, and teasing us when we deliberately fell in. Laughing, we swam quickly through the water, splashing all three of them. Annabeth and Luna chuckled.

A few of Annabeth and Luna's friends had tagged along as well, shocked that their normally responsible friend would do something so reckless, and interested to meet the boy who had persuaded her to do so. Hopefully it wouldn't be unreasonable to say they weren't disappointed by (in Annabeth's words) how stupidly reckless and yet intriguingly persuasive we were.

School carried on the same way up to Christmas. We joked about with our friends, Iris-messaged camp regularly… Hermione bickered with us as we completed our transfiguration project. There were about three more attacks, much to the mortification of Alyssa. However, without any clues other than quite young and red haired girl. Despite our thoughts immediately leaping to young Ginny Weasley (her family were infamous for their red hair, just as the Malfoy's were for being blond, or the Potter's for our ridiculous messy black hair) we had discovered about five other red haired girls in First and Second year, none of which we knew very well.

We had also discovered that young Ginny Weasley was rather lonely herself this year. Before last year, she had spent most of her time with Ron – we'd seen it. They had been happy to have fun and mess around together. But since Ron had come to Hogwarts he had decided he was to cool for his younger sister, and so had dropped her in favour of our brother and Hermione. So the youngest Weasley was alone this year. Considering we only knew really one other girl her age, we introduced her to Annabeth and Luna. They weren't close friends, but we did see them round school together quite a bit, which was nice. At least Ginny had someone now, since her brother was so terribly neglectful of his little sister.

Two weeks before Christmas, flyers went up in every common room. Our oh-so-fabulous DADA teacher had decided to grace us with his so very superior knowledge and start a duelling club. Most of the Slytherins decided not to join in, having received some rather superior tutoring in duelling from our parents due to the ancient traditions around the act. Duelling was a challenge to defend honour, or settle feuds. It was a vital part of the ancient beliefs that so many pureblood families still followed. All the same, Draco, Blaise, Theo and we decided to join in, just to see what complete and utter mess would occur with Lockhart in charge. Apparently Severus had been coerced into joining as well, which was just going to make it better.

Despite it being the week before most people would be travelling home for the holidays, Lockhart hosted his first club meeting on Wednesday before term broke up for Christmas – or Yuletide (or indeed, just the winter holidays), depending on the religion of the student.

Anyway. The duelling club… I daresay you can imagine how hilarious it was to watch Lockhart being beaten by our godfather. It was amazing.

The four of us (five if you count Percy and me as two) arrived early, to get good views up at the
front, where the dining tables had been pushed together and transfigured into a duelling platform. Lockhart was already up there, welcoming his adoring fans and basking in the attention as per normal. Finally, about fifteen minutes later, when the Hall was packed and the doors had finally swung shut, Lockhart was ready to begin.

"Welcome! Welcome! In light of recent events, the Headmaster has granted me permission to start this little duelling club, to make sure you are all prepared and ready for whatever might cross paths with you…" He announced dramatically, pulling at the strings holding his velvet green cloak on. "Now, if I may introduce my lovely assistant, Professor Snape, who has so kindly volunteered to help me demonstrate to you all the correct procedure for a duel."

Severus stormed up the steps on the other side to Lockhart, his thunderous face and flapping robes leaving no delusion that he had actually volunteered to help the flamboyant Defence teacher. All the same, he drew his wand, nodding to the crowd of students. Meanwhile, Lockhart had untied his cloak, and threw it into the audience, where a Hufflepuff girl caught it, much to the disappointment of her peers, if the moans of disappointment were to be believed. We chuckled as Severus rolled his eyes.

"If we may start, Professor Lockhart, perhaps we might demonstrate how to disarm your opponent?" The Slytherin potion's master suggested, stress Lockhart's name and title to draw the man's attention back from blinding us all with his flashing teeth as he smiled.

'Once again, I find myself believing that his teeth should come with a warning – do not look on pain of blindness!' Percy half-joked, squinting our eyes. I laughed in agreement.

While we'd been momentarily distracted, the two teachers on the duelling platform had been getting ready, standing toe to toe, wand in front of their faces. They turned, walked five paces apart, turned and bowed, then assumed duelling positions.

"Ex-"

"Expelliarmus!" Severus cast, cutting through Lockhart's attempt. The younger man was sent flying backwards through the air to land heavily on his bum, even as his wand fell into Professor Snape's outstretched, waiting hand. The potions master let a small smirk of amusement cross his features, before training them back to solid indifference when Lockhart looked up at him.

"Good!" Lockhart praised brightly. "Perhaps a little overpowered, but an excellent demonstration, Professor. Now, children. The incantation is 'Expelliarmus', and the wand movement is a sharp flick of the wrist."

The teacher demonstrated. "Perhaps a demonstration? Ron! Charles! What about you?"

The two Gryffindor's grinned and started to clamber up on stage, but Professor Snape's sharp voice cut in before they could. "Ron Weasley? I don't think so, Professor Lockhart. With his wand in the state it's in, we'll be sending Potter here back in a matchbox. However, if I might suggest one of my own students instead? Say… Harry and Percy?"

The hall shifted nervously. Half of them had been there at our last duel, almost a year ago. Percy had all but blown up the Lake after Charles had hurt me mentally. We smirked.

"We're game if Charles is. What do you say brother? Shall we show them how it's done?" We offered, a mischievous glint in our eye.

Charles seemed to catch on, an identical smirk dawning on his own featured. "I must say, brother, it
sounds like fun. Do try not to blow anything up this time, though? The idea is to show professional
duelling, after all, isn't it?"

Severus paled, realising what he had just suggested. Lockhart looked bewildered, glancing between
the two of us, as we stood in front of each other on the platform. Charles had his wand in front of his
face, cocking an eyebrow at us as he waited for one of us to do the same.

'Please! Please, please, please, please, please!' Percy begged, desperate to some form of fighting after
so long without a motive in our training bouts with dummies. I laughed, and relented.

'Create Hades, Percy.' I requested before stepping back to watch the show.

Tension in the room rose even further as our robes flashed red, and Percy flicked our left wrist
summoning his wand. We nodded, then turned, pacing five steps turning again and bowing. We then
assumed the position, and waited for Lockhart (as the referee) to tell us to start.

"Begin!"

We immediately both jumped into motion. Percy, thinking fast, cast a quick 'rictusempra' ticking
charm, which Charles almost failed to dodge. Charles retaliated with a jelly-legs curse that Percy
jumped over, folding over into a dive and rolled past Charles, turned quickly and cast 'colloshoo' to
stick Charles' feet to the floor. Our brother snarled, his feet stuck in place, half turned to face us.
Percy grinned.

"Got to stay light of your feet, brother!"

"Expelliarmus!" Charles incanted, but Percy shook his head, moving just slightly to the side to dodge
it.

"Fumos."

A cloud of smoke created a screen, blocking us from Charles' view as we snuck behind him on with
feather light footsteps, not making a sound as we moved.

"The idea is to disarm only!" Lockhart stressed, clearing trying to see through our smoke screen. We
also heard a yell of triumph from Charles as he freed himself. Really though. He should of through of
removing his shoes earlier.

"Mimble wimble!"

The tongue-tying spell caught us from surprise, and we were unpleasantly surprised to find our
tongue stuck to the roof of our mouth. We glowered at Charles as the smoke screen cleared, and he
chucked tauntingly.

"What's wrong brother – cat got your tongue?"

The Gryffindor's laughed, and we rolled our eyes. I joined Percy and flicked our right wrist,
summoning my wand to. Silence filled the hall. Of course, everyone knew that we had two wands,
but seeing them both out, ready to use… Even Charles, who had faced it before, paled.

'Really brother? Did you thing a tongue tying spell would stop us?' We projected our thoughts at
him, and his stumbled back.

"Hey! Stop it." Charles pouted. "You know I hate it when you do that weird thought thing…"
Severus snapped his head to us in surprise, before signalling with a small nod of his head to meet him in his office afterwards. We nodded back.

'Finite incantatum.' We chorused in our head, unravelling the spell. Our tongue slipped free from its prison on the roof of our mouth and we grinned. "Expelliarmus."

Charles' wand flew from where it lay limp in his grasp. He stared at us in shock, and belatedly we realised we had used wordless magic. In front of the entire lower school. Ok, so Charles knew we could do it. But I doubt he expected us to actually use it.

"You were off your mark today, Charles." We frowned, handing him back his wand and sheathing our own. Charles sighed, and rubbed his neck.

"Sorry. I guess… I don't know. I guess I'm not used to duelling in front of large audiences." He admitted shyly.

We put a hand on his shoulder to offer our sympathy. "Best get used to it. Isn't James entering us into the junior duelling league at the end of the summer?"

Charles groaned. "Don't remind me!"

We both jumped off the platform, immediately surrounded by Draco, Blaise, Theo, Ron and Hermione. Draco narrowed his eyes at us.

"That was child's play! You two know how to duel better than that." He complained mournfully. Blaise sniggered.

"We'd been hoping you might blow up the hall – or at least set Lockhart's trousers on fire." He pouted. "Now I owe Draco five galleons."

"You bet five galleons on that?" Ron looked disgusted. "What do you do – throw money around?"

"Well, for those with it…"

We elbowed Blaise sharply, and gave him a warning look. Too late, it would appear, however, as Ron punched Blaise in the face. Immediately, Draco and I stepped back, even as Charles and an excited Theo stepped in. Hermione scowled.

"Can they be any more immature?"

We considered, tilting our head. "Well… Charles gets into huffs when James steals his breakfast cereal, so definitely yes for him… Theo and Blaise do have a bet on how many girls in the school want to date Lockhart too… Don't know very much about Ron. What do you say Draco?"

Draco smirked. "Oh, I'd say the Weasel is at his limits, if he's fighting over someone else's money that they themselves bet."

Hermione growled, slapping us both. "Oh, you arrogant little Slytherins!"

We swapped glances with Draco as Hermione stressed the word 'Slytherin' like it was the worst word she could think of. We then abruptly burst out laughing. We were Slytherin's. Why Gryffindor's always used it as an insult was quite beyond us.

"Well, if we're arrogant little Slytherins, then you must be a Ravenclaw wanna-be Gryffindor." Draco offered, and we burst into a fresh bout of giggles.
Severus turned up at that point, casting an annoyed gaze over where Blaise and Theo were brawling with Ron and Charles. He sighed woefully and turned to Draco and us. "Pray tell why they decide to have a fist fight in a duelling club?"

"Well sir. Blaise was bemoaning the fact he lost five galleons to me because he bet the Potters would blow something up in their duel. Ron heard and was insulted he bet such quantities of money, and so commented, to which Blaise of course replied." Draco explained.

"Ron didn't very much like his reply either. He punched Blaise in the face. Then Theo – who I think has wanted to fight all day to be honest – joined in, and Charles didn't want to be left out. We were just bemoaning their immaturity, weren't Hermione?" Percy added, innocently.

Hermione gritted her teeth but nodded. Sighing again, Severus flicked his wand, too bored to even take points from the beaten up miscreants. He just sighed, and shook his head.

"Either duel it out like Wizards, or take it somewhere else. I have neither the will nor the energy to sort you out now." Severus turned to leave, then turned back. "I don't suppose you'd care to join me, Harry and Percy?"

We nodded, and bade our goodbyes to our friends, our brother, and his friends, before following our Godfather. The halls were silent as we walked slowly down them in companionable silence, with only the clatter of footsteps and crackle of torches on the wall to keep the silence warm and comfortable.

Severus sighed as we entered his office. He sat us down, and offered us a mug of tea. We accepted, welcoming the warm beverage with delight. Few could make better tea than a potions master.

"In the Hall, after your brother tongue tied you," Severus said after a moment of silence, "you use legilimency, didn't you? Projecting your thoughts at him though, rather than delving into Charles' mind."

We nodded. "It's… easy for us, I guess. We have natural skills in occlumency – we told you about that last Christmas. Charles asked us to teach him, if you recall. So we projected thoughts at him, and tried to help him block them. He's not very good yet, but we've been practising."

"Behind your parents and the Headmaster's back, I presume?"

We frowned. "What does the Headmaster have to do with anything? I mean, I know he's leader of the Light, but Voldemort hasn't returned. Yet. So the Headmaster should have no say in whatever extra-curricular activities Charles takes part in, unless it was drugs, sex or alcohol, in which case Charles should be should be sent home for bad behaviour."

Our godfather sighed. "Your brother will always have the Headmaster as an authoritative figure in his life. The Headmaster is a meddlesome fool, though he means well. Now I'm not saying bow to his every command, but take it into account when dealing with him. Show too much talent and he might start meddling with you too."

"Draco said something along those lines. Not about the Headmaster, per say, but that we should keep our talents to ourself lest someone looks up and takes note. We don't know who will be our enemies, and we won't truly know until the war starts – if it starts." Percy shook our head. "War. When did we become old enough to talk about war as a fact, and not a far off possibility somewhere in the far future?"

"It isn't a fact though, not yet." Severus pulled us into a hug, and smiled warmly at us. "But for now,
you focus on your schooling. Let the *real* adults do the worrying."

We smiled thankfully, and snuggled into his hug, sipping our tea. Severus truly was a good godfather, and Head of House. How in the name of the gods we were lucky enough to get him was quite beyond us. But for now, we would just relax and enjoy the fact that he was watching over us, and spend more time on our studies. Maybe this weekend we could help him with his weekly potions for the medical wing, and talk to Hermione about the finishing touches to our model.

A knock at the door had us looking up, and Severus letting go of us. We sighed regretfully as Severus called for whoever it was to enter.

"Ah, Severus. Talking to your young prodigy, I see. Still top of most of your classes, Harry, Percy?" The Headmaster asked as he breezed into the room, sitting in the other more comfortable chair Severus had in his office for talking to his House during 'open office', were we could take our problems to him as our Head of House.

"Not all of them." We shook our head. "Magical History is a problem – Professor Binns seems rather good at sending us to sleep, more than anything else."

Dumbledore chuckled. "Yes I suppose he does. He was the same when I was taught here too, mind. Of course, he was *alive* back then…"

We laughed too, and Severus even managed a half-smile.

"Headmaster, how might I help you tonight?"

"Ah, yes. I heard about the Potter twin's duel tonight. I was surprised you suggested it after last time they duelled, and so wanted to check Harry and Percy here were all in one piece. Charles seemed quite alright in the hall, apart from a few bruises."

We chuckled again. "He and Ron got into a fight with Blaise and Theo. I assure you, Headmaster, the bruises were nothing we gave him."

"Good, good." Dumbledore nodded. "Well, that aside, it's nearly curfew and I'm afraid I must call Severus away for a staff meeting. I suggest you run along to bed, you've got school tomorrow!"

We nodded, exchanging goodnights with Severus and the Headmaster before 'running along to bed'. The Headmaster was right. School was tomorrow, and no doubt several of our teachers would be giving us end of term tests, to check everything was in order before the holidays.
We hummed quietly as we worked on our transfiguration project. It was due in today. The castle had been finished weeks ago, but Hermione had then got started on the grounds. It was no secret that we frequently went swimming in the Black Lake, and so she tasked be with constructing it. Grinning, we had – that evening, the ice be damned – gone for a dip and made a mental map of the lakebed, with the Squid's help to ensure an accurate model of it. Having also discovered that the Chamber of Secrets was under the lake we had spent an entire lesson transfiguring the chamber with its extensive system of pipes and passageways. We had to add charms of course, so that nobody who didn't already know the location of the Chamber would be able to see the pipe leading down from Myrtle's toilet on the first floor. Nor would they see the details we’d added to the chamber, only the barest of details from the rough descriptions in a few of the legends.

Hermione had started on the forest, adding in a few well known places that were no deeper than a mile into the Forbidden Forest, where Care of Magical Creatures lessons took place, or were frequented Hagrid when he was put in charge of detentions on occasion.

"Hermione…” We said suddenly, shocking the witch out of her concentration as she worked Hagrid's hut and vegetable patch.

"Potters." She answered amicably enough, not glancing away from her work.

We paused for a moment. "What would you say about charming figures of people to move around our model? So like, they stay – or move – as their real life counterpart does?"

We'd been mulling the idea around in our head for weeks, contemplating how difficult it would be to charm them. I would work similarly to the Marauder's Map. We'd owled Remus, and he'd offered a few spells we could try, rather than actual transfiguration,

"If you have the time right now and have finished everything else, why not?" Hermione replied, exasperated. "We don't have time for this, Harry and Percy. Get a grip on yourselves!"

We cast the spell we'd discovered worked the best, and figures appeared all round the castle, mostly grouped in clumps in class rooms. They weren't exactly figurines – more like illusions – but they did the trick. To our surprise, even the ghosts appeared.

Hermione looked up, and gasped. "Percy, Harry, that's…"

"Incredible?" We smirked at her. The floors could be turned invisible with a simple spell, allowing view of what lay below. It was pretty cool, if we said so ourselves.

New vigour in our work we both quickly completed our model just in time for McGonagall to call the lesson to an end. We grinned at Hermione, who rolled her eyes, but grinned back all the same. Our model took up so much space we'd moved to the abandoned back rows of the room and had joined to rows together to put it together. Hermione ran an eye over it critically.

"It's fascinating. In the muggle world something like this would take months upon months – if not years to complete, and we did it in about one and a half. Magic truly is something… amazing.” She murmured, half to herself.
"And you've hardly scratched the surface. You went with Charles and Ron down the trapdoor last year, didn't you?" We asked. She nodded. "The chess board you had to play across was our extra-curricular transfiguration and charms project. We had full access to the restricted section in the library and more help than perhaps Harry is willing to admit from Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick, but we made that." We told her, with me adding in a bit of my own commentary – just to annoy Harry of course. "It's something that is indeed produced on a mass scale by producers, but the spells are only really fourth year work."

"Only fourth year." Hermione rolled her eyes. "Not even I studied that far ahead last year."

We chuckled, and Percy couldn't help by quip. "Ah, but Harry had unlimited access to the Potter library since we were five. That's six years of studying longer than you, and a photographic memory between us."

Before Hermione could reply, Professor McGonagall approached us, smiling widely at our project. She raised an eyebrow at the illusions walking round it, but chuckled at idea.

"Interesting. Exactly what I expected from pairing two of my top students together. The charms were a little overboard though, don't you think Harry?" Professor McGonagall guessed at a glance exactly who had been behind the charms. Harry grinned unapologetically.

"Well, Professor, perhaps you heard mention of a Marauder's Map when you taught James?" At her curious nod we smirked. "It's a similar idea, except a model of the castle. The illusions trace exactly where everyone is at any one point in time in the castle. Uncle Remus send us the spells."

Our Professor laughed, shaking her head. "I can probably also bet you hid the secret corridors so only those who know about them can see them?"

"We students must keep some secrets." We smiled innocently up at her.

She laughed again, but nodded. She moved on finishing her rounds about the class before dismissing us all for the day. It was the last day of classes before the Holidays, and we were all excited to go and pack. With a quick nod of acknowledgement to Hermione, we grabbed our bag, sheathed our wands and walked out the classroom, quickly joining Theo, Blaise and Draco. Theo and Blaise seemed quite satisfied with their creations, figuring they weren't exactly bad. Draco was in fits, however.

"That utter imbecile Longbottom!" He moaned, actually pulling at his hair, disrupting the neatly slicked back locks. "I swear, if I get an EE or worse, an A on this project, I will personally seek him out and murder him while he sleeps."

We all laughed at that, much to Draco's indignation.

"Nothing less than an O is suitable from a Malfoy!" Draco sneered at us, calling on more laughter.

We trailed back to the dorms, teasing our blond friend and his high expectations for what his work should always be worth. The common room was buzzing as we entered. First years were exchanging floo addresses and extricating promises to write from their friends. The older years, already packed and ready to leave come the morning, were lounging about by the fire, chatting happily to each other, and arranging to meet up. Those staying behind were playing games of chess, or starting on their holiday homework while they waited for their friends to finish packing.

We moved quickly through the hubbub to the steps leading down to the dorms. Crabbe and Goyle were already there, trying to shove more into their badly packed, already full trunks. Chuckling,
Harry waved a wand at their cases, muttering an incantation. Their clothes rose out, quickly folding themselves before falling neatly back into the trucks, leaving a fair amount more space. The two boys nodded thankfully.

"Thanks Harry." Goyle smiled.

The pair were curious. They acted rather slow and dumb in class, but could immerse themselves in some rather intellectual conversations on the rare occasions they joined us in the common room. They tended to hang around Pansy and Daphne more than us, the girls apparently more open about helping them with classwork and homework on the occasions when they didn't get it. Those occasions were fairly numerous – no matter how educated the duo were in general topics and Wizarding politics, magical theory was something that always seemed to manage to slip past them, making the rest of their spells slightly harder to cast. But the silent goons they seemed to act as in class really weren't anything like their real personalities.

We'd asked Draco about it once before. He said that their families owed allegiance to the Malfoys, and often acted as body-guards to the new heir when he came along. Therefore, by acting a bit thick and slow, they were underestimated, and were a real asset in a fight. We nodded at the theory, but bemoaned the fact that such raw talent was going to waste.

"You should learn some basic household spells." We smiled at them. "We'll teach you after the holidays, if you like."

The duo grinned again. "That would be great, Potters."

Blaise sniggered. "Draco could teach you some preening spells. You know – perfect hair, teeth whitening, skin moistening stuff."

We all burst into a bout of laughter at that, even Draco after a good attempt of looked affronted. That seemed to set the atmosphere as we all immersed ourselves in our packing. We joked and laughed as we found our dorm mates belongings among our own in the chests at the end of our bed, or indeed under our bed.

In just under an hour, our dorm was empty of personal belongings, as bare as the day we entered it. Severus came round half an hour before dinner to check we were all packed and had all our homework with us. He was nothing if not persistent in checking his house were prepared for anything with time to spare.

The 'leaving' feast was spectacular as always. They always had pudding on the first and last days of term, as well as on weekends. Theo and Blaise excused themselves after dinner, explaining that they wanted to set a trap for Filch after he gave them a detention for being muddy after a Herbology lesson. Seriously though, he could cut them a bit of slack, at least, after Herbology of all lessons.

Anyway, we watched them go with just a little glee. After all, Filch was – quite literally – the bane of almost every student's life at Hogwarts. He despised all of us openly. Stuck up git…

Draco and we claimed our normal ring of chairs near to the fireplace. It was our favourite spot in the entire common room. Actually, it was everyone's favourite spot, so it was claimed on a 'first-come' basis. We chatted quietly for about an hour, discussing dates to meet up and go to Diagon, or visit each other's houses. This New Year we decided all of us – Blaise, Theo, Draco and us – all had to meet up, and have our own little party to celebrate the year past, and predict events of the year to come.

Annabeth and Luna, who were semi-welcome in the Slytherin Common Room as they often paired
up with one of the first years in projects (willingly) and so had been acknowledged as an almost honorary Snake for ignoring the dark prejudices we all had to fight in the school, decided to come visit us for a bit. They sat on the worn rug and watched Draco and Harry and I as we chatted to them about classes and holiday plans. Luna and Annabeth admitted to having decided to stay at school, as Camp was too far to travel back to really. Horrified by this, we jumped to invite her round Potter Manor whenever she wanted during the holidays. It wasn't as if our parents would mind. Charles always had friends over anyway, so they could hardly complain even if they did.

Another half hour past before Theo and Blaise came back to the Common Room. We past a gaze over them critically. Theo was lumbering along, rather than gliding along with his usually elegant stride. Blaise kept stumbling too, as if he wasn't used to having his long legs.

Well, well well. Harry sighed. It seems our brother would like to pay us a visit. And Ron too. I groaned. We should take this to the dorms. Out of public view.

"Theo! Blaise! How went your business?" Draco asked brightly, with a slight wink. A Theo-shaped Ron looked slightly shocked, drawing back before he managed to rain in his composure.

"Great thanks." Charles (in the form of Blaise) flashed him a grin, but offered no details, of course.

We stood with a sigh, and put a hand on our brother's shoulder. "Shall we go upstairs so we might get all the details?"

Charles paled ever so slightly. We'd give it to him – he was a good actor. Annabeth chuckled before Luna took over and stood to whisper in our ear.

"You know they aren't really your friends, right? There are far too many nargles hovering round their heads."

"So there are." We agreed. "But when it comes to our brother, that to be expected, isn't it?"

Luna giggled, skipping on ahead to our dorms. Nobody was really sure where the rules lay about girls from other houses entering the boys' dorms. I mean, sure the staircase didn't stop them, like it would if the boys attempted to enter the girls', but we didn't advertise the fact to any of our teachers, just in case.

We followed, our hand tight on our brother's shoulder. Charles winced.

"Careful!"

Draco rolled his eyes, still not realising anything was wrong. For someone so bright, Draco could be ridiculously unobservant sometimes. Ron trailed behind almost hesitantly, as if wary of being brought into the very heart of Slytherin territory. We smirked, and almost saw Charles' eyes widen with dismay.

Once in our dorm, we sat on our bed, leaning back against the covers as we sat and watched Charles and Ron struggle to find something to say as they desperately tried to stay in character. Draco raised an expectant eyebrow, and Luna and Annabeth settled on our bed, laying with their feet on the pillows next to us as they gazed at our brother and Weasley as if this was the best entertainment she'd had in ages.

"Well?" Draco got bored waiting. "How did it go?"

I burst out laughing, much to Harry's amusement, unable to keep quite any longer. "Oh Draco.
Haven't you guessed yet?"

Draco looked at us in confusion, and out the corner of our eye I caught Ron gazing at him with wide
eyes at the sign of such a human emotion, for Draco’s barriers were down around friends.

"Well, you know that week we were in Gryffindor?" Draco nodded, and we continued, Annabeth
casually flicking a silencing spell at Ron and Charles as they tried to interrupt, giving them a no-
nonsense look, that had them recoiling away from the rather scary first-year. "Well, we caught the
golden trio brewing polyjuice potion Myrtle's bathroom. Uncle Severus had originally believed we
were, as our magical signature is almost identical to Charles and his wards had picked it up when
Charles stole the ingredients, and so we promised him we would find out, and inform him if his
suspicions were true. Severus actually decided to leave them be, so we kept tabs on the potion,
making sure it wouldn't blow up, or turn into anything poisonous but his directions."

"Are you telling me, that this is…?"

"Charles and Ron, yes." Harry nodded with a grin at the pair's horrified looks and silent cursing of
us. "Where Hermione is however, is another matter entirely."

Annabeth lifted her silencing spell, allowing Ron and Charles to talk, and they both cast her an
identical wary look. We laughed.

"Oh, come on. Did you really think we would let you play over our friends?" Harry demanded, and I
decided to sit back and enjoy the show as Harry – and Annabeth, strangely – interrogated our
brother. "You think we Slytherins are spineless cowards because we're cunning, but you really have
no idea of our loyalty to each other, do you?"

"Well, of course you'd rat us out!" Ron spat. "I said you would, didn't I?"

"Oh?" Annabeth raised an eyebrow at Charles. "Charles would call out his brother if he tried the
same thing. So long as it doesn't put the other danger, twins do have separate minds that they can use
to get the other in trouble, or protect their separate friends, you know."

Charles blushed. "Yes, well…"

"What do you want?" Draco demanded, angry that we had been invaded in the safety of our own
territory.

"Oh, they want to know who the heir of Slytherin is." Harry said, concentrating on something
different. "Of course, if the Heir was in Slytherin, then everyone in our house would know, so
dressing up as one of us and asking really would give away your disguise. But, we can assure you
that they aren't, and I must say we're insulted you didn't ask us."

Charles was starting to look guilty now, which was a strange expression on Blaise's normally care-
free face. He opened and shut his mouth a few times before deciding on the right words to say. "I
could have, but Ron and Hermione would hardly just take your word for it, would they? I mean, you
are primarily a Slytherin, and only secondly a Gryffindor really."

We conceded to that, recognising the truth when we heard it. "True. I can tell you this, however –
we found the Chamber a few months back, and know the 'monster' within. Alyssa is actually quite
friendly once you get to know her. We swear on the River Styx though that we haven't, and have no
intention of, setting Alyssa on muggleborns. In fact, if you find the heir, please tell us so we can
personally beat them up for forcing her to attack students."

Thunder rumbled dimly overhead at our oath. Annabeth and Luna sucked in a breath sharply,
recognising the seriousness of the oath. Ron clearly didn't, and scoffed.

"Oh, you swear do you? And tell us, what exactly does your measly little oath actually mean to us? The river Styx? That doesn't even exist!"

Annabeth much to our delight, slapped the youngest Weasley boy straight across the face. "That means, mortal, that should they break their oath, then their souls burn in the River Styx for all eternity. Because, yes, the River Styx does actually exist, and if you're not careful, you could become intimately familiar with it when you die."

Ron sneered. "Mortal? Just because you believe in that mumbo-jumbo doesn't mean I have to. Your parents are probably just really powerful wizards who favour the idea of being gods."

This time, Harry and I punched him. "I have seen the gods. Unless you know a spell that can make you ten feet tall, I'd shut up."

Ron blushed, but didn't drop his sneer. Again, this was a really odd look on our friend's face. I breathed a sigh of relief when, after about another ten minutes of a pointless argument that was just going round in circles really, Ron and Charles' faces began to bubble and they shifted back into their correct bodies.

The boys swapped a look, and looked relieved themselves to see more comfortingly familiar features on each other's faces.

"Right. That cue's you two's time to go." Draco snapped, clearly finding that seeing their faces as well was too much. Annabeth and Harry cast quick glamours on Ron and Charles to disguise them as we hurried them out. When would our lives ever calm down to a point that could be considered normal?
Chapter 48

Percy's Point of View

We managed to get Ron and Charles out the common room no questions asked. We bullied them into showing up where they had locked up Blaise and Theo, then (after making sure our friends were simply sleeping and safe) followed our brother and his friend to Myrtle's bathroom, where Hermione was still locked up in a stall.

"Oh, wait till you see!" Myrtle chortled nastily, her dislike for the Gryffindor bookworm shining through. "It's simply awful."

Then, spotting us and Draco behind Ron and Charles, the young ghost grinned. "Hiya Harry and Percy."

We smiled distractedly back, approaching the door where Hermione was. Frowning, we called across to her. "We checked your potion every single week without fail. Merlin, we even checked it this morning. There was absolutely nothing wrong with it. So, Hermione. What on Earth did you manage to do to mess everything up, huh?"

The stall door opened, and we stood staring in shock at the girl within. Hermione looked, for all the world, like one of those cat-ladies out of Doctor Who. She had a furry face and a tail. We had to fight the urge to laugh.

"You added cat hair?!"

Draco actually burst out laughing at our exclamation. Charles and Ron looked affronted, and Hermione ducked her head. "I got it off Millicent's robes when we were duelling. I didn't realise…"

We had the fight to hit Hermione over the head for her stupidity. No, but seriously? If you were going to collect a hair of someone's robe, you might as well double check first that it most definitely was theirs! A simple detection charm would at least identify it as human or not…

Gritting our teeth, Harry grabbed Hermione's arm, pulling her out of the stall.

'Severus is going to have our head for this… we promised we'd see it through to the end!' Harry grumbled.

'In our defence, we couldn't exactly just ask them to warn us when they were going to invade Slytherin territory and infiltrate our group of friends by impersonating half of us, could we?' I pointed out. This must be a really bad day for Harry if I had to be his voice of reason… Oh well. We all have our bad days, right?

'Percy…' Harry all but growled at me. 'You know I can hear you thinking currently, right?'

Oh! 'Hehe, ops?' I offered, ducking his mental cuff to the head. 'Hey!'

Hermione tried to struggle as we pulled her out, but we had several years of my fighting obsession to our advantage.

"Let me go!" Hermione yelled at us, catching us with a stunning blow to the side of the head. Ow!
Remind us not to belittle girls. This one had some real force behind her.

I took over, shaking away the shock of being hit. I grabbed her arms, pinning them to her side (it was a bit difficult given all the fur, but I managed) and lifted her up. "Oh no, missy. This is one trip to the hospital wing that you most certainly are not missing out on. Or would you prefer we took you to Professor Snape or Professor McGonagall, so you might explain yourself to them personally?"

Hermione stopped struggling, going limp in our arms. "I guess your right... That doesn't mean I like it! But... This is hardly going to cure itself."

Ron and Charles exchanged looks, and Draco eyed her in mock amazement. "Did you honestly just agree with something a Slytherin said? Pack up, Harry and Percy, the apocalypse is coming."

We snorted in amusement, but continued to bustle Hermione out the bathroom and off towards the Hospital Wing. Myrtle hovered round our small party, her emotions switching between gleeful over Hermione's mess up, and worry that we might get in trouble for it. We shot her a smile every now and again as we walked.

Annabeth and Luna, who had slipped away to their dorms when we headed for the bathroom, met us just outside the Hospital Wing. It was uncanny, Luna's strange knowledge of what was going on and when. They didn't say a word, but pushed open the door.

"We informed Madam Pomfrey of the situation." They whispered quietly in our ear as we past. Draco smirked as we passed the message on to him. He offered Luna and Annabeth a proud smirk. He couldn't deny that they were certainly interesting people to be around. A wave of pride for our friends washed over us. Luna and Annabeth might not exactly be normal, but that was over-rated anyway. For what our lives involved, they had a much better chance of survival this way too.

We shivered as we considered the high death rate that hung over all Demigods. The fact that we had survived reaching camp with only one monster attack really spoke for how lucky we were. I was a miracle Annabeth and Luna had survived alone on the streets too, no matter how short a time it had been. Seeing Ron and Charles had Hermione and Madam Pomfrey covered, we hugged Annabeth and Luna quickly.

We needed to be off to bed, and Draco was already pulling on our arm, calling us back to the common room. We did only have about ten minutes to be back before curfew. Harry nodded to Draco, then walked over to Charles.

"We need to go. Curfew is nearly here, and Professor Snape won't be happy if we're not back in time. We'll talk later at home tomorrow." Harry flashed our brother a hard look. We might have understood why they had invaded the Slytherin Common Room, but Charles had already known that we more than certainly didn't approve of the potion, or the fact that they wanted to, and now look what had come of it. Hermione was in the hospital wing, no longer able to go home for Christmas.

Charles nodded, guilt in his eyes. We sighed. It was obvious that rebuking him wasn't going to stop him from getting into any more trouble. We'd just have to watch over him more carefully, and try harder to prevent it in future.

Then we turned to go, offering our goodnights to Luna and Annabeth, then leaving with Draco.

The corridors were empty and silent as we quickly picked up Blaise and Theo before heading down to the dungeons. We sighed with relief that Alyssa was safe in her Chamber for tonight. With all the excitement over Christmas we wouldn't be surprised if there were Gryffindors running round the school tonight, and adding in a deadly snake would only end badly. Our thoughts turned to the red-
head who was being possessed by the 'false master' of Alyssa's and groaned. Alyssa was doing her
best not to hurt anybody, but if this girl carried on… We would have to investigate it as soon as we
got back after the holidays.

It was only later, when we were in bed and on the very edge of sleep that Harry suddenly
remembered something.

'Isn't Charles staying over the holidays this Christmas? Something about wanting to keep Ron
company while his parents were away in Egypt with Bill?'

I chuckled lightly. 'That sneaky Lion! Maybe we should confront him at breakfast…'

'No.' Harry disagreed.

'No.' I echoed with a sigh. 'I doubt they'll even leave the hospital wing for breakfast.'

The next morning Harry woke early, and so when I woke he already had us dressed and our last few
belongings packed away. My bleary vision cleared as Harry shook our head, refocusing our eyes on
the text. I didn't even bother trying to decipher the jumbled letters into words this early in the
morning, instead deciding to let Harry read it out to me mentally. I had forgotten how relaxing that
could be, having somebody else to read to me.

After a while, however, I began to get restless, ready for breakfast and to be moving. Harry chuckled
lightly, bookmarking his place and standing up. 'Shall we go wake the others? Breakfast is probably
just about starting now, and we've got two hours until the train leaves.'

I nodded emphatically back. 'Let's do it!'

I decided, as it was the last day of term, we could forgo the normal methods of waking our dorm-
mates up, and levitated water from the sink over them.

'Percy…' Harry seemed to hover over me, not interfering with what I was doing, but still nervous
about it. 'Are you sure this is a good idea? Last time… well. Draco was rather mad at you, right?'

I laughed, waving it off. 'I'll be fine. We've learnt drying charms since last year. Ready? Three…
two… one!'

There was a resounding splash as the water fell down on the other five occupants of our room. We
stood giggling to the side as gasping shocked screams filled the air. The door was flung open a few
seconds later, and our Godfather stormed in.

"What exactly is going on here?" He demanded, before casting an eye over the mayhem.

"Percy!" Draco yelled. "I swear by Merlin, I am so going to get you back for this!"

As our blond friend came running at us, we quickly ducked behind Severus, resulting in a sopping
wet Draco to crash into the strict potion's master. Draco paled, looking up. To our surprise, Severus
was grinning fondly at down at him.

"Well, as amusing as this is, I suggest you five hit the showers while Percy here and I clean up the
mess your little wakeup call caused." Severus ordered. When nobody moved he sighed and rolled his
eyes. "Move it, you lazy brats!"

Delighted at having our potions master behaving normally, our entire dorm kicked into motion,
scrambling to snatch up their fresh clothes and towels before heading out. Blaise and Theo made sure to soak us as well, embracing us in a tight hug as they passed, before messing with our hair in greeting.

As soon as Crabbe and Goyle had left the room, Severus turned to us. "Well Percy. I highly doubt you'll actually be needing my help, so forgive me if I just stand here and watch to make sure you don't miss anything.

Sighing in slight disappointment, I waved my hand in a 'come hither' motion and smiled as the water slowly began to rise, floating over towards us as it formed a large ball of water just before us. With a simple spell, Harry banished the ball of water to the lake. Severus grinned proudly at us.

"Nicely done! I take it those were talents inherited from your father?"

We nodded, narrowing our eyes at the mention of Poseidon. It reminded us again of Camp. We had been so busy these past few weeks we hadn't had time to call Leo as often as we normally did. I made a mental note to ask our parents if he could come over for a few days round Christmas. Send him a portkey or something.

Severus, noticing we were lost in thought, put a hand on our shoulder. Harry smiled up at him.

"Sorry. We were thinking about Camp and Leo. We haven't been able to talk to him in a while." Harry explained. "Do you think James and Lily would mind if we invited him over for Christmas?"

"Has he no family to be with?"

"All his brothers in his cabin, I guess. Otherwise, not really. His mum died in a fire a few years back. He'd been on the run from foster homes when we found him." Harry said with a small sigh.

"Well, I can hardly see Lily turning away a friend of yours, and James will agree with Lily or suffer her wrath. And from experience, I can tell you that Lily's wrath is not something easy to withstand." Severus said, his face dead serious.

A small giggle escaped our lips, and we hugged our godfather. "Thank you! We'll ask when we get home."

At that point, Draco, Theo and Blaise returned, shortly followed by Crabbe and Goyle. We all headed up to the Great Hall together, chatting and joking as let the excitement of the festive season take over us. As predicted, Draco wasn't actually that annoyed at us, but he did his best to ignore us for the entirety of breakfast. But then, I can be rather hard to ignore when I want…

"Draco! Draco! Draco!" I chanted, changing our tone of voice with each repetition of his name. Draco snapped within the first twenty seconds, much to our delight.

"What, Percy?"

"You aren't really mad at us are you?" I asked, giving him puppy eyes. Blaise and Theo laughed. They had been far too smart to hold a grudge against the might that we were! Draco groaned, but couldn't deny me when I pulled the puppy eyes on him.

"No… But I want to be!"

We turned sharply when a laugh came from over our shoulder. Charles stood there. He had bags under his eyes from lack of sleep, and his uniform – clearly the same one from last night – was creased and shabby. Blaise and Theo narrowed their eyes at him in glares, and our brother offered an
apologetic smile in response.

"Sorry about last night. It was a stupid and entirely-"

"-entirely Gryffindor thing to do?"

"Exactly!" Charles took a moment to realise what he had just agreed to. "No wait! I meant thoughtless. I may not exactly trust you guys, being the enemies of my House, but… but I should have trusted Percy and Harry when they said you didn't know. And I shouldn't have investigated the way we did. Sorry."

Charles looked down at his feet, and we half smiled. "Well, I'd say Hermione's current state is warning and punishment enough for what happens when you ignore us. Next time, believe us when we tell you that it is genuinely a dangerous potion you're making. We don't say things just to be annoying. We were genuinely worried for you."

An hour later saw us on the platform at Hogsmead. Annabeth and Luna had already said goodbye, promising to stay over on Christmas Eve until Boxing Day – at least – provided Professor Flitwick allowed them. We, of course, had no doubt that the tiny charms professor would let them come over. He was a good friend of our family, and was (no doubt) invited for dinner as well.

Charles, too, had said goodbye in the Great Hall, giving us a letter for Mum and Dad, along with their presents and cards. He claimed that while he could have owled them to them, it was tradition they sat under the tree, and so made us promise to place them in prime position there. We of course agreed, making him promise in return to watch over Luna and Annabeth. All of their friends were returning home, and they were so far from camp so we worried over them. Charles agreed immediately. While he had originally thought they were a little strange, he had been eager enough to get to know one of our 'non-slimy-snake friends'. We had glared, but let it slip, just this once.

The train ride was long (as usual) but we passed the time by playing Irish Snap on the little table in our compartment. Blaise and Theo had been eager to learn the muggle card game, and although Draco had first turned his nose up at the bordering on violent card game, he too got right into it.

"Seven!"

"Eight!"

"Nine!"

Our hands all suddenly slammed down forcefully on the pile as Blaise's "nine" had been accompanied by the nine of spades. Groans split the air a moment later.

"Draco! We told you to take your ring off!"

"Ow! Whose nails were those?"

Draco pouted, but did actually take of his ring (which was – of course – proof that he was the Malfoy heir rather than a girly fashion statement) and Theo blushed slightly, looking down at his immaculate nails.

"Sorry guys…"

We stared at each other for a moment, then burst into laughter. We pushed the cards to Blaise, whose hand had ended up on the top of the pile, and began again in earnest. The outcome of the game was
that we were out first – having played the game the most and thus having the most experience with it – Draco a close second – Malfoy's never lose, of course – then Blaise leaving a forlorn Theo with the full deck of cards.

The Platform was as busy as ever when we arrived, full of happy family members and excited students and a younger siblings. After being unable to spot James and Lily, we followed Draco over to where his parents were, to wait out the worst of the crowd. Mrs Malfoy – Narcissa – was polite and kind as always, offering us a hug and asking about term and all our adventures. Lucius, however, was much more distant than we were used to. He greeted us with a customary handshake, then started quizzing Draco on what had been going on at school with the Chamber of Secrets and all, shooting us discrete (though not discrete enough for our sharp eyes) wary looks all the while.

Eventually, after scanning the slowly emptying platform again, we noticed Lily and James, looking torn as they debated coming over. We said goodbye to Draco, promising to write, and wished his parents a good Yuletide before heading over to our parents.

"Hey mum, dad." We grinned, hugging them both in turn. Lily beamed at us, and James ruffled our hair playfully, much to our chagrin.

"Ready to head off kiddo?"

"Yep!"

Much to my surprise, Harry and I found ourselves chatting animatedly to our parents as we walked off the station with them, telling them about all the little details that went on in school that we hadn't been important enough to add to our biweekly letters, but still needed to be expressed.

"Mum…” We suddenly remembered about Leo. "You know we told you about our friend at camp – Leo?"

Mum nodded, a small smile on her face, as if she could already guess where this was going.

"Well, since we haven't seen him – physically not at least – for four months, we were wondering if we might be allowed to invite him round for Christmas, since Annabeth will be here too." We asked, pleading at her with our eyes. Lily grinned.

"Of course, darlings. It will be nice to finally meet you friends from Camp."

"As a word of warning, he is a few years younger than us – he's ten. But please don't… don't coddle him too much. He's lived on the streets for about two years before we met him, and –"

Lily cut us off. "Of course. He's a demigod right? I'll make sure not to be too motherly."

"Thanks mum!"

As soon as we were home, had disabled the various pranks that James and Sirius had left round the house for us to walk into, and had unpacked our truck (Lily's orders), we fashioned a rainbow in the bathroom using water from the sink and called Leo.

I froze when we spotted Leo in the shower – clearly his cabin had been sparring after their dinner – and quickly shut our eyes as some of his brothers moved around in the background.

"Um… Leo? Could you call us back when you're clothed? We didn't mean to… We didn't realise
Leo burst into laughter, drawing the attention of all his cabin mates.

"Why so shy Perce? You go to boarding school for Olympia's sake!" Beckendorf called to us.

I blushed. "That doesn't mean we get changed in front of each other! Geeze, who do you take us for?!

"Ah yes." Beckendorf chuckled evilly. "You're in the rich 'proper' people's house aren't you? Can't have any of that scandalous stuff going on in the dorms can we? I mean. Getting changed. In front of each other!"

I opened our eyes to glare at him. "Don't be mean!"

Leo had (thank Olympus and all below it) moved out of the shower now, and both he and Beckendorf were dressed, sitting on Leo's bunk in Cabin nine. "You wanted to talk to me?"

"Yeah! It's that… well. Yuletide is here, and we're having Annabeth and Luna over. We were wondering if you'd like to come as well?"

"That sounds amazing! But… how though? England's a long way away." Leo's original grin had slipped off his face now.

We smiled. "Portkey, of course. We can send it via Hermes' mailing service, and it'll take you straight to us!"

"Sounds good." Leo smiled back, his hair starting to smoke lightly as his excitement grew. Beckendorf noticed and quickly snuffed out the flames.

"Careful Leo. You need to learn to control it, lest the whole camp finds out…"

Leo blushed, ducking his head. I'll just go ask Chiron. See you soon mate!"

We grinned, ecstatic at how well this Christmas appeared to be setting itself up to be.
We were woken up the first Monday of the Holidays by a heavy flying object landing on top of us and an exciting high pitched voice yelling our names extremely loudly in our ears. "Harry! Percy! Wake up!"

Percy moaned, trying to curl into himself away from the noise and pull our covers over his head. However, the little fiery imp on top of us wasn't having it. "Come on! You invited me over, didn't you? You honestly can't expect me not to want to see everything this small, wet country has to offer, can you?"

"Leo… We love you, but not at six in the morning…" Percy groaned. "Well… actually, Harry might, but I don't. Wake me up at some more godly time in the morning."

"Technically, the sun has risen, so Apollo has named this a more godly time in the morning, since he's up and driving his chariot." Leo pointed out, entirely far too coherent for such an hour in the holidays. Especially for him. It was like, what, one in the morning back at Camp? What is this boy on?

"Leo… What time did you get here?"

"Um… about ten yesterday afternoon which was… three o'clock here?" Leo grinned as we peered at him over the top of our covers.

"Did the house-elves give you coffee?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Leo! What have Annabeth, Luna and we talked to you about concerning drinking coffee?"

"Only drink it when I really need to stay awake." Leo grinned angelically. "Your little elves offered it, and it was too good to pass up, so… I wanted to stay up for you guys!"

"Leo!" We whined. "We are so having words with the elves about giving you coffee. Only in the mornings, and even then only if you're practically dead!"

Leo laughed, but I could no longer find the effort to be annoyed at him. Percy was right - I probably would have woken up in half an hour anyway so it was no real loss for me. Percy on the other hand… well, he's lost about another 3 hours on uninterrupted sleep, but since I could hear him softly snoring again already, I knew that it wouldn't interrupt his day to much. Me on the other hand… I now had to singlehandedly entertain a hyperactive Leo for three hours until Percy woke up and could help.

"Breakfast?" I offered with a small sigh, levering our body out of bed after shoving Leo off us. Leo grinned (again – though to be honest, I don't think he has actually stopped grinning since he woke us up).

"I thought you'd never offer!" Leo exclaimed, his eyes sparkling. I chuckled, then paused, wondering what the fastest route to the kitchen was. Of course, our little passageways through the
ceiling were definitely the fastest, but if we showed them to Leo, there was the risk of our friend attempting to navigate them himself and getting lost… No. That wouldn't do. Besides, Percy would kill me if I showed them to someone without him.

Grabbing Leo's hand, we headed out the door, ignoring the small hiss of greeting from the little snakes we had painted on our door after realising that we could talk to them last year. James and Lily had offered us a new room, after we had complained that we had run out of wall space to paint. Of course the entire wing of the manor was technically ours, as we were the only other child in the house other than Charles, but it was still James' manor, so… Anyway, long story short we had set to work decorating the doorway with as many Slytherin symbols as possibly, just to put our mark on the Manor. Let it never be said ever again that there was never a Potter in Slytherin!

Leo gave us an odd look at our faint smile. "What you thinking about now?"

"Look." We spun around, indicating our door, which was a pretty shade of emerald green, standing out starkly from white walls of the hall way. On this particular floor there were three other rooms – each with a name printed in gold lettering on the door. They were also decorated in the bright reds and golds of Gryffindor. Our names, however, were in silver, and our door was adorned with multiple silver snakes. In permanent paint, of course.

It was tradition to leave a child's room untouched after they left it. So our wing of the House was full of our ancestor's rooms. We had investigated them once, trying to imagine what kind of people they might have been before tracking down their portraits in the family gallery.

"We made our mark as the first Slytherin in the family for generations – if ever!" I announced proudly.

"I thought Percy was a Gryffindor though?" Leo looked confused. "Besides, what's so important about being a Slytherin?"

"Just prejudice." I shrugged. "The saying goes that 'there was never a witch or wizard who went bad that wasn't in Slytherin.' Complete poppycock of course, but there it is. And then Gryffindors and Slytherins are age old enemies, so it makes us different. Uncle Sirius – Charles' godfather – is from a notoriously dark family that have always been a part of Slytherin or Ravenclaw. By being sorted into Gryffindor, Sirius marked himself as different, and not one of them. He's very proud of that."

Leo opened his mouth in a silent 'oh'. We smiled at him, then gently tugged his sleeve, pulling his through the corridors down to the kitchen. We recognised a few of the elves in the kitchen as they worked to cleaned and sorted out the food so that Lily could set to work when she came down to make breakfast. Lily didn't always cook our meals, but she certainly liked to when she could.

"Young master! Harry-sir!" The elves chirped, abandoning their tasks to crowd round us. We beamed down at them.

"Tippy! Nandy!" I exclaimed, noticing the two young elves that had always taken care to make sure we were cared for during the time our parents forgot about us… I still didn't really know what to think of that. Percy, in one of his few moments of genuine intellect, was convinced it was as much our fault as theirs. Probably the reason why he had been more open than I about forgiving them.

"What can we bes doing for young master Harry, and young master Harry's friend?" Tippy asked, her eyes bright with the idea of being given a task to do. I chuckled.

"Could we have breakfast please?"
Nandy pulled her ears and looked up at me with wide apologetic eyes. "We bes sorry, young master Harry, sir, but Lady Lily said yous must be eating as a family, sirs. At seven-thirty."

"Hey! Hey!" I gently clasped her hands before Nandy could start twisting her ears in punishment as failure for being able to complete our task. "That's fine. Could we have two cups of hot cocoa then instead?"

Nandy brightened, and she and Tippy set to work heating the milk and climbing on each other's shoulders to reach the high self that Lily hid the hot chocolate powder on. Leo and I sat on the small island table in the centre of the kitchen, watching the elves work in perfect synchronisation. They was no more than eight of them altogether, so they were the perfect collaborating team after years of working together.

As we sat drinking our hot cocoa, I did request the elves not feed Leo any more caffeinated drinks, for the sake of the entire house's sanity. The elves giggled slightly at that request, mumbling something about him being a hyperactive little fire-imp when on coffee. Leo blushed at that, and I giggled too.

At seven thirty Lily ventured downstairs. We watched in amusement as it took her a few minutes of walking round us to actually notice us. She jumped half a foot in the air when Leo finally opened his mouth to say good morning. She had her wand in our faces a second later. We both swapped looks, then simultaneously put up our hands.

"Don't shot, don't shot!" We chorused.

"Oh dear Merlin Harry! Don't scare me like that!" Lily gasped, putting away her wand. She then turned to smile at Leo. "Hello. You must be Leo. I'm Lily, Harry and Percy's mother."

"Hello, Mrs Potter." Leo smiled. Lily grimaced.

"I'm not that old! Please, call me Lily."

"Yes Lily." Leo looked slightly awkward at the request, but obeyed all the same. I grinned.

"Is Dad not up yet? James is such a lazy-bones!"

Lily sighed, exasperated. "If you can get him up, be my guest to try."

Leo and I exchanged an evil look, then sprinted off to our parents' room. James was snoring lightly when we crept in. Silently, I levitated the water from the bathroom, letting it hover over the entire bed. Leo's hair was dancing with flames already at the idea of what was to come.

I let the water fall, and James jumped up with a high pitched yelp. Seconds later Leo had flames dancing around him, though he was careful not to burn him. Screaming even more now, James ran for the shower, dousing himself once more. Giggling, Leo and I high fived. Percy woke up again at that point, took a minute to assess the situation then pouted.

'Harry!' He moaned. 'You had fun without me again!'

'Stop sleeping then!' I mock moaned back at him. Percy giggled slightly at that.

"Come on Dad!" Percy called. "Breakfast!"

"You mean you soaked me, then set me on fire to tell me that?" James shot us an injured look. "Meanies! How did you summon fire anyway?"
Leo stepped forward, his hair still smoking. "Hello, sir."

"Leo, right?" James frowned. "Weren't you supposed to get here at ten last night?"

Leo looked at us, and we burst into laughter, realising what had happened. "Dad, you set it at ten o'clock, but didn't specify that to be British time. Leo arrived here at three this morning."

James offered Leo a sheepish half-smile. "Ops. Sorry."

Leo just laughed. Then Lily yelled at us to all get ourselves downstairs and we jumped, then quickly got moving. Percy and I dried the bed while James quickly changed before we all but sprinted downstairs. Lily was a demon when she was angry.

Leo, after originally looking at us like we were mad, seemed to understand after seeing our mother's disapproving stare when we entered the kitchen. He hid half-behind us, but we could hardly blame him.

"About time you got up!" Lily rebuked James before swinging round on us. "And if our bed is wet..."

"It's dry! It's dry!" I yelped, ducking the wooden spoon she pointed in our direction. "We weren't going to make that mistake again. We cleaned up, promise!"

"Hump." Lily returned to the happy morning mood she had been in earlier when she had first entered the kitchen. "Well, pancakes are by the stove. Help yourselves boys! And guests first!"

"Yes Lily!" James and we saluted Lily, courteously bowing and gesturing Leo first, who pompously stuck his nose in the air, to go and collect his breakfast. We all broke out laughing a few seconds later, and Lily shook her head in amusement at our antics. Now all we were missing was a hyperactive Charles celebrating the start of the holidays!

We sobered at the thought of Charles staying at school. We may not always get along, but we did miss our brother when he wasn't with us. Percy sent me an image of Charles running round Hogwarts, throwing paint balls or confetti into the air as he did last Christmas at home, with an exasperated Professor McGonagall chasing after him and I burst into laughter.

"Hey dad, we don't suppose Charles requested any paintballs or confetti from you in any of his recent letters, did he?" We asked, grinning as James' face turned from confused, to understanding, to full out beaming.

"No, but he did request a pack of fireworks and a large box of Christmas banners!"

Lily groaned at the thought of receiving another letter home from her son's head of house, while James and we cracked up, Leo looking between us in confusion. We shared the story, and soon Leo had the mischievous smile that we had come to associate with a trouble-making invention building in his mind on his face. We had a strange mix of positive anticipation and dread at that look.

Leo flashed us an 'I'll-tell-you-later' look and we nodded in understanding. Looked like we'd have a long day ahead if we were to keep up with Leo, who was still slightly high on caffeine.

Sure enough, the remainder of the day was spent persuading James to transfigure the objects of one of the basement rooms into a workshop for Leo (which took a lot of reassurances that Leo was in fact a son of Hephaestus) and then helping Leo sketch out his ideas (adding a few of our own) and recruiting James (and Sirius when he arrived later that afternoon) in order to spell the creation as Leo worked on it to give it magical properties as well, if the machine was to work in a school saturated
with magic. After all, the strong electromagnetic fields that our magic creates practically fry any electrical devices around them, unless those devices were specifically charmed (while made) to counteract the effects of the fields. Or at least that's what Beckendorf told us last time we attempted to go find Leo in their workshop last summer.

Anyway, then end result was this really quite cool remote controlled robot that could shoot fireworks at a set target. Percy and I didn't even have to confer to decide that if Leo let us keep it and we could keep it away from Lily long enough to smuggle it back to school then we would set Lockhart as a target. The fireworks weren't dangerous or deadly of course! The robot had a source of powder that it would heat up so it glowed different colours then be projected at a certain target, where it would hover in the air for several minutes, and colour the target (victim) such colours.

After a few minutes pleading with Leo (he didn't take long to persuade after the word 'teacher' was mentioned) and James (we had Sirius' full backing at this point) we had permission and assistance in hiding and smuggling our new toy to school come January. Lockhart wouldn't know what hit him!

That evening, after dinner, we took Leo out into the woods behind the house. The fairies and nymphs flocked to meet up with us again, and some fire-sprites came out to settle in Leo's smoking hair at one point to. We showed Leo where the weeping willows stood by a little bubbling broke in a small clearing, and where the unicorn herds came to settle in winter. The local centaur herd came galloping past at one point too, and Leo watched them a bit shocked after discovering that they were just as serious as Chiron, much unlike their more rowdy cousins the Party Ponies.

Our old friends the werewolf pack were in the woods as well. It took us a short while to persuade Leo not to draw his knife around them, and explain that they were magical creatures, not the mythological ones found in the US. Still, considering that Liekos and his pack were just as wary of Leo as he was of them, we couldn't exactly blame either of them for it.

When it fell dark Sirius and James came looking for us, and we pointed out the glowing fungi and lichen, along with the pretty winter flowers that would only ever flower at night.

"You should be careful in the woods at this time." James told us disapprovingly. "The centaur herds said a local werewolf pack have been moving through the area."

"Who, the Liekos pack? They're perfectly friendly. Most werewolf packs are actually, once you acknowledge that their species are just stupid dangerous beasts, but intelligent caring people. Surely you learnt that from Uncle Moony!" Percy said off hand. "Besides, we've known the Liekos pack since we were six. They wouldn't harm us, would they Leo?"

"They were perfectly nice people." Leo admitted.

Sirius looked dumbstruck, then burst out laughing. "True little adventurers you were back then. Always running off someplace new. You stayed away at full moons, right?"

"As if the naiads or forest nymphs, let alone the fairies or unicorns would let us near a pack of wolves on full moon. The trees wouldn't let us in either. They keep us out when the woods are unsafe." I told them.

Leo walked silently beside us, deep in though. I wondered if he remembered how the trees seemed to have bended their branches away from the paths we took though the woods, as if someone had partially broken them so that they grew in different directions. On the days when danger lurked within them the trees bended their branches back into shape, blocking everyone out, and keeping the dangers within.
James huffed, lecturing us for a few minutes more before eventually giving up, knowing from all the lectures he'd attempted to give us last year that while I might listen to a few of his points, Percy would disregard them altogether as soon as something more interesting came along. He didn't mention it to Lily either, so we manage to escape her wrath for that evening at least.

All in all, it was shaping up to be a pretty good Yuletide holiday.
Chapter 50

Harry's Point of View

The sound of dripping water echoed eerily in the large cavern, the only sound in the large dark space. Far above sunlight spilled in, casting a pool of white brightness in the gloom. But even with the dim lighting the snake impressions on the carved walls were impossible to miss. The Chamber of Secrets was unmistakeable. Merlin only knows I'd been in there enough times to recognise it.

The sound of footsteps broke the sound of the steady beat of dripping water, startling me. As I glanced around for the source of the noise, I became overwhelmingly aware that Percy wasn't sharing this dream with me. That meant either he was in a different dream entirely, or he was awake with Leo. Again.

The shock of red hair stood out like a torch in the dark colours of the chamber. Its owner was young, and – judging from the length of their hair – female. Don't get me wrong, I understand that boys wearing their hair long was coming into fashion again (Draco kept me up to date with these things) but there was an unmistakable difference between girls and boys hair. Don't ask me to explain it, there just it.

Her hair fell over her face, hiding it in a mixture of shadows and red cascading hair. Her voice was low and deep, almost masculine and completely unrecognisable (if we even knew her) as she hissed her commands to Alyssa.

$Speak to Salazar, greatest of the Hogwarts four!$ 

I winced as the noise of stone grating against stone filled my ears, making my head ring. Gods of Olympus that sound set my teeth on edge. I watched in a horrified fascination as Alyssa was forced to answer the call, slithering gracefully from her den, and hissing threateningly. It was reassuring to know she hadn't given up quite yet.

$Thrice already I have ordered you to cleanse the castle of the mudbloods! Do not fail me again, Basilisk, or there will be consequences.$ The red-headed girl hissed, her voice cold and threatening.

$Failed? I have removed them from lessons. It is your Mediwitch that keeps them here. Perhaps bring up the topic with her?$ Alyssa hissed under her breath. The girl snarled, sending a crimson red spell at the Queen of Serpents. Her thick skin certainly protected Alyssa from the worst of the curse, but her pained hiss was enough to make me want to strangle the red-head.

$You will respect me! And you will obey me.$ The girl warned. $So. Off you go now.$

Alyssa hissed miserably, swinging her yellow gaze on me, pain and regret in the familiar deadly orbs. Then she slithered off, waving her tail angrily and crushing a snake statue in the process. Taking off at a run, I followed her, grabbing on to Alyssa's tail to hitch a ride up the pipes. Alyssa was letting out a stream of curses about the red head. I couldn't help but fully agree with her.

When we exited the pipes I recognised the familiar hallway outside the library. I shifted uneasily, knowing how busy this hallway got. If Alyssa wasn't careful…
Suddenly a familiar voice made my blood run cold. I tried to grab Alyssa, to pull her back, pull her away, but I wasn't really there. She may be able to feel my presence, but my friend was deaf to my shouts, and my hands, which had been able to grab hold of her earlier to tag a ride, slipped through her body.

The voice got louder, talking to somebody else – presumably an older year judging from the slightly deeper voice that replied. I didn't hear the words, just the familiar tones of the voice I knew so well.

A shiny bronze dagger appeared from around a corner, and two pairs of eyes – one grey and one blue – reflected in the shiny surface. I screamed as the dagger and the hand holding it fell to the floor, followed by her body. I rushed to her side, going to sweep away Luna and Annabeth's long blonde hair before remembering that I couldn't, and so merely stroked it instead. Beside Annabeth and Luna, another Ravenclaw – Penelope Clearwater I think it was – was on the floor too. Two more paralysed. Two more to the growing number of victims. First there had been Mrs Norris, then a couple of weeks later a first year Gryffindor – Colin Creevey – had been found, his hands still clasping his camera to his face. That had been back in November though, and the teachers and students had grown complacent in the lack of attacks.

I suddenly felt the living world tugging at my spirit, pulling me away from Annabeth and Luna. I fought it as hard as possible, but as was the case with these things, the faster I fought, the faster I woke.

Leo was peering at us worriedly when I opened our eyes. He breathed a sigh of relief as I gained consciousness.

"Thank the Olympians! Are you ok Harry? You were thrashing something horrible."

Suddenly the reality of what I had just seen flooded over me and I grabbed Leo into a hug, tears bubbling up in our eyes. Leo reflexively brought his hands up around me, letting out a small comforting noise as my tears soaked into his night-shirt.

Percy woke up slowly, his thoughts muggy and still coloured with the bright colours of sleep. After a few minutes he woke enough to start receiving my emotions and immediately started to question me.

'Harry! What's wrong? And don't tell me nothing. You're crying and I can feel your emotions.'

'I wouldn't do that.' I whispered back. 'I do know when I can actually get away with lying, you know?'

I sent Percy the memory of my dream, and tried to voice its contents to Leo. By the end, Percy was fuming, ready to declare war on the girl that forced Alyssa to attack the students of the school. It wasn't that we didn't care before, it was that now it was more personal. Tracking her down had become a serious priority now.

"You... you never told me there was a basilisk threatening the students at Hogwarts." Leo said, his voice shaky and his eyes glinting with anger. "But worse, you let Annabeth and Luna stay in a school with a basilisk over the holidays when you could have taken her home."

We sighed regretfully, and rubbed our eyes. "It's no excuse, but there had been no attacks in over a month. We had though they had stopped. And Annabeth and Luna... we thought they were going to camp. The holidays just never came up in conversation until it was too late to put their names on the list of students leaving school for the duration of Yuletide."

Leo simply glared at us.
"And Alyssa isn't attacking the students! She is deliberately making sure not to make direct eye contact with any of the students! Hence why Annabeth and Luna are simply petrified – while it may not be pleasant it's definitely a step up from dead!"

Suddenly a new wave of tears threatened to break, but we tried our best to push them back. But that didn't mean Leo couldn't see them. Guilt crossed Leo's face, and he sighed.

"Sorry. I know that it's ridiculous to blame you but…"

"But she's hurt and we sort of knew what was going on." Percy finished. Leo nodded. We pulled him in for a hug.

We sighed. "We should tell Chiron. Maybe he could tell us what to do."

"Apart from finding that daughter of a Fury that set the basilisk – Alyssa did you call her? – on the school?" Leo remarked dryly.

Leo and Percy and I all burst out laughing, somehow finding hilarity in the situation. I mean, what else was there to do? Clearly the teachers weren't doing anything to help the matter. Oh yes we had curfews and escorts, encouraged to move round in pairs or groups. But what good was that against an unknown non-human threat?

Having no solid evidence of the attack on Annabeth and Luna and the other Ravenclaw Leo and we had to wait impatiently for the news to arrive by owl. James and Lily had noticed our quiet moods, and so shot us slightly suspicious looks. Our parents knew about demigod dreams, but they were unwilling to put too much stock in them really. But they understood when one of them came true.

The letter had arrived two days after I'd had my dream, when we had been eating breakfast. It was the twenty-fourth of December, Christmas Eve.

_Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry_

_Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore_

_(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chief Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)_

_Dear parents,_

_Due to an issue with the wards at Hogwarts, we are sorry to say that we must send all the students that remained here during the holiday home whilst we remedy the situation for their own safety. They shall be arriving at King's Cross station (on platform 9¾) at ten am on Wednesday 24th December._

_Unfortunately, the previously unknown gap in our wards has resulted in the attack of two of our students, who have been petrified._

_May we assure you that the problem shall be rectified, and the school should be perfectly safe for students to return in the New Year._

_We apologise for any inconvenience,_

_Professor McGonagall,_

_Deputy Headmistress_
Lily's voice was coloured with disbelief as she read out the note. "Harry, Percy dear, did you know anything about this?"

We sighed. "Harry dreamt of Annabeth and Luna and other girl being attacked two nights back."

"Did you see what by?" James' voice was unusually serious as he snapped straight into Auror mode.

I shook my head immediately without hesitation. I wasn't about to rat out Alyssa. They could kill her! "No, whatever it was had been around the corner. Annabeth was using her dagger to look round corners for whatever reason. I think whatever petrified them was reflected off it."

James nodded for a moment, then froze. "Her dagger... in school?"

"Force of habit." Leo winced. "We are almost constantly under attack from monsters in America after all."

James grunted, unwilling to look too understanding when Lily had her disapproving face on. He stood up, mumbling something about collecting Charles up from the station. Lily handed him another letter, this one from the Mr and Mrs Weasley, requesting (if it wasn't too much hassle) to look after her boys and Ginny as they were currently in Egypt with their eldest son Bill. James nodded, and set off again.

"Nandy! Tippy!" Lily called, the two elves appearing with a crack. "Could you two dears set up four guest rooms? Percy, Fred and George, Ron and Ginny are staying for a while. The twins of course will want to share a room."

"Mum!" We butted in. "Fred and George are more than just 'the twins'. Couldn't Nandy and Tippy set up two rooms, then they can decide if they wish to share or not? Us twins are more than just one single entity."

Leo sniggered. "Well, in the case of you…"

"Sh! We're making a point here! Harry and I are one, and we know that. But we wouldn't like to share a room with Charles, just because we're twins and so it is obviously expected of us." Percy pouted.

Lily nodded. "True. Could you…"

"Tippy and Nandy will set straight to it, Lady Potter ma'am!" The elves chorused, disappearing with their normal crack.

"Right, are you two finished? I suggest you go find somewhere slightly out the way for a little bit while. The boys and Ginny will no doubt be here in a couple of hours, and there will no doubt be a fair amount of mayhem when they arrive, so maybe, just till lunch —"

"Could we stay out the way?" We nodded, glancing at Leo. "What do you say about sparring in the gym?"

Leo agreed, and before Lily could protest we were sprinting down the hallway to the gym with Leo close at our heels. We spent maybe ten minutes choosing weapons, Leo marvelling at the quality of some of our Goblin-made blades and commenting on the small flaws that various other ones had.

Eventually he chose a long steel dagger, which (due to his young age) looked more like a sword in proportion to his body. We picked up the silver sword we had attempted to use against the Minotaur last year and Percy set into his ready stance. I moved back to give him full control, and watched in
delight as Percy and Leo warmed up, before starting to full out spar. There was something beautiful about sparring with swords, with the way our muscles shifted and flexed as we slashed, ducked, turned and rolled in some complex dance of skill. Leo held up well against us, clearly having spent a good deal of time over the autumn term practicing with his cabin mates. Of course, we did have several years more experience however, and so beat him in all of our matches. Leo didn't look put out however, and kept on coming back again and again with more determination, and our matches became closer as the hours dragged by.

Eventually, as Percy disarmed Leo and held our sword to his throat, we heard multiple people clapping, and spun around, our breathing laboured to see Charles, Ron, Fred and George watching us, with James a few meters behind.

"Damn, Percy and Harry." Fred whistled.

"Remind us not to get on your bad side!" George finished, grinning.

We let out a shaky laugh, replacing our sword on the wall. Leo did the same, his breathing just as heavy.

"So, who's you're little friend?" Ron asked, earning him a glare from Leo.

Leo turned his puppy-dog eyes on us. "I'm not little, am I?"

We squirmed. "Not for your age, no, but compared to Ron…"

Leo pouted, crossing his arms in a mock huff. "You're all mean!"

"Oi Potter! I've warned you before about being mean to my brother, haven't I?"

I turned in surprise at the familiar voice, spotting Beckendorf watching us all with amusement from within his rainbow iris-message. Leo grinned as he ran up to his brother, describing his stay so far with us in England animatedly.

Fred and George circled the iris-messaged with curiosity before turning to us to ask us questions on it.

"What is it?"

"Nobody has ever invented a spell to communicate through rainbows before have they?!"

"Slow down!" I held out our hands as if to ward off the excess of questions. "It's actually an ancient spell, used back in the time of the Ancient Greeks. One of our friends – a centaur called Chiron who we met in the woods at Camp last summer – is related to the original Chiron, told us about it. We use it to keep in contact with our magical friends we met at Camp, since America is a long way to send an owl."

The twins huffed at us, but let us off for now.

"We came to see if you two wanted to play some Quidditch – three a side." Charles told us, glancing warily at Leo. "That's if Leo can fly."

"Of course he can!" I grinned. "There is magic in is heritage, after all."

Well… it was true. The Hecate children back at camp were always recruiting (occasionally through blackmail if needs be) to play their shortened form of Quidditch back at camp, and demigod powers
could be considered magic really.

"Hey Leo!" I called. "You up for Quidditch?"

Beckendorf groaned. "You willingly play that game? No, I don't think it should be even called a game, its torture!"

I smirked as Percy fully agreed with the son of Hephaestus. "Come now, it's not that bad! Besides, you've never played it properly, with bludgers."

Beckendorf turned pale white. Ops, maybe he had. We laughed, assuring him it wasn't that bad before we cancelled his message and pulled Leo down to the field.

"So." Fred grinned. "Each team gets one chaser, one seeker and one keeper. Chasers also get beaters to protect themselves from bludgers. Yes?"

We nodded. The twins whispered quickly for a minute, then Fred joined Leo and us, and George joined Charles and Ron.

Fred offered to be our chaser, if Leo thought he could cope being a keeper. Leo grinned. He had learnt that while he was rather bad at catching the Quaffle while flying he was very fast still, and brilliant at getting it by it.

Percy grimaced as he slipped to the back of our mind, and slipped into the weird trance thing he did when I flew. I flashed him a comforting feeling before kicking off into the air, watching Leo follow. To little surprise, Charles was the other seeker, Ron the opposing Keeper, and George the chaser-come-beater.

When we were all in position James, who had followed us down from the gym, transfigured us some goal hoops before releasing the balls, first letting the snitch go, then the bludgers, and finally tossing up the Quaffle to Fred and George, who both rushed in to catch it. There was a small squabble, much to my amusement, but George ended up in possession, and we were all off.

I watched the game with one eye as I also scanned the pitch for the glint of gold that was the snitch. George, unprepared for the might that was Leo, didn't even feign as he aimed to score. Leo quickly hit the ball aside, and Fred gained possession of it, easily dodging his shocked brother as he aimed to score. Unfortunately, Ron wasn't as shocked, and blocked the goal.

The game continued in a similar fashion for a while longer, our chasers and keepers being fairly evenly matched. Ron was a better Keeper than Leo, but then Fred had a better aim then George… So, in the end, it came down to a match between Charles and me, each desperately scanning for the pitch. Finally, almost an hour later, I finally spotted the tell-tale glint of gold that gave away the position of the snitch.

It was halfway between Charles and me. We spent a moment circling, wondering if the other had spotted it too before full out speeding for the little gold ball that would end the game and announce one the winner. I flattened myself to the broom, deciding to speed vertically towards the snitch below, while Charles headed straight for it. In the end I only just managed to steal the snitch away from his outstretched fingers before having to pull up sharply and safely decelerate in order to land.

Grinning, I shook hands with Charles. "Nice game!"

Charles grinned, not at all put off by his close loose. "Next time, in an actual House match, then I will beat you!"
James called us in to lunch, briefly pulling Percy and me aside to warn us against pulling off more daring stunts such as the one we had pulled whilst in a few miles of Lily, just to be on the safe side. We got off with it this time, but there would be no telling next time.

Chapter End Notes

Hey! I'm back (finally). Hopefully chapters should start coming fast now because I'm not back to school till September now :D
Anyway, enjoy! :)
Chapter 51

Ok, I am really really sorry for being this late. I've had the chapter written, I just haven't gotten round to putting it up for like, half a month. So I am truly honestly sorry for that. Also - sorry about the length of this chapter. It really didn't want to be written so ended up rather short. But the next chapter's will get longer, I promise! Finally, if I don't update for a while after this, it's not just me being idle, I'm going on holiday to Greece for three weeks then come back to go straight into six form, so I'm going to be a little busy for a while until I can get a routine sorted out. Anyway, I hope you enjoy :D

Chapter 51

Harry's Point of View

The evening passed in a series of mugs of hot chocolate, tales of school (both present from us younglings and past from James and Sirius – who had joined us shortly after lunch) and games. Wizarding chess had been a brilliant hit until Ron beat everyone. Then we moved onto monopoly – a muggle board game Lily enjoyed, which went on for several hours, leaving Fred and George (who had paired up as a team) as the winners after bankrupting all of us.

Leo and we were drowsy as we tumbled into bed at nearing midnight, but happily so, and more than willing to yield to the siren call of sleep.

Then next morning I was woken by both Leo and Charles jumping on our bed, with a sleepy but amused Ron watching on. Ginny stood awkwardly in the doorway, taking in the painted walls of our room with interest. Everyone was (in typical Christmas tradition) still in their pajamas and sporting ruffled bed-hair.

Percy groaned as Leo threw the glass of water that we kept on our bedside table over us, providing us with a shot of energy. I didn't even bother fighting Percy as he grabbed control, grabbing both Leo and Charles' wrists and pulling them out of the room with him, running up to Lily and James' room to wake them up. I was excited, yes. But not quite that much.

Breakfast was a rowdy affair, with ten of us all wrestling for food. Lily put her foot down when food actually began being thrown at each other ("Sirius started it!") and put an end to it before any real mess could be made ("If you make a mess you can skip present opening to clear it up – without magic, mind!"). Yep. Lily was a pro at threat making.

Present giving wasn't delayed for any of us, however, and soon brightly wrapped parcels were flying thickly through the air. We received (between all our school friends) almost a new wardrobe of robes, a phone that could run on magic from Leo (and the rest of the Hephaestus cabin), "A guide to Archery for Dummies" courtesy of the Apollo Cabin, a lock-picking set from the Hermes cabin, a book on advanced potions from our godfather, and a broom-care kit from Charles. Lily and James gave us a fifty galleon gift-voucher for Flourish and Blots (correctly guessing we'd prefer to choose our own books) as well as a series of smaller presents such as new potion ingredients, a leather bracelet with five silver enchanted charms for protection, and a set of paints and brushes for our work.
on our room.

In return, we sent several gifts back to camp – sketches of plans copied from textbooks that the inventor never managed to complete for the Hephaestus cabin, or a warded chest filled to the brim with wizarding sweets for the Hermes cabin, and acromantula silk (the strongest material on earth) to the Apollo cabin to create bow strings out of. We had swapped for the silk with Hagrid, offering him an orphaned fae egg we’d found in the forest in return. Leo received a kit of bolts, screws, paperclips, rubber bands, tools and scrap metal along with a tonne more random objects to tinker away with. Severus was given a celestial bronze cauldron, forged by us (with Leo's help, supervised by Beckendorf over Iris Message), to experiment with the metal's effect on his potions. For Charles we had managed to purchase an all season ticket for the Chudley Cannon's matches in this year's League. James received a season ticket too, as Charles was only twelve still. Lily we gave a new recipe book we’d seen her admiring in Diagon Alley in the summer.

The rest of the day passed swiftly, without note really. Christmas dinner was a very quiet affair, with many of the Weasley's giving Severus strange looks as he sat and ate his meal next to us. Surprisingly no pranks were pulled, and we fell into bed feeling rather happy.

It was a couple of days when we found ourselves unable to sleep, and so had decided to walk around the corridors that we found a black leather bound book, lying innocently on a window seat. Percy picked it up, noting the faded gold lettering on the back reading "Tom Marvolo Riddle" before flipping through it. But the pages were blank. It rang a bell in our memory, and Percy pulled up the image of Lucius Malfoy slipping a battered black book not unlike this one into Ginny Weasley's cauldron last summer. Presumably they were in fact the one and same.

We took it to the library, picking up the bottle of ink and quill we had discarded earlier when doing our homework after lunch, and dipped the quill in the ink, hovering it over the page as we wondered whether or not it was a good idea to write in this book. A drop of ink splashed down onto the page, then disappeared, the ink apparently being absorbed into the page, but not travelling through onto the other side.

Ginny? Is that you? I'm sorry about what I said earlier.

Percy and I stared in amazement at the words that appeared in the book, written in a pretty curly hand. Percy's dyslexia didn't much like the curly style of the writing, so I read it to him.

Not Ginny, w I'm afraid. I wrote crossing out the 'w' before I could write we. Percy sniggered at my mistake, but didn't comment.

Who are you then? The diary wrote back.

Harry. I replied honestly.


No. I told you, I'm Harry. Just Harry. One soul can't be more than one person, can they? Even if I was, why would you care? If you ask me, you seem more than a little stalkerish. Maybe I should burn you…

That would not be a good idea, little Harry. My diary isn't flammable.

Your diary, huh? Does that mean you are Tom Marvolo Riddle, the boy whose name is on the back? The diary didn't reply for a while. Yes and no. I am his memory, preserved in a diary for fifty years.
Please could you give me back to Ginny? I owe her an apology. Besides, it isn't nice to steal other people's belongings.

She left you lying on a window seat. Picking you up is hardly stealing. I scoffed, and Percy sniggered again. You must have been a Gryffindor, with such high morals over stealing.

"Gryffindor! Gryffindor!" If one could stutter in words, Tom Riddle did so now. I'll have you know I am a Slytherin, born and breed! One could say it was even in my blood...

"Harry! Harry! Harry!" Percy grinned. "He's got to be the heir of Slytherin! He said it was in his blood!"

"Like being Slytherin is in Draco's perhaps. Every Malfoy since the dawn of their house was a Slytherin – with the few Ravenclaw exceptions – so he could have been a bastard of some ancient line. Or similar to Snape – if he mother defected from her family rules and fell in love with a muggle."

"Besides, if he is, as he said, a memory preserved in a diary, then how would he be terrorising the school? It just doesn't add up!"

"He could be possessing someone, like Voldemort with Qui rel last year." Percy pointed out.

I shook our head. "But he's a memory. Thus he can't have a soul to possess someone with."

"Still there Harry?"

No. I retorted sarcastically. "I've gone to Spain."

"Touchy." Tom wrote in his fancy writing. Percy and I burst out laughing.

Writing sarcasm doesn't have the same effect. Especially when it's all to do with how you put stress on the word. Anyway. I'm now pondering whether physically ripping apart your bindings would work.

Absolutely not! Must you insult me so? Just give me back to Ginny. At least she's polite!

At least? Got other problems with our dear Ginny, do you?

"That is none of your business, even if I did, which I don't. Now, please. I'm asking politely now. Give me back to Ginny!"

"Fine. We sighed. In the morning. She'll find you right where she left you. How's that, your lordship?"

"Perfect actually."

"Smug git!" Percy huffed. "Leave it be, Harry, I'm getting tired."

"Same here, actually. Draco and Blaise are coming over tomorrow, and Draco said Blaise is bringing that awful cat of his. Felix indeed!"

Percy groaned. "I hate that beast. Can't we get rid of it?"

"No!" I exclaimed. "Percy, that's rude, besides, Blaise is besotted with the creature. And he's our friend. If Blaise wants a cat, and we still want to hang around him, then sod the cat, I for one value friendship better."

"Hump!" Percy yawned, ruining his moody pout. "Bed?"
'Bed.' I agreed, forcing our tired limbs into action and dragging us to our room and into bed.

Tomorrow we would worry about cats named Felix and diaries named Tom Riddle. For now, sleep was needed. A long, restful sleep…
Chapter 52

The next morning dawned far too bright and early for my liking. Squinting, I noticed that Lily was drawing open our curtains. Huh. No wonder it was so bright. I paused to watching the dust float and spin around in the golden light for a moment before Harry turned our gaze back to Lily.

"What's with the light? Go away." He mumbled, his words slightly slurred by the covers over our mouth. Leo groaned in agreement, burrowing deeper under his covers.

"Blaise, Theo and Draco are here already – or would you prefer I asked them to come back another day? I'm sure they'll be very understanding that my lazy sons can't be bothered to get out of bed before noon."

We heard sniggering at the door, then a ball of ginger fluff landed heavily on our stomach. We gasped, winded as Harry cast our eyes down on the smug ball of fluffy doom that was called Felix. The cat had grown the start of a fluffy main round its head. It gave it the look of a lion, though (as Harry reminded me) male kneazels grew mains as well. I groaned and pushed the large kitten off us.

"Thanks for the sympathy guys." We huffed, mock pouting at the trio standing in the doorway smirking at us.

Glancing at our alarm clock Harry jumped out of bed. When did it reach twelve o'clock already? And – more to the point – how on earth did Leo manage to sleep this long as well?

We froze for a minute, remembering Riddle's diary and our conversation with it last night. Hm. Tom Riddle… That name sounded familiar I realised, now that the heavy restlessness wasn't hanging over our head. But where from? He couldn't have been a particularly famous wizard, we'd definitely remember if he'd made the history books. He couldn't be ancient either. While the soft black leather of his diary had been faded and old, it was still intact and not held together by the usual spells used to preserve old books. Maybe an author of a book we'd read recently? No…

Draco punched our arm lightly. We started and gave him a hurt look.

"What was that for?"

"You were lost in thought. What's on your mind?"

"Tom Riddle." Harry told him. "His name is stuck in our mind and for the life of us we can't remember where the Hades we've heard of it before."

"Tom Riddle… He was head boy when Father was in school. Got a special award for something or
another I think, though I can't remember what now." Draco mused.

Blaise and Theo just sighed. "Now you've sorted that out, I swear we were promised a Quidditch match with some red-haired fiends?"

"I call Keeper again." Leo's sleepy voice rang out from his place of the floor. Our three Slytherin friends turned to look at him in surprise, taking in our young friend's youthful face, curly brown hair and tanned skin. I bit back a laugh when I noticed the smoke starting to rise from his hair when as Leo shifted uneasily under the weight of the stares.

"What? Is it my pyjamas? Because personally I rather like Doctor Who, and there is nothing wrong with having a perfectly normal obsession with a TV show." Leo joked weakly, indicating his TARDIS patterned sleepwear.

Draco sneered. "TV show?"

Leo gaped at him, then shook his head. "Man, you guys haven't lived if you haven't watched TV. Harry, Percy, I call for a marathon evening of as many good series you have."

We nodded, and Lily chuckled.

"Right after you fix whatever you did to our TV last time I let you near it."

"What?" Leo pouted. "I was just improving it slightly, and hacking the TV signals to allow you to watch live TV. It's hardly broken."

We laughed, and quickly hustled Lily out the room so we could get changed. Uncaring of our three Slytherin friends and Leo (all of whom we had gotten changed around numerous times) Harry quickly stripped off our pyjamas and threw on some warm clothing appropriate for a Quidditch match.

Moving downstairs, Charles, Ron, Fred, George and (to our surprise) Ginny stood waiting for us in the hallway. All were clutching onto their brooms, watching us run down the stairs impatiently. Ginny kept shooting glares at the twins, which soon answered our question as to why she was suddenly being so social today. We'd half expected to have to keep swapping our team mates round while playing in teams of four.

James and Sirius were waiting for us at the pitch with both Leo and our brooms while Draco, Theo and Blaise got them to unshrink theirs.

The day moved smoothly. We won some games and lost some, which (if we were honest) was probably a good thing, as it kept spirits competitive, but not resigned or angry. It also meant that no house could claim to be better than the other over Quidditch for the day, which probably saved us from having to break up several duels or fist fights.

Ginny was silent but determined all day. We attempted to talk to her once dinner had finished and Draco, Theo and Blaise (along with the creature from hell that was called Felix) had gone home.

"So Ginny, did you enjoy the matches today?" Harry asked, smiling at her.

She sneered at us. "I'm sorry, was I supposed to?"

"Well, enjoyment was the main aim of them, yeah." I retorted, slightly snappishly, more than a little hurt that she couldn't care to even hold a polite conversation with us.
"Whatever."

"Any plans for--"

"Just leave me alone! Can't you take a hint? I don't want to talk to some filthy freakish half-blood such as yourself! You think you're so special, because you're a twin soul, and you belong to two houses, and you go to a summer camp in America and are brother to the boy-who-lived, but none of it's true! You're just a stupid Troll-brained imbecile who can't keep his stupid nose out of other people's business!" Ginny all but snarled at us. "You had absolutely no right poking around in my stuff!"

Confused and more than a little angry now, it took us (well, me at least) a little while to realise that she was talking about Tom Riddle's diary.

"Poking around in your stuff?" I took a step forward and glowered down at her. "Well forgive us if we discover a discarded old diary lying on a windowsill and are just a little bit curious about who it belongs too, or why in Hades it's blank. Or even worst, forgive us when the stupid thing writes back!"

"Well you shouldn't have touched something that isn't yours in the first place!" Ginny was clutching at straws now, her pride and anger not letting her back down, even though she knew her argument was practically in shreds.

Harry took over then. Unlike me, he was completely calm as he looked down at Ginny and shook his head in disappointment. "Aren't you forgetting something though? This isn't your home or even Gryffindor tower. This is the Potter manor, and – as Potter's ourselves – we have more than every right to look around at stuff in our own home."

Ginny opened her mouth then shut it again, running back to her room.

The remaining week of the holidays past in a blur of duelling with Charles, having sword fights or helping invent new machines with Leo, the occasional match of Quidditch and the colourful blur of New Year's parties.

The school did indeed open again for the new Spring Term, though Harry and I were more than a little sceptical that the school was actually safe. However, quandary to our scepticism, there were no more attacks, and Alyssa reported that the red headed girl had stopped visiting her since the hatchings had all been sent home just before Christmas. This information through us for a little while, but we didn’t really question it, hoping (oh-so-very naively) that whoever it had been had stopped for good.

Then, as the spring term drew to a close, we discovered someone had flooded Moaning Myrtle's toilet and thrown a book through the poor ghost. Discovering the book, it didn't take us long to recognise the faded leather and age stained pages of Riddle's Diary.

Curious as to why Ginny would have discarded the diary that she had been all too defensive about at Christmas, we picked it up a resolved to discover what Riddle had to say the matter. Needless to say, that was an infuriating conversation.

"Helo Tom." I wrote, probably misspelling numerous words. But hey, give me a break. I was mad, and I wasn't in the mood for thinking about spelling so I did my best to spell them as I would say them. It's not my fault English is just a complicated language! "Care to eggsplain why Ginny drown uo in a toilette?"
"Pardon?"

'Give it to me!' Harry laughed. 'You're writing nonsense.'

"Sorry." Harry scrawled delicately under Tom's loopy writing. "My brother is dyslexic you see. We were wondering if you'd care to explain why Ginevra Weasley tried to drown you in the girls' lavatory."

"Ah, hello again Harry. I will explain, but only if you'd care to explain what you were doing in a girls' lavatory. " Tom retorted, his writing slightly messier as if he was digging the nib of his quill into the paper, presumably in annoyance.

Harry grinned. "Certainly. We were visiting our good friend Myrtle of course. She's a ghost you see, and doesn't leave her toilet very often. We met her while investigating why some stupid Gryffindors were deciding to brew polyjuice potion there."

Tom didn't reply for a few moments, though a series of ink dots tapped onto the paper as he contemplated his next words.

"We had an argument. She thought I had spilled some of her secrets to her friend after that friend found my diary and wrote to me."

"Of course. Because Ginny generally tries to kill her friends after arguing with them."

"Moving on, care to explain your view on blood status to me? As a Slytherin I presume you are familiar with how we view it."

"Indeed. Mudbloods don't belong here with their filthy blood."

A memory suddenly hit us of a couple of dreams we had experienced in the summer.

We were sitting in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, though the ghost was no-where in sight. From one of the cubicles we could hear a girl sobbing, and the shifting of her feet on the floor. The door opened and a tall boy walked in, looking about the age of sixteen. He had fine facial features, with the same aristocratic look about him that the Malfoys had. His hair was dark and neat, much like his uniform. Clear green eyes flittered round the room curiously. They skipped over us before resting on the locked cubicle door. Shrugging, the boy turned to the sink.

$Open.$ The boy hissed in a familiar language, apparently to the sink. We gave him a strange look.

'Why is he talking to a sink?' Percy laughed nervously. This boy, whoever he was giving off scary vibes, and we didn't like that.

The cubical door creaked open an inch behind us, but we ignored it, watching in shock as the sinks slowly moved apart, the top floating off it. A large snake waited inside, its hide a sickly green and its eyes… they looked an almost sulphuric yellow, and had a freezing power. I felt positively sure that, had this not have been a dream, we would have dropped dead after looking into that gaze. We shivered.

A sickly thud echoed round the room, originating from the cubical behind us, where the crying girl had been. A triumphant smirk lit up the other boy's face, and we shivered, forcing
ourselves to look round.

We saw the pale hand first. Limp, as if she was unconscious. They we saw the rest of her, from where she had fallen out of the cubical. Her messy black hair covered her face, but I had a strange sense of certainty that she wore glasses, and her round face was patterned with freckles. Myrtle. Moaning Myrtle. The poor, poor girl...

We were at Hogwarts. While the shape of the corridors were familiar, the paintings all seemed different and there were random places were old suits of armour or statues that we didn't have dwelled. We guessed this much have been years ago.

A flicker of black caught our attention up ahead. It was a boy. We crept closer, recognising the boy from a dream we had a while ago. The Parselmouth. He entered the girls' bathroom, and crept closer to the sinks. A sudden voice pulled him to a sudden stop.

"What are you doing here? This is the girls' bathroom. You're not a girl, are you? Tom Riddle?"

The boy spun round to face the ghost of Myrtle. She smirked at the older boy.

"If you don't leave, I'll tell Dumbledore. I'm sure he'd be fascinated to know you came here. Especially since it's out of bounds to students."

The boy's green eyes lit up with a sudden fire. He glared at the ghost, and raised his wand menacingly. The ghost flinched back, holding her hand out in front of her body as if to protect herself from whatever was to come.

"You dare threaten me? You filthy little mud-blood!"

A red curse flew from Riddle's wand, and hit the ghost. She fell back with a cry and the boy smirked.

We froze for a minute, thinking about it.

'It was him wasn't it? He killed Myrtle.' Percy's voice shook with anger and an all-consuming hatred for this boy who had hurt our friend.

I nodded, taking deep breaths in an attempt to calm down. 'He must have been the false heir Alyssa talked about. I presume then he can't actually be a mere memory. His diary must be more powerful than that. But how is a spelled diary capable of possession? Unless he simply influenced her, but I don't believe that.'

Percy hummed in agreement. 'Be careful here Harry.'

"Don't you agree?" The mocking words stared up at us from the page when we stared back down.

I didn't answer, but posed another question.

"Killed any recently?"

"No. Of course I haven't recently. I'm a memory remember?"
"So you have before?" I smirked. Riddle certainly knew how to word his sentences to avoid the truth.

This time there was a long pause. "You don't like me much, do you?"

"No." I left our answer short but not-too sweet. Tom didn't reply for a long time after then. We just left it, closing the book and shoving it into our bag to think about at a later date. Hopefully – if we were lucky – this could be the end of it! Destroy the diary, and Alyssa would be free from the false heir. And the school would be truly safe again!

The fates, it would appear, weren't listening to our prayers. The following day after our little chat with Riddle we passed a duel between a pair of older students in the corridor. A Gryffindor and Slytherin obviously. A widely cast severing curse however caught the bottom of our bag before the teachers could break the pair up, and our belongings were send crashing to the floor, breaking our ink bottle.

"Hades!" I cursed. I had spent ages on our homework last night after Harry (for once) forgot about it and called an early night. 'There goes all my hard work.'

Harry chuckled slightly at our pout. 'Sprout won't kill us for an honest mistake. And Severus favours us as his godsons and members of his House. We'll redo McGonagall's at lunch. It'll be fine, Percy.'

'Still.' I muttered. 'The one time I even attempt to try to do the homework without your help – and Draco agreed I got it right as well!'

In our rush to collect up all our books and parchment after repairing our bag we missed a certain ginger first year reclaiming the leather diary we had discarded in there the night before. In fact, we probably would have taken a lot longer to find out had there not been another attack, landing a Hufflepuff – Justin Finch-Fletchley – in the Hospital wing, petrified, just the next day.

It had been the day of a Quidditch Match – Gryffindor vs Hufflepuff. Most people scoffed at the Hufflepuffs, claiming they were too weak or peace loving to play Quidditch properly, but this season my money was firmly on them. They had a new Seeker – a fifth year called Cedric Diggory – and he was both swift on his broom and had a sharp eye for the snitch. Not that we had told Charles our (Harry's) observations. After all, why would we give the Gryffindors a better chance at the Cup than they could muster on their own?

Anyway, Draco and we had been trailing the Gryffindor Quidditch team down to their changing rooms, occasionally offering the expected friendly banter of jokes and insults. Well, Harry and my remarks were friendly. Draco (obviously) had a bit more spit to his, but the team were obliging us with surprising good-will, giving back as good as they got.

Just outside the changing room door, Professors Sprout and McGonagall stood with stern and worried faces.

"I'm sorry, team, but I'm afraid the match today has been cancelled." McGonagall didn't seem at all happy with her news, not that the Gryffindors noticed. They were far too busy complaining.

"But Professor, you can't just cancel Quidditch!" Oliver Wood, captain of the Lions were complaining.

The Twins were kicking up their dual noise, declaring her news to be "Rubbish!" and "Utterly preposterous Professor!"
Professor McGonagall sighed. "I really am sorry. But there's been another attack."

"Who?"

My voice filled the weighted silence that followed our Deputy Headmistress' words. But it was Professor Sprout who replied, her normally cheerful face downcast.

"One of my Badgers. Justin Finch-Fletchley."

The Hufflepuffs started shouting all at once over that, demanding to see their Housemate. As Professor Sprout attempted to stop their shouting and calm them all down, we felt a sliver of dread fill us. Desperately, we checked our bag for the diary that we had dumped there a few nights ago.

'The severing curse!' I realised. 'Someone must have picked it up or we must have missed it when trying to gather up our books.'

'Di Immortals!' Harry cursed. 'The Fates only know where it is now!'

'School might be closed now.' I realised with a small sigh. I realised only now that I really didn't want school to close. The reading and writing might be a pain, but the social life and practical skills were actually really great fun.

'We need to solve this then.' Harry decided. 'As soon as possible.'

'And we have an idea where to start.' I declared smugly.

'Ginny Weasley!' We spoke together, with a small grin.
Chapter 53

We spent the Easter holiday's plotting. Unlike last year, our group of friends and we decided to spend the holiday at school, studying for our end of year exams rather than going home. Charles and the Weasley's all left however, so we had no chance of seeing Ginny then.

Speaking to Ginny face-to-face, we had decided, would be the best way to go for it. We would just ask her outright if she had noticed any strange gaps in her memory, or found herself doing strange things for no apparent reason. Our plan in writing looked rather easy. As ever, putting it into action seemed to take a fair amount more effort.

Tracking down a lone Gryffindor was a lot harder than it sounds. We tried the Library, the study-group classrooms, the Great Hall, outside by the lake, the astronomy tower, the kitchens, all the normal classrooms and – as a final resort – the Gryffindor common room. Of course, checking the Gryffindor common room might have been the first place someone might look for a Gryffindor, but (from our week there in November) we knew that the Gryffindor in particular we were looking for didn't actually spend much time there.

In fact, it wasn't until the second weeks into the summer term (the attack resulted in some Ministry Officials being called in in a last ditch attempt to keep the school both open and safe) that we ran into Miss Ginny Weasley, and (rather ironically) we hadn't actually been looking for her at the time. We'd been visiting Myrtle actually, and Alyssa, when Ginny had come into the bathroom.

It took us a moment to recognise Ginny. Her eyes were glazed over and trace-like, her face void of any emotion. She walked in slow but precise steps, which was odd considering she normally had a quick pace, and was easily spooked and quick to run. She held Riddle's diary in her left hand, while her right index finger and the inside of her middle finger were smudged with ink, as if she'd recently been writing.

Either ignoring or failing to notice us, Ginny strode over to the sink, hissing at it. $Open!$ A second later, Ginny had disappeared down the pipe. We turned to Myrtle, who smiled cheerily at us.

"Don't get hurt, though if you do die, you are of course welcome to share my toilet." She offered. It had become a little joke now, every time we went down to visit Alyssa.

"If Alyssa kills us, we'll be sure to take you up on that offer." I joked back, grinning at the ghost.

We jumped into the pipe right after Ginny. Echoing hisses reached us from elsewhere in the chamber as Alyssa moved around. Judging from her choice of language, Ginny had ordered her after the school's 'hatchlings' again. We scowled. Stupid Ginny for trusting the book. Stupid Tom for possessing her.

I all but stole all of our control and stormed down the familiar passages to find Ginny, uncaring of our loud, ringing footsteps that would give away our presence and position.

'Careful Percy.' Harry tried to warn me. I did try to listen to him, but anger was buzzing around in
my head like a vexed hornet, distracting me from everything but my target. 'Tom could be a very
dangerous wizard, even if he is possessing an eleven year old girl. Especially since he's possessing
an eleven year old girl.'

'I know but… He just makes me so mad!' I growled. 'How dare he use and endanger our friends?'

Harry hummed in agreement, but seemed more concentrated on a backup plan should – or when – I
messed everything up. I ignored his plotting thoughts and focused on the main chamber in front of
us. In particular, I fixed our gaze on Ginny Weasley, who was sitting in the mouth of Salazar
Slytherin's statue, watching us with alert cold eyes.

"Hello Tom." I sneered, storming towards the eleven year old girl.

Ginny raised an eyebrow at us. "Tom? My, my, my, we are getting presumptuous aren't we? For all
you know, I could still just be simple little Ginny Weasley."

"Except that your answer ruled out any chance of that. Besides, Ginny prefers slouch. Only
Slytherins sit with such rod-rammed posture all the time. And certainly no Gryffindors do." I growled
in reply.

Tom waved a hand dismissively. "Technicalities. But if we're playing the guessing game, my
immediate assumption would be that you must be Harry, except you wear Gryffindor robes. But,
from you easy dismissal of the majority of Gryffindor's posture I might assume you don't like your
house very much. So… Percy?"

I didn't bat an eyelid at his correct assumption. "Who I am isn't the issue here. The issue is however,
who in Hades you are, and why in the name of the Olympians you have decided to attack Hogwarts.
We don't take lightly to threats against our friends."

"Who am I?" Tom laughed. "Why, Potter, I would have thought that would have been obvious. I am
Slytherin's heir of course."

"Of course." I sneered. "Slytherin's heir. Is that why you had to force Alyssa to do what you want
her to?"

"Alyssa? I don't know anyone of that name." Tom looked genuinely perplexed. "You are falsely
accusing me of deeds I didn't do!"

I huffed. "Imbecile. You want the loyalty of a snake and yet aren't even so polite as to ask her for her
name. Alyssa is a Basilisk, you twat."

"Now that is not a very nice word for a second year to be using." Tom teased, but then his face –
Ginny's face – darkened. "And as for being polite to a snake. It's an animal. Why would it care about
something as simple as a name?"

"A snake is just as alive as you or we. Why shouldn't it have emotions?"

Tom waved us off. "You are annoyingly repetitive and predictable. I really don't have the time or
patience to listen to you right now. I already have to put up with Ginny's prattle. It's always 'Why
doesn't anybody like me?', or 'I think I'm going mad Tom, I'm keep blanking out!', or 'Tom, why
won't Charles even look at me as more than Ron's sister?' It's dull, repetitive and beyond annoying!"

"You emotionless son of a Fury!" I snarled. "Leave Ginny be! She didn't do anything to you!"

"Oh, shut up!" Before either Harry or I could react, he was pointing Ginny's wand at us. "Stupify!"
The world blacked out for me, but I presume Harry's back up plan worked, because when I next woke up it was the next morning, and we were in the Slytherin dorms.

'Morning sleepy-head.' Harry greeted me cheerfully, realising I was awake.

'What… what happened?' I groaned, moving our hands up to grab my aching head. I don't know why grabbing the outside of your head is supposed to help with a mental headache, but hey, it seems to work!

Harry smirked. 'I took control as soon as you dropped. Tom was stunned to see us apparently unaffected by his spell for long enough for me to bid him a not so very farewell and walk off down into the tunnels and away. Clearly he doesn't know the layout of the chamber too well, because it sounded like he got pretty lost looking for us.'

We laughed at that. But when we arrived up in the common room, the mood was strangely sombre, especially for eight o'clock in the morning. We might not all be morning people, but sad or serious wasn't normally a common emotion at this time.

Harry shot Draco a questioning look.

"Another attack." He mouthed back. Harry nodded.

'I wonder who it was this time?' I pondered, mentally making a note to visit Annabeth and Luna soon. We aimed to go once a day, but this week things kept getting in the way (homework, detention, Riddle…)

"It hasn't been said to you yet, but I'm sure you are all aware of the feeble situation that the school is in at the moment." Severus, who we hadn't noticed until now, spoke quietly. "We have been given a month, during which the Ministry has sent us Officials to locate and eradicate the source of the problem. We had been sure it was solved over Christmas, but it appears our solution was not quite what it seemed. As a result, several new rules have been put in place. You are not allowed to travel anywhere in a group smaller than your year group in Slytherin. Teachers will accompany you between lessons, and after lessons have finished you are to come straight back to your common rooms. Clubs have been closed for the time being. If you require a book out the library, please refer to the catalogue Madam Pince has created, and it shall be sent to you. It anyone is spotted alone a detention will be the least of your problems."

"But sir, what about our exams?" One of the seventh years called out. "The library doesn't have enough copies of books for all of us."

"Seventh years get priority. Any year before OWLs have the least priority, and so any books will be allocated to them only if unwanted by any older year. It's far from perfect, but it is the best we can do at the time being." Severus sighed, looking round the room before letting his eyes rest on us. "I know some of you have a passion for night walking. I strongly discourage any breaking of rules at this time. The threat is still unidentified, and therefore we have no idea how it is attacking students. Proceed with caution, for all our sakes, please."

When everyone started heading out to head up to dinner, we pulled Severus aside. "Sir, we… the Ministry, what will they do after they have identified the threat?"

"Depends what it is." Severus sighed again. "If it is a human, either expulsion or Azkaban I suppose. If it is a creature… well, I can't see any action other than slaying it being taken."

I gulped, and fixed our eyes on the ground. We didn't want that to happen to Alyssa!
"Harry, Percy." Severus tilted our chin up. "If you know anything, I implore you to speak. If we – as the teachers of Hogwarts – made no progress it is unlikely the Ministry will. And then Hogwarts will be closed."

We shook our head, thinking quickly. "We're sorry sir, we can't help with that. It's just… it seems so much more realistic, with death sentences hanging over the matter."

Severus pulled us into a hug. Neither of us were under any delusions that we were speaking the whole truth, nor that Severus believed us for a second, but we pretended for then. Severus knew we were upset about something, but also that we didn't want to talk about it.

"Harry, Percy." Severus pulled back to look at us. "I am your teacher, but don't forget I am your godfather too. If this is a demigod issue, or just something that is bothering you, as your godfather I will be here to help you."

"Any what if your duties as a godfather and a teacher clash?" I voiced my question quietly, offering our godfather a small smile. Severus shook his head, unable to answer.

"I want to say I was your godfather first, but…"

"But your duty as a teacher is important too." I shook our head. Harry pulled me back, giving me a small hug as he took over again.

"I'm sorry sir, but this is something we need to sort out ourselves this time."

Our godfather put up his mask to the world, but we saw the concern and hurt flicker in his eyes just for a moment. Harry hugged Severus. Just because we didn't need him this once, didn't mean we never needed him. For those weekend afternoons when Draco and we got to spend time brewing potions with him, or the dinner's at our house during the holidays, when we sometimes felt that he was the only one who understood why we did little things, like exclamations of 'Salazar!' or our offhand mentioning's of house politics, that (as Gryffindors) our family just didn't understand. But Severus would always manage to notice, steering the conversation away or explaining it better. Similarly, Severus could back us up when I did something definitively Gryffindor in the Slytherin common room.

Severus walked us up to breakfast, as Draco, Blaise and Theo had gone with everyone else up to the Great Hall. Out of habit we glanced towards our brother's seat on the Gryffindor table. One look at his forlorn face, and the empty seat beside Ron and he and we knew immediately who had been attacked. Granger. We frowned at this. Why we had no particular attachment to the brown-haired know-it-all girl, we had grown closer to her before Christmas when we had been working on our project. So while we didn't feel particularly sad for her, there was that tugging at something inside us, as if we should feel bad. It was… odd.

"Hermione." Harry said, sitting down besides Draco. "She was the one attacked, wasn't she?"

Draco nodded. "Apparently she had a mirror with her. Strange objects they keep finding people with. Cameras, mirrors, daggers…"

We froze. Hermione must have known that it was a basilisk that was attacking the school. And if she knew, she had no doubt had some information on them to show Ron and Charles.

"And she was found outside the library, near where Luna and the other Ravenclaw girl were found. Do you think it's a coincidence?" Blaise asked.

"No." I stood up. "Probably not."
Ignoring our friends bemused questions as to where we were going and what we had meant, we headed over to where Charles was, and sat down across from him.

"We're sorry about Hermione. We know it doesn't help any, but we're still sorry."

Charles nodded. "We were going to visit her at lunch time, McGonagall said she'd take us. Do you… do you want to join us? You could visit Annabeth and Luna too."

We smiled. "That would be nice, thanks."

We sat in an almost awkward silence for a little while, before starting up a conversation on Quidditch, if just to distract each other from our thoughts. Ron joined in with his unwavering faith that the Cuddley Cannons would win this year. I wanted to snort, but just about held in it. I mean, kudos to Ron for keeping his unwavering faith and support behind the Cannons, but they would need a completely new team before they had so much as a chance in the league this year. Oliver Wood watched us with narrowed eyes as we started planning a Quidditch match for the summer.

"You play against each other in the summer in Seeker matches?" The older boy asked. We both nodded.

"Yeah, so?" Our perfectly timed, synchronised answer had us grinning.

Wood shook his head. "And you still loose to your brother despite knowing all his moves, Charles?"

We laughed, and Charles ducked his head in slight embarrassment.

"Harry doesn't have set moves, Oliver. He's too impulsive for that."

"Oh, impulsive am I?" Harry teased. "Then what are you? I swear if you have so much as half a mind to do something you are off and doing it!"

"So what, you think things through first?"

"Most of the time." Harry nodded. "Yeah, I do. Percy… he's another matter."

'Hey!' I scowled in mock anger at Harry. 'That's mean.'

'Aw, did I hurt ickle Percy-baby's feelings?' Harry laughed, and I scowled properly now.

"Charles, you are official my favourite brother right now." I declared. "Harry's horrible."

The entire Gryffindor table burst out laughing.

'Now who's the mean one?' Harry pouted, and I smirked.

'Still you.'

Draco pulled us back, so we were walking a little behind the main group as we walked to our first lesson. "You still think we shouldn't tell Severus about the Basilisk?"

"Please, no!" I all but begged Draco. "Alyssa doesn't want to attack the school. It's a rather long story, but in short there is this diary that used to belong to a guy called Tom Riddle – an old head-boy right? Anyway, somehow Tom Riddle is possessing Ginny Weasley using the diary and then forcing Alyssa to attack people. If the teacher's or Ministry find out, then the wrong person will be framed."
Draco nodded, but looked slightly sceptical. "That kind of makes sense. Do I want to know how you discovered this though?"

"Well, you know how the Weasleys stayed over during Christmas?"

We told Draco everything, making sure that we didn't leave a detail out.

"So you've been dreaming about this guy since last summer?" Draco asked, still a bit sceptical.

"Demigod dreams remember?" I reminded him. Draco was about to reply, but we had already arrived at Charms, so he put the subject aside for a while as the lesson commenced.

Right before lunch we had Transfiguration with the Gryffindor's, and so we told Draco, Blaise and Theo we'd meet them in a little bit and followed Ron and Charles with Professor McGonagall to the Hospital Wing to see Hermione and Luna and Annabeth.

We moved first over to Annabeth and Luna's bed, removing the dead flowers and conjuring a new bouquet of bright daisies. We noticed that their bronze dagger had been returned, and now lay gleaming on their bedside table. Gently pulling aside her outer robe, we unbuckled her sheath from her skirt and sheathed the blade in it.

"Everything's falling apart her guys." Harry told them quietly. "The Ministry have been called in to try and track down Alyssa and the school has tightened its security to the point we can hardly breathe without the teachers knowing about it. "Hermione was attacked last night, and we found out for sure that Ginny really is the one ordering Alyssa, but only because Tom Riddle is possessing her! It's a right mess. But somehow I bet you two would find some brilliant plan in that head of yours to sort it all out."

I smiled as Harry continued. "It won't work as well, but we'll try and step up in your place. Just… please don't kill us if it all goes too wrong?"

We placed the notes for all her missed classes – carefully provided by her friends in her year – on the growing pile beside her bed.

The door shut quietly behind McGonagall just a few moments before we hear a quiet exclamation from Charles. We gave Luna and Annabeth a quick farewell before moving over to see what Charles had found. He was holding an old piece of parchment that looked like it had been ripped from a book. We frowned. Hermione really wasn't one to destroy books in such a fashion. So why would she rip a page from a book?

"Look at this!" Charles beams. "It all makes sense!"

"Of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or deadly than the Basilisk, known also as the King of Serpents. This snake, which may reach gigantic size, and live for many hundreds of years, is born from a chicken's egg, hatched beneath a toad. Its methods of killing are most wondrous, for aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the Basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death. Spiders flee before the Basilisk, for it is their mortal enemy, and the Basilisk flees only from the crowing of the rooster, which is fatal to it."

Harry glanced at the page. "Sorry, but what makes sense? It's just a page on Basilisks."

"The attacks!" Charles exclaimed in a hushed voice. "A basilisk must have been the culprit. Remember a while ago, there was that whole hubbub about the killed roosters?"
"No." We shook our heads. "That can't have reached the dungeons, sorry."

"Oh," Charles looked confused as to how to continue for a minute, before picking up his story again. "Well, earlier in the year someone killed all of Hagrid's roosters. We've also noticed columns of spiders leaving the castle and last night –"

Charles cut off abruptly. He glanced at us, then continued. "Last night, both Hagrid and Dumbledore were arrested under suspicion of having a part in opening the Chamber. Hagrid was apparently accused of being the culprit last time, and so fell under suspicion this time too. He sent us to talk to his good friend the acromantula Aragog. Long story short, before trying to eat us he wasn't the monster attacking students, but that a girl died last time and they don't speak of the monster. Their greatest enemy, right?"

We nodded, still not particularly liking where this trail of thought was going. "But then why isn't anyone dead?"

Charles was stumped for a moment. "They didn't look at the Basilisk directly! Colin had his camera, Justin looked through Nearly-Headless-Nick, didn't he? And a ghost can't die twice! Annabeth and the prefect had the dagger, and Hermione her mirror."

We sighed. "It's all very well knowing what the monster is, but what about the chamber?"

Charles grinned, and the last bit of hope we had that they couldn't get into the chamber and Alyssa might live shrivelled up and died.

"That's where we might need you. We think the chamber might be in Myrtle's bathroom, but it stands to reason Slytherin wouldn't let just anyone in. We'll be needing a Parselmouth of course."

Ron spluttered. "You're a Parselmouth?!"

We sighed, casting angry eyes at Charles. "Yes. But that doesn't mean we're going to go along with your hair-brained scheme!"

Again, Charles grinned, and we were immediately reminded of all the potential blackmail material he had on us that he was probably about to call upon in the next few minutes.

"No! Charles, no! Just because you have no sense of self preservation, doesn't mean we don't!"

"So should I tell mum you're still going for swims in the Black Lake and little night walks in the Forbidden Forest?"

"Charles!"
Chapter 54

Harry's Point of View

We spent the next week avoiding Charles at all costs, really not wanted to be blackmailed into going after Alyssa with him.

The measures we took to ensure that we didn't see Charles or Ron at any time might possibly have been a little extreme, but hey they worked. Even if we did have to get at some ridiculous time in the morning to ensure we would be gone by the time our brother entered the hall. We took lunch and dinner in the kitchen as well, to be on the safe side.

We explained things to Draco, who looked completely bemused as to how on earth we could possibly have allowed Charles to know so much blackmail material on us. Blaise and Theo were constantly asking if we were ok, as they never saw us outside the common room after class had finished. And while we were technically supposed to stay in the common room, we'd always managed to sneak out before.

I think Blaise must have talked to Severus, because our godfather pulled us aside after lessons one day.

"Are you two up to something? Because I have it from good sources that you have been actively obeying the new curfew. Is there anything wrong?"

"Hm?" I shook my head, prodding Percy for help. Percy however was no use, planning our next chance to either go for a swim to see Nerissa or to visit the unicorn herd again. "We're just following the rules. It is in our best interests, after all."

"Nothing to do with the fact that I hear your brother has been looking for you?" Severus asked, and I cursed.

"Maybe?" I sighed. "Charles thinks he might have found the entrance to the chamber, and wants us to help. We just... well. It just isn't something that kids should be involved in, is it? But, I suppose he would have had to actually found the chamber first. It's probably just rumours."

Severus didn't look convinced. "Just don't do anything stupid or ridiculously reckless, ok? And yes, I do mean you Percy. I will put you in detention for the remainder of the year if you do."

I nodded, but I had a sinking feeling that – one way or another – we would be ending up with those detentions. We just hoped our Godfather would leave us enough time to do all our homework so we wouldn't start next year with detentions already stacked up. All the same, I did promise our godfather, "I will do my best, sir."

I am so so sorry! I genuinely though I had posted these :/
We managed to evade Charles but then Saturday arrive, and pretty much everything fell to Hades from there as almost everything that we had desperately hoped wouldn't happen did.

We were visiting Annabeth and Luna, talking to them about how Professor Sprout said that the mandrakes would be ready soon so that Professor Snape and Madam Pomfrey could brew the mandrake draught to put everyone else back to normal. I sighed and sat down in the seat beside them.

"The attacks have stepped up this week. I was lucky to persuade Severus to take us to see you. Students are all but confined to the common rooms around classes. Charles has found the chamber, and knows that Alyssa is a basilisk. We swear she never meant to do this to you. Alyssa never wanted any of this. We can't… we can't just betray her and bring Charles to kill her." We told them.

Percy summoned fresh flowers to replace the dead daisies by her side table. "But he's threatening to tell mum about our various less than safe activities we do. Or, still do, more to the point. But we don't actually know if he's serious. Draco thinks we're just letting him get to us but… I'm not so sure. Percy trusts Charles as our brother but I think he really would put the school before our brotherhood, so to speak. That's what they raised him to do anyway."

We sighed. "Oh wise girl. Where are you when we really need your advice?"

Suddenly the speakers on the wall crackled into life, projecting Professor McGonagall's voice around the entire school.

"All students are to return to their house dormitories at once. All teachers return to the staff room. Immediately, please."

We stood, glancing round the room. Severus had left, saying he'd be back to pick us up in an hour. And that had been ten minutes ago. Madam Pomfrey was hurrying out the door. Looked like she'd forgotten about us too. Sighing, we decided to see what all this mess was. If Alyssa was on the move, we'd hear her coming. I tapped our head with my wand, wincing as the horrible feeling of an egg being cracked over our hair spread down our head, and through our body. Glancing at our now camouflaged body that was showing the grey stone and white bedding colours of Annabeth and Luna's bed behind us we quickly but quietly followed Madam Pomfrey, and pressed an ear to the staff room door.

"…been taken by the monster." Professor McGonagall was telling the otherwise silent staffroom. "Right into the chamber itself."

There was a harsh inclination of breath as the teacher's expressed their shock. Then our godfather spoke up. "How can you be sure?"

"The heir of Slytherin," Professor McGonagall replied, sounding very shaken up, "left another message, right underneath the first. Her skeleton will lie in the chamber for ever."

There was the noise of someone bursting into tears while numerous people sat down heavily.

"Who is it? Which student?"

I can tell you know, we have never heard Madam Hooch sound as weak as she did then, asking which student had been handed a death sentence. It scared us.

"Ginny Weasley." McGonagall's voice was quiet, and we almost missed the name. We froze, hearing the name. We weren't so much surprised as angry. Angry at Tom for possessing her, and Ginny for refusing to let anyone help her.
Before we could react, however, the sound of hurried footstep came from further up the corridor, and we moved quickly out of the way of the door, only moment before Lockhart reached it and through it open with a loud dramatic bang.

"So sorry – dozed off – what have I missed?"

The unapologetic tone was met with visible glares of dislike from many of the teachers, we noticed before the door shut.

"Ah, just the man." Severus' voice was cold and dead serious. There was an underlying mocking tone, but we doubted Lockhart had the brain cells to comprehend it, let alone notice it was there. "The very man. A girl has been snatched by the monster, Lockhart. Taken into the Chamber of Secrets itself. Your moment has come at last."

"That's right, Gilderoy," Professor Sprout chipped in, sounding rather delighted. "Weren't you saying just last night that you've known all along where the Chamber of Secrets is?"

"I – well, I –" Lockhart spluttered, much to our amusement.

"Yes, didn't you tell me you were sure you knew what was inside it?" Flitwick joined in.

Deciding that as amusing as hearing our Professors taking Lockhart down a few pegs was it wasn't helping more Ginny any we decided to move on.

'This is a really bad idea.' I muttered.

'Well, yes.' Percy grinned. 'And you did promise Severus not to do anything stupid like, oh, I don't know, running off into the chamber, didn't you?'

'Percy, not helping!' I gritted our teeth.

We reached the bathroom, and we could see Myrtle waiting for us, and quickly removed my disillusionment charm.

"She went down hours ago, Harry, Percy." Myrtle sounded worried, unfazed by our sudden appearance. "And her fingers on her left hand were stained with something that looked like blood!"

"We know." Percy nodded. "We're going to bring Ginny back. We won't let anyone die like you did."

The pale ghost smiled thankfully at us, then ushered us on towards the sink. $Open.$

As usual, the fake sink shifted forward, and then sunk into the floor to reveal the slimy pipe. We offered Myrtle one last smile, the climbed into the pipe and slid down to the bottom. Thinking quickly, I cast a silencing charm on our shoes to allow us to keep the element of surprise if there was anyone else down here. We moved quickly through the dark tunnels, ignoring everything other than the familiar path to the main chamber.

We paused the entrance to the main chamber, taking in the small form splayed out on the cold, wet stone floor. A blurry apparition of a boy stood over her, wearing Hogwarts uniform. Even though we couldn't see the crest on his uniform we would bet anything that it was a Slytherin one.

We moved slowly and carefully to prevent the spectre from noticing us until we wanted him to. Drawing closer, Percy pointed out that yep, that was the snake crest on his robes, and a prefect badge on his chest.
"Tom?" Our voice was loud in the silent cave, and echoed back at us a few times. The boy's head shot up, surprised.

"Charles?" He looked confused. I sniggered, realising that – with Percy taking most of the decisions – our robes were adorned with the Gryffindor crest. Clearly he must have talked to our brother at some other point when Ginny misplaced the diary.

"You need to help me, there's a basilisk." Percy played along with it, knowing that if the Slytherin thought we were the Gryffindor Golden Boy he would underestimate us. "If we're not careful, it'll come after us. Help me get Ginny out of here!"

The amount of concentration not to say 'us' was impossible, but Percy managed to pull it off. I sent him a quick smile.

"Oh, it won't come until it's called." Tom replied with a sneer, picking up Percy's wand from where he had dropped it purposely on the floor to check on Ginny.

"What do you mean? Ginny is ice cold, we need to get her help!" Percy then cast a confused look at his wand in Tom's hands. I giggled at how good his acting skills could be when he wanted. "Give me my wand, Tom."

"The basilisk. It really won't come till it's called. Besides, a wand would do you little good. Basilisk skin is, after all, resistant to spells."

Percy stood up, his eyes narrowed, glancing between Ginny and Tom as if the thought of them being behind the attacks had just occurred to him. "Wait, but that means…"

Tom sneered, distorting his otherwise handsome face. I hadn't noticed before, but he had strong features, and his dark hair seemed to make his pale skin glow slightly. Then I frowned, noticing he was less transparent than when we had first seen him.

"Yes. It was Ginny who opened the chamber. I can be very convincing when I wish. Not that she knew about any of it. I put her in a kind of trance you see, so she wouldn't freak out. She spilled her soul into my diary. I grew strength from it, from her, stealing her energy for my own. So, you see, as she grows weaker, I grow stronger." Tom looked down at us with such a snobbish, prideful look I wanted to slap the expression off his face.

"You… but… you saved the school last time!" Percy protested, thinking of the trophy Tom had won for 'special services to the school', we'd seen in the trophy room while investigating him after Draco had mentioned he had been awarded some crest or something.

"You really thought the oath Hagrid was capable of opening the Chamber of Secrets?" Tom laughed. "He was just a good scapegoat I used."

I was burning with a slow anger now, and it was taking all my control to reign in my magic that was starting to blow around us, tugging at our hair slightly.

"But why kill off muggleborns?"

"They don't deserve to come here and sully our society with their dirty blood." Tom sneered. "But you mustn't have been paying much attention, they haven't been my target for a while now. No, I've been trying to track down you, Charles. After all, how can it be that a stupid baby with no inkling of magical talent could destroy the most powerful wizard of all time?"

Percy laughed. "The most powerful wizard of all time? Do you mean Voldemort? You must be
joking. Dumbledore has always been, and will always be, the most powerful wizard of all time."

"Voldemort is my past, present and future." Riddle sneered. He wrote out his full name – Tom Marvolo Riddle – in glowing letters, before rearranging them to spell out 'I am Lord Voldemort'. We sniggered slightly, trying to imagine how long that must have taken him to work out, then we got serious. Teenage Voldemort was trying to return. This was bad. Very bad.

But before Percy and Tom's conversation could progress further we heard footsteps, and turned to see Charles watching us, his face pale white with disbelief.

"Harry? Percy? What the hell are you doing here? You can't... You wouldn't... And Tom? I... I don't understand."

Tom looked at us in surprise. I grinned wickedly at him, moving forward to allow our crest to flash green. "Sorry for the deception, Tom, but we didn't actually agree that we were Charles. You just assumed. But please, don't stop, I want to hear all you evil plans. After all, you're planning on sending Alyssa to kill us anyway, so we might as well have some entertainment while we wait."

"Huh?" Charles looked between us, confused.

"Oh, keep up Charles." Tom sneered. "Your brother has been visiting the Chamber all year. Made friends with the Basilisk to set on the school."

I drew my wand now, sending a red stunner at the ghost. It passed through his apparition, as his body wasn't complete yet, but from his face it must have still hurt.

"No, Charles, we swear on our magic, we didn't use Alyssa to attack the school. Tom has been possessing Ginny through the diary. We discovered the Chamber ages back, during your polyjuice incident, and yes, we befriended Alyssa, but we wouldn't attack muggleborns. We swear!" I pleaded with our brother.

"That's why you didn't want to come." Charles reasoned. "You didn't want to kill your friend. Must you befriend deadly snakes, Harry, Percy?"

"Well, it wasn't our sole intention!" I protested. "We meant to discover what was petrifying students and discover if the Chamber was real, as well... Alyssa was very nice really."

"Enough chat!" Tom snarled, realising he couldn't set Charles on us. "If you really think you're stronger than me then let's test the might of the Great Potter twins against the truly powerful Salazar Slytherin!"

Tom turned to the statue of Salazar behind him. $Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four, speak to me!$

The mouth opened, and we saw Alyssa slither out, glaring at Tom.

$Alyssa, don't listen to him! We don't want to hurt you!$ We begged. Tom laughed, and spat out a command to attack. Alyssa swayed, fighting the command. Taking advantage of her hesitation I sent a simple shrinking charm at her, reducing her to the size of a normal adder. See, it was true that Basilisk skin was spell resistant, but only against life threatening spells, which is why we could shrink Alyssa.

$Sorry, we'll return you to normal asap!$ I promised as she hissed in complaint.

"Charles, keep your eyes forward. Take our hand, and run! We have reduced Alyssa to a smaller
size, but that isn't going to help for long."

Charles nodded, taking our right hand. Percy managed to work Riptide out of his other pocket.

'Your wand!' I hissed. 'Tom has your wand!'

Percy cursed, turning around. Tom was attempting to resize Alyssa, but it really wasn't working. Clearly he didn't have any affinity at all with Percy's wand, and as Alyssa was constantly moving as she slid after us, Tom's aim was wonky.

"Expelliarmus!" I muttered the spell, picturing Percy's wand soaring through the air to my hand. Luckily, we were still in range to cast such a spell, and Tom was taken on the unawares, so I caught (and sheathed) Percy's wand with ease.

We then turned to run again. Charles us up ahead, but had stopped running. Dumbledore's phoenix was sitting on our brother's shoulder, and he was holding something that looked awfully like the school sorting hat. We frowned.

"Charles, what are you doing? Run!"

While we trusted Alyssa to hurt us normally, and we knew she had some free will, we also didn't know how well she could circumvent orders, and didn't want to risk the chance that she couldn't stop herself from hurting Charles. Or us, but we were more worried about Charles at this point.

Already however my quick shrinking spell was starting to wear off as the true size of Alyssa and my torn attention when I had cast the spell took its toll. The phoenix took off from Charles' shoulder, pecking at Alyssa's eyes, and she screamed in pain.

"No!" Both Tom and we cried out at once. Toms in anger, us in defence of our friend.

"Your bloody bird may have blinded the basilisk, but it can still hear you." Tom hissed, narrowing his eyes at us.

$Alyssa.$ Percy's voice was no more than a whisper. $We're so sorry, we didn't want you to get hurt.$

Alyssa let out a low hiss that we had come to understand as her equivalent of a hum of understanding or acceptance.

This time is was Charles who grabbed our hand and pulled us away down a winding, twisting pipe as Alyssa was still forced to chase us. Our shoes soon became soaked in the puddles, making them squelch horribly. And while ours were still under a silencing charm, Charles' footsteps were unbearably loud, as was our heavy breathing in the dark tunnel.

All too soon we turned off the main pipe only to reach a dead end, and Alyssa slowly moved closer, turning her head into the tunnel. She opened her mouth, her long fangs dripping with venom. Slowly, quietly, we reached down, staring into her bleeding eyes as we fumbled for the rock we kicked with our foot entering the dead end. Percy through it down the pipe, careful to make sure that it didn't hit Alyssa, and she slithered off after it.

We waited with bated breath for a few minutes, hardly daring to breath before Charles moved, following Alyssa out back into the main chamber.

Ginny was very pale now, and Tom looked almost solid. I noticed the diary, still cradled under Ginny's arm and had an idea.
'Percy. It's the diary. Until Tom has absorbed all of Ginny's energy, his life force is still linked to the diary. Destroy the host, and he simply won't be able to exist anymore!'

'Ok.' Percy didn't question it. 'But how?'

Before I could think up an answer, Alyssa slithered back into the hall. Charles drew his wand, but Percy grabbed his arm.

"Spells won't help us now." He uncapped Riptide, revealing our glowing bronze sword. "I'm the best with a sword, I'll keep Alyssa away. Just destroy the diary!"

Percy charged towards our friend. $Alyssa!$

Our friend struck at us, but her movements were halting, as if she didn't have any heart at all behind them. And thus our game began, drawing her from Charles. Percy used the flat of our blade to block Alyssa's swiping tail and to prevent her from managing to bite us. However, after about five minutes Percy's guard slipped for a flickering second, and Alyssa managed to somehow sink a tooth into our right shoulder.

The venom was like liquid fire, spreading through our body. I could hear our heart beating loudly in our ears, driving the venom further into our system. As Alyssa reared back, her fang broke off, still buried in the back of our shoulder.

$Percy, Harry…$ Alyssa sounded grief stricken.

We stumbled back, our vision blurring. Percy grabbed the fang and yanked it free. We stumbled over to Charles.

"Did you… destroy it?" Percy slurred. Charles shook his head in the negative.

"Nothing works!"

The world spun around us. The venom was moving too fast through our system, shutting it down.

Percy fell forward, the fang still clutched in his hand.

By some miracle, Percy managed to stab the diary as we fell. The last thing we saw before the pain grew too much and black swamped our vision was Tom Riddle blowing apart into pieces.
Harry and Percy slumped forward onto Tom Riddle's diary, the venom in their system eating away at lives. The white snake fang clenched in their left hand sunk deep into the little black book beneath them. Their brother watched in horror, spotting the dark wet blood seeping out the circular hole in the back of their robes.

Looking up at a terrible scream, Charles saw that Tom had a massive hole in his chest that was slowly growing bigger as he was blown into dust, cursing the existence of the Potter twins and swearing revenge. Charles couldn't bring himself to care however, as he looked back down at the limp form of his twin. It looked as if Tom already had his revenge. Ron's sister, Ginny was now safe, but his own siblings were on the edge of death.

A flash of red and gold feathers flew through the air and a large phoenix landed on Charles' shoulder. Charles sent him a despairing look, his normally bright eyes full of tears for his brothers. Then he returned his watery gaze to his twin.

"You have to save them! Please!" Charles pleaded the large bird on his shoulder. Dumbledore's familiar had come to save them, hadn't he? So surely, somehow, the phoenix could save Harry and Percy?

Fawkes sent Charles an intense look. Charles couldn't understand the look, but didn't interfere as Fawkes hoped to the blood-stained stone beside Harry and Percy, leaning over the fang wound. The magical bird tilted his head to the side, and let a large fat tear slowly roll down his cheek to fall on the gaping wound.

The wound hissed, steam rising from where the phoenix tears touched the raw flesh. Fawkes didn't stop crying over the wound, not until the steam stopped rising and the flesh and skin had knitted back together and he knew that the healing tears were in the boys' blood stream to battle with the deadly basilisk venom.

Meanwhile, Charles was distracted as Ginny waking up, looking around her in confusion. Fear and confusion lit up in her eyes when she noticed Harry and Percy and Charles. Then her gaze fell upon the black corner of Tom Riddle's diary only just sticking out from under Harry and Percy, and she seemed to understand.

"Charles, you have to believe me, I didn't mean to. I mean… It was me. I ordered the attacks, but I didn't want to. Tom made me, he got into my head somehow…" Ginny tried to explain. "I… I wanted to tell you at breakfast, but Percy… I didn't want him to… to…"

Charles placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, remembering how she had wanted to tell Ron and him something important at breakfast before Percy run her off. Ron and he had been certain that it had been about the Chamber of Secrets, but Percy had thought otherwise for some strange reason.

"I understand. But… what was it Percy didn't want you to tell us then?" Charles asked, side-tracked as he wondered what on earth the so very proper Weasley would have to hide.

Ginny let out a small snigger. "Oh, that. I walked in on him and his new girlfriend Penelope. I had been going to tell him but… well. He didn't take being interrupted to well, and then… I didn't want him to judge me…"
Charles nodded, understanding perfectly. He didn't exactly have an older sibling who he wanted to impress, but Harry and Percy were pretty much his equivalent. Charles was supposed to be the Hero. The saviour of the Wizarding World. But Harry and Percy really were heroes by blood – being half-bloods and all – and (for the second time now) seemed to manage to save the day before he could even reach the place where it was all happening! Was it any wonder he didn't want them to think he was useless? To think he was a useless child who needed saving all the time?

"Ginny. It wasn't your fault, alright? You were possessed. Nobody is going to blame you for any of this. You're a first year for crying out loud!"

Ginny and Charles looked at each other for a moment before Ginny started looking around them, desperately looking for something to help her change the subject.

"How are we going to get out?" She asked, her voice quiet.

Charles swallowed. He hadn't thought of that. He glanced at Fawkes and his brother, then at the blind basilisk, who was hanging back, hissing miserably. His eyes narrowed. How dare the serpent hurt his brothers! Then had trusted her.

"I'll think of something." Charles said, his voice tight. "But first there is a certain snake I need to destroy."

Charles looked round for a weapon. The glowing bronze sword that Percy had fought with earlier had disappeared. Then a silver glint caught his eye. It was something inside the sorting hat, glinting in the faint light of the cave. He stood, and picked up the hat before drawing out a long silver blade. It was a gorgeous weapon, the blade crafted of silver with a leather handle and a red ruby as a pommel stone. Well, Charles thought with a wry smile. Percy would describe it as gorgeous. Personally, he didn't care. Just so long as he could kill the monster that had hurt his brothers with it.

Charles approached Alyssa slowly, taking careful steps to reduce both the sound of his footsteps and the vibrations he would send across the floor. Of course, it was futile really, as Alyssa smelt both him and the metal sword before he got very far. Charles raised the sword above his head, and then slashed wildly at the snake, slicing a thin, shallow cut down her side.

Alyssa hissed in pain, instinctively drawing back her head to strike at the one that had hurt her. Charles dodged however and raised his weapon to strike again. Before his blade had fallen upon Alyssa, however, it struck something else, and the harsh sound of metal hitting metal rang out and echoed in the large rocky chamber.

Percy's Point of View

Waking up occurred slowly. I was aware of a throbbing in our head, and a very obvious lack of pain in our right shoulder and insides. The poison was gone, our wound healed. But how?

I opened our eyes warily, expected to be abused by the harsh white of the hospital wing. Instead I was met by a soft gloom. Suddenly I became aware of everything else; the cold, wet stone floor stealing our body heat; our left hand curled uncomfortably underneath us, still clutching the fang that was pushed all the way though Riddle's diary; the whistle of a sword flying through the air; the defensive hissing of Alyssa; the sharp intake of breath from Ginny, who was still sitting where she had been lying.

"Di Immortales! Please gods, if you're listening, don't tell me that is Charles fighting Alyssa. Please, please!" I muttered under our breath, hardly daring to sit up and turn around. Needless to say, the
sight he saw wasn't pretty at all.

Charles was quickly dodging Alyssa as she struck at him, thick red blood dripping down from a shallow cut down her side. She missed, and Charles raised his sword to strike her again. I froze. Sword? Hades, this was bad!

I lept up, vaguely aware of Harry waking and protesting at the movement. Running over to stop our brother I pulled Riptide out our pocket again, uncapping it and bracing it to stop Charles' slopping strike.

The clash of metal on metal rang out loudly, echoing. It was suddenly strangely silent as the sound faded away, and nobody moved. Charles was staring at us in amazement, and Alyssa was flicking out her tongue, tasting our scent.

"Don't hurt Alyssa." We warned. "It's not her fault."

Charles turned his head to glare at the ground. "But she hurt you."

"Tom Riddle hurt us. Alyssa was forced to obey him, but she was not at fault, not for any of this. You don't blame Ginny do you?"

Charles reluctantly agreed and so seeing as he was no longer a risk to our scaly friend's health, we turned to face her. $You alright, Alyssa?$

Alyssa let out a sad little hiss. $I bit you…$

$We're fine now.$ I promised. $But are you ok?$

$Apart from the false-master forcing me to attack you? Or the fire-bird destroying my eyes?$ Alyssa let out a dry hiss of humourless laughter. $I will live, little Lords.$

I hummed disapprovingly. She was in pain. 'Harry, how would you say your energy levels are?'

'Low. Very, very low.' Harry sighed. The venom took a lot out of us. We can't heal her, Percy. It would be a death wish.'

'Just a little. To stop the pain?' I begged. Harry sighed, but nodded. We couldn't just leave her in pain, after all. I placed our hands on either side of our friend's face, and leant our forehead against hers, ignoring the large fangs lurking in her mouth. Our hands grew warm as we sent a little magic to heal Alyssa's wounds to stop them hurting. Even with our eyes shut, the silver light from our hands filtered through.

Alyssa hissed in confusion, then in thanks as she understood what we had done.

$Keep safe, our friend.$ We smiled at Alyssa, ignoring the fact that she couldn't see us at the moment. $We'll come to visiting as soon as possible, ok?$

Alyssa nodded, the butted her head into our side to get us moving. We laughed, but walked back to where our brother and Ginny were standing. Ginny looked slightly horrified by our interaction with Alyssa, but Charles just looked resigned.

"You never could do things the easy way, could you?"

I burst out laughing, and waved our hand as if to ward the question off. "You can't talk, Charles. You're the one who always comes charging along after us, don't you?"
Charles looked down, as if the question meant more to him than the gentle teasing I had meant. Harry put a hand on his shoulder, and met his eyes as he looked up.


Charles grinned, and started to lead the way back to the pipe from Myrtle's bathroom. We followed behind, letting Ginny walk between us. After a while, the sound of someone shifting rocks could be heard, as well as the heavy cursing I knew to associate with one Ronald Weasley. I sniggered.

"Ow! Bloody hell!" Ron cursed. We could see him now, hopping on one foot, holding his other, which it appeared he had managed to drop a rock on. It seemed as though the ceiling had collapsed. We sighed, shaking our head.

"Gryffindors. You always have to break something, don't you?"

Charles chuckled as Ron looked up with a startled expression. "Of course! What do you take us for – graceful swans?"

We swapped looks with our brother and Ginny before the three of us starting laughing. Ron pouted, glaring at us.

"What are you doing here? I bet you were the bloody heir all along, weren't you? Bloody snake-lover!"

Our mirth dissipated quickly, and we glared daggers at the red-haired boy that our brother was such close friends with. "Yes. Of course. Which is why yours sister is alive and well, not dead while the gods-forsaken Dark Lord gloats over her body."

Charles sighed. "Ron, we don't have time for this. If you don't trust them, then trust me. Harry and Percy had no part in the attacks or abduction of your sister."

Ron sighed, but didn't argue. He helped Charles and Ginny over the rocks, but pointedly offered us on assistance. Not that we needed it anyway. Upon scrambling over obstacle, we were met by the sight of Lockhart, looking for all the world as if he had just been confounded.

"Ok. Who cursed Lockhart?" Harry asked, raising an eyebrow. Ron and Charles swapped looks.

"Well, he was trying to obliviate us, except he was using Ron's wand..." Charles explained.

We sighed. Ron had failed to replace the wand he had broken upon his arrival at Hogwarts this school year, and ever since it had been backfiring spells at the caster, rather than the intended target. Then we grinned.

"Well, it doesn't look like we'll have to put up with Lockhart next year. Who knows, we might actually get a decent teacher."

Lockhart just nodded and smiled stupidly as we grinned in celebration. Ron took charge man-handling Lockhart down the corridor until we reached the pipe leading up to Myrtle's bathroom. We paused and Harry and I drew out our shrunken broom, then stared in confusion as nobody else did similarly.

"Please tell me you didn't honestly decide to jump down into a pipe that was god knows how long without bringing along some form of transport to get back up?" I slapped our forehead at our brother's lack of foresight.
"Well, Ginny was our priority!" Charles defended them.

Before anything else could be said Fawkes let out a low melody, and Harry grinned. I prodded him then grinned when I saw where his thoughts were headed.

"Luckily for us, we have a bit of help with us."

Charles followed our gaze to Fawkes and frowned for a moment before his expression cleared, and delight filled his expression.

"Of course! Phoenixes can carry extremely heavy loads!" Charles exclaimed, then held out an arm as a perch for the fiery bird. "Would you mind giving us a lift back up to the school, Fawkes?"

The bird chirped happily and they all formed a line. Charles held onto Fawkes claws, then Ron grasped his other hand. Ron also had Lockhart clinging to his waist, and finally Ginny held Lockhart's ankles. We flew on our broom behind them, ready to catch anyone should they slip.

Luckily nobody did, and we all made it up to Myrtle's bathroom in one piece. Myrtle flew over to us instantly, inspecting us. She tutted over our torn and dirty robes, especially where we had been bitten. We hurried to assure her we were ok, sending the occasional glares at Ron and Charles who were sniggering in the background.

A flicker of flames in the corner of our eye alerted us to Fawkes' disappearance. No doubt off to find McGonagall to bring her here to make sure we were all safe. Quickly, we hissed 'close' in Parseltongue under our breath, ensuring that McGonagall wouldn't gain access to the chamber and threaten Alyssa.

McGonagall came rushing into the bathroom a few minutes later, accompanied (much to our surprise) by no other than Professor Dumbledore, who we had been certain had definitely been in Azkaban when we had entered the Chamber looking for Ginny.

"What do you think you were doing?!!" McGonagall exclaimed. "You all could have been killed or hurt!"

We sniggered. "Fear not, Professor, Ron and Charles brought a teacher along with us. The defence teacher, no less."

We indicated Lockhart, who was wandering around the bathroom with a dazed but delighted expression on his face. Professor McGonagall pulled a face. "Yes, well, Potter, please don't mind me if I don't find the fact you had Gilderoy along with you particularly reassuring."

We sniggered again, grinning at our brother, who rolled his eyes, but grinned back.

Dumbledore spoke up then, smiling down at Charles, his bright blue eyes sharp behind his half-moon spectacles. "I don't suppose you could tell me how exactly you found the chamber, could you?"

Charles looked between us and Dumbledore and we gave him a wide-eyed why-are-you-looking-at-us look. We weren't helping him out here. After all, we did find the chamber in a different way to them. Charles wrinkled his nose at us, annoyed by our lack of helplessness.

"Shouldn't this interrogation be occurring in a more secure location?" Harry offered. "Your office, perhaps, Headmaster?"

Dumbledore met our eyes a moment before we felt a gentle brush against our shields. Fortunately,
we knew what was going on this time, and didn't throw our Headmaster all the way across the room as we had on our first night in Hogwarts.

"Asking is a much more polite method of getting information." Harry told him, our face unreadable. Dumbledore winced.

"Forgive me, I –"

"Just attempted to see what we were thinking, and solve the question of how on earth we ended up in the Chamber with our brother?" Harry snorted. "As we said, an office is a much more suitable place for such a discussion, wouldn't you agree Professor McGonagall?"

Professor McGonagall gave us a startled look, but nodded all the same. She offered to take care of Lockhart while Dumbledore questioned Charles and us in his office.

The walk up to Dumbledore's office was kind of awkward. Charles and I felt as though we had broken just about every school rule there was, and now would have to endure the lecture of a lifetime. Dumbledore no doubt felt the tension, but he certainly made no efforts to dispel our worries.

Soon enough however we were sitting across from Dumbledore, with the head teacher beaming at us for whatever reason. Charles and I exchanged nervous glances. I mean, everyone knew that the Headmaster was slightly nutty, but he was pleased with us for stupidly running off and risking our necks? That was new.

"So." Dumbledore said, a twinkle in his eyes. "Tell me everything."

Charles started, explaining about the Polyjuice, and the diary and how Ron and he had first suspected Hagrid, before proving his innocence by talking to Aragog, the spider that had been named the monster fifty years ago. He then explained about finding the sheet of paper in Hermione's hand last week, and how they had put together the clues to realise that the entrance to the Chamber was in Myrtle's bathroom. He then explained what had happened to Lockhart and how he and found us talking to Riddle, and the following fight.

Then it was our turn. We sighed.

"Well… We found the Chamber back in November." I admitted, just to get it over and done with. "We're a Parselmouth see, and… well. We managed to put everything together after talking to Myrtle, and then we met Alyssa – the basilisk in the Chamber. She didn't like what Riddle was making her do, and we sort of just clicked as friends. We were trying to work out who was behind the attacks, but I guess it didn't really seem real until Annabeth and Luna were attacked at Christmas. We then found Riddle's diary and met the so very charming murderer himself and started putting two and two together…"

Dumbledore and Charles listened to our story in silence. We explained up to the point where Charles had found us in the Chamber. When we finished, we were met by stony silence for a minute as our audience digested our story. Charles knew us well enough to know that we really had tried to help, but had been torn between protecting our friend. Dumbledore wasn't as understanding.

"So why didn't you report what you found to a teacher? Professor Snape is your godfather is he not? Surely you could have at least talked to him."

We sighed. "Alyssa is our friend. We weren't going to risk her. Professor Snape is still a teacher at this institution and wouldn't have hesitated to report her to you, who we have little doubt would have had her killed."
"A basilisk is a dangerous animal!"

"She wants to *protect* the students at this school, not attack them!" I gritted out. "We explained this. Riddle forced her to obey him. Under normal situations, she is perfectly safe. Especially now Fawkes blinded her!"

Dumbledore wasn't impressed. I don't think our put out glare at Fawkes helped much, but what can I say? We won't forgive Fawkes for that. Before he could say anything further on the subject the floo activated and our parents came hurrying through. Upon spotting Charles and us Lily swept us up in one big hug.

"Oh thank Merlin you two are safe." She breathed a sigh of relief before pulling back and glaring at us. "You two are so grounded this summer."

"But Mum!" We protested. I pouted. "We have camp though!"

Charles huffed at our genuine excuse. "And you already organised for us to go visit the Weasley's for a week while you and Dad go away for a bit."

"No buts!" Lily pulled us into a huge hug again. "You had me so worried. Never ever again, understand? This cannot become a yearly occurrence. My poor heart will give out if it does."

We chuckled. "Sorry Mum, but you do have us three as sons. It's not looking up."

Charles chuckled too and James cracked a grin at us. "You alright?"

"Thanks to Fawkes." We grinned in gratitude at the magic bird, who chirped cheerily in reply.

"Mr Potters!" Dumbledore didn't raise his voice, but we were hard pressed to miss the exasperation in his voice. "Back to the matter of the Basilisk –"

Lily screeched. "Basilisk?!"
Chapter 56

Chapter 56

Percy's Point of View

We glared at Dumbledore, daring him to explain Alyssa to our furious mother. Lily was also glaring at the Headmaster, occasionally moving her gaze over us, but generally just demanding an answer from someone. James looked shocked too, but was hiding it better as he joked weakly with Charles.

"Huhem." Dumbledore cleared his throat. "As it turns out, the source of the attacks this year was a basilisk that your sons managed to befriend. I do assure you Harry and Percy weren't behind the attacks – the culprit has been caught – but your son is now refusing to give us entry to the chamber to allow us to take care of the monster."

"The monster?! The only monster here is you, trying to deny the fact that you are going to kill Alyssa if we let you in to her home!"

"And why are you in the situation that Percy and Harry must give you entrance to wherever this basilisk is?" Lily asked, her eyes hard. It wasn't clear as yet whose side she was on, but we had a feeling she certainly wouldn't be on ours soon.

James spoke up then, his clear reasoning reminding Lily that his intellect wasn't wasted on only creating pranks. "We're talking about the Chamber of Secrets, correct? This is more about Harry and Percy being a Parselmouth, isn't it?"

Dumbledore shifted uncomfortably. "I must ensure the safety of Hogwarts, and that cannot be accomplished until the creature is dead."

"Mum!" I turned wide eyes on Lily, begging her to help us. "Alyssa doesn't want to hurt anyone. Surely we could take her? Please?"

Lily and James exchanged an awkward look. "Harry –"

"It's Percy." Charles interrupted quietly.

"Percy, then, this isn't a normal pet snake. Basilisks are illegal pets – they have been since the medieval era!" Lily protested.

"No." I grinned. "It isn't illegal to own one. It's merely their creation that is illegal. Alyssa belonged to Salazar Slytherin, so even if she was hatched after the ban was put in place, simply looking after her isn't illegal. It's in 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' – and that's a first year textbook."

Lily sighed. "And where would we keep it? If this snake is as old as you are suggesting, it can't be small."

"She is definitely over 20 feet long." I admitted. "But we can't just let her die!"

"Lilyflower, darling." James spoke up, refusing to cower under Lily's death glare. "Think about it this way – Harry and Percy are Parselmouths, correct? So they have no doubt befriend this snake – Alyssa, wasn't it? So asking them to just let someone kill her is not unlike Voldemort telling you to step aside and let him kill your children."
Lily looked horrified. "I most certainly do not see the connection between this snake and my children! Those are two completely different situations!"

Before the argument could escalate further Dumbledore's office door swung open and our godfather swept into the room, casting a swift glance over its occupants before sweeping us up into a big hug.

"Oh, thank Merlin you two are alright! When Draco said you were missing…" Severus pulled back for a moment and scowled. "And don't think I haven't forgotten your promise. You are in detention for the rest of the year!"

"But, Severus, Alyssa was in trouble, and Ginny was being killed and Voldemort was trying to rise again!"

"Alyssa?" Severus tilted his head to one side.

I ducked our head and quickly opened our mouth to explain, but exclamations from almost everyone else interrupted.

"Voldemort?!!"

"I think you missed something out, young Mr Potter." Dumbledore gave us a stern look.

"Huh? We explained about Tom didn't we? Tom Marvolo Riddle. An anagram for 'I am Lord Voldemort'. He must have spent quite the time figuring that out." I sniggered. "But yeah, his memory was in his old diary, and he was stealing Ginny's life force to come back to life. Didn't Charles explain that?" We glanced at our brother, who looked completely bemused.

"Nope, I entered after that bit where Tom revealed his evil plan." Charles grinned.

"Oh." I scuffed our feet on the floor. "We thought you had been there."

Suddenly remembering something, I fished the black leather diary – the fang still embedded through it – out our pocket. "Evidence, sorry. I forget we had that for a moment."

The Headmaster inspected the book, and sighed.

"This was a dark artefact. You did well to destroy it. May I ask what inspired the idea of stabbing it with the fang?"

"Huh?" Harry grinned. "Well, Percy pulled the fang out our shoulder, then we managed to collapse over the diary actually. Drove the fang into it with our own body weight."

Charles sniggered, and I joined in. I mean, as went luck went, that was definitely on the miracle side of the spectrum.

That information drew more exclamations from Lily though, and we spent the next three hours assuring her that we were safe, and arguing about Alyssa (we did – eventually – win that argument, after agreeing to shrink our friend to a more manageable size). Severus never did budge about the detention, either. Lily's agreement with the punishment made it easier for him to win that argument though. Charles was all but fast asleep by the time all the discussion was over.

Just before we could all disperse, we had another unexpected visitor. Lucius Malfoy, accompanied by a cowering house-elf. Charles – who had been woken up so he could be moved back to bed, narrowed his eyes at the sight of the elf.
"Dobby?!” He muttered, shaking his head. We didn't bother asking, guessing we probably didn't want to know.

"So." Mr Malfoy narrowed his eyes at Dumbledore. "I'm sorry to interrupt this… charming little gathering, but I had to know if the rumours were true. Despite being suspended by the Governors, you saw fit to return, Albus?"

Dumbledore grinned, his eyes twinkling merrily as he held up a bunch of letters. "You see the other eleven governors saw fit to contact me. Quite the storm of owls, I assure you. After hearing the fate of Arthur Weasley's daughter they decided they wanted me back here immediately. Another funny thing was many of them told me that you had threatened to curse their families had they not had me removed in the first place."

I admit, both Harry and I were startled at the change Dumbledore overcame in the presence of Lord Malfoy. It was as if he had flicked a switch. Gone was the demanding leader of the Light and here was the aged grandfatherly Headmaster that so many dark-families commented on as going senile. But we weren't so startled that we didn't notice Draco's father pale ever so slightly. It was hardly noticeable to anybody else in the room, but we knew Lucius, so the action was painfully obvious to us. But surely he wouldn't do something that stupid! Draco and his family had never hidden the fact that they were darkly inclined from us, but to go as far as blackmail and threaten people's families?

"So. Have you stopped the attacks yet – found the culprit?" Mr Malfoy sneered, concealing his true emotions, shaken though he was.

"Ah yes," Dumbledore said with a small smile.

"And? Who was it then?" The sharp biting tones were unlike any we'd ever heard of before from Lucius.

Dumbledore picked up the diary – fang and all – and showed it to the Pureblood Lord. "Same person as last time. Only this time, Lord Voldemort acted through somebody else by means of this diary."

The Headmaster was watching the Governor closely. Our brother, however, was watching his elf, and the small creature was gesturing first to the diary with his white bandaged hands, then to his master, then hitting himself on the head in punishment. We sighed, rolling our eyes. So the little elf thought Mr Malfoy was behind the diary as well?

Harry nudged me. 'Don't you remember?'

'Remember what?'

Harry projected the memory to me, and I felt a growing dread as I watched it.

**Mr Weasley and Mr Malfoy were arguing, while Draco was watching with a look of bland amusement on his face. Ron and his younger sister, Ginny, were red in the face as they glared at the Malfoy's.**

**Malfey senior had a disdainful sneer on his face as he picked up a battered second hand book from Ginny's equally battered cauldron and said something. He dropped the book back in, and I noticed a black book fall out his sleeve into the cauldron with Ginny's text book.**

"Do you know how Ginney Weasley got hold of that diary, Mr Malfoy?" Charles was asking as I started paying attention to the conversation again. Clearly we'd missed a fair portion of it.
Malflyn sneered. "How should I know how the silly girl got her hands on it?"

I shook our head at Charles, begging him silently not to go on. Publically accusing Lord Malfoy was not a good idea. He didn't notice us though – nobody did – and went right on ahead.

"Because you gave it to her." Charles said bluntly. "In Flourish and Blotts. You picked up her Transfiguration book, and slipped the diary inside, didn't you?"

"Prove it." Hissed our friend's father. I groaned.

"Oh, I'm afraid that is quite impossible, especially with Riddle's memories wiped clean off the book. But if I might be so bold, Lucius, I advise you not to go giving out any more of Lord Voldemort's school things. Should any more find their way into innocent hands I'm sure Author Weasley for one would ensure that they're traced back to you." Dumbledore commented, the threat thinly veiled.

Lucius only just then noticed us in the room, and a look of horror crossed his face for half a second before he got himself under control again. Turning on his heel sharply and calling for his elf, the blond aristocrat strode out the room.

We barely noticed as Charles grabbed the diary off Dumbledore and ran after them, as we were mulling over the thoughts that our best friend's father was a really dark wizard. Before, we'd thought that the war that had ended shortly after our birth wouldn't really ever affect us, but there was the proof in the flesh and blood.

'Percy. I don't think we should mention this to Draco.' Harry muttered.

I nodded. 'That would be a good plan of action. I don't want to lose our friend over this.'

But no sooner than we had made that decision did Lily speak up.

"Harry, Percy, you are moving into the Gryffindor dorms, no arguments. I am not having you hanging around with that... that thing's child. You are to sever all connections with the Malfoy family, am I understood?"

Tears swum in our eyes as her words sunk in. Where had this all gone so wrong? Short of Luna and Annabeth, we didn't have any other friends in any of the other Houses. Lily wouldn't honestly tear all of that way from us, would she?

Strong warm arms wrapped around us, and I buried our head in our godfather's robes. Harry was murmuring odd things to me, such as how we could deal with this in a way Lily didn't have to know about. We could get around her instructions.

"Lily!" Severus snapped. "You cannot be serious about this! All of Harry and Percy's friends are Slytherins. The Gryffindors all know that my house is where they really belong. Percy might fit in with all the brash decision the Gryffindor's make, but neither of them really belong with that House. Besides, Draco isn't his father. He is their best friend! You are punishing your sons for another man's deeds!"

James – surprisingly enough – was on Severus' side. Our side. "Lily, calm down and think this through! You can't honestly think that cutting off all of our sons' friends is the way to deal with this."

"Are you telling me I don't know what is best for my children?" Lily snapped. "And you only met them properly two years ago for goodness sake Snape!"

"And whose fault is that?" Severus growled. "Besides, you can hardly talk! You forgot about their
very existence for five years!"

"No! Enough!" Harry joined the yelling too. "Lily, we are old enough to make our own decisions. We aren't babies anymore. Don't you get that? We've been making our own decisions for the past seven years, and learning from our mistakes. Don't try and mother us now."

Lily withdrew at the mention of that time. It was – admittedly – a rather taboo subject in the Potter Household, but we didn't feel bad bringing it up. Especially if it meant that we could stay with our friends. Lily's eyes hardened a moment later, however.

"Headmaster, I request as punishment for breaking however many school rules last night and putting themselves in mortal danger you house Harry and Percy in Gryffindor House for the remainder of the year."

Harry and I glared disbelievingly at her.

'No! I won't accept it!' I snarled.

Harry nodded. They can't deny us access to Slytherin Common Room though. I was sorted into Slytherin, so only being sorted into a different house would deny us our rights to be there.'

Severus growled. "If that is their punishment, then I revoke my detentions. Living with that lot should drive in the message better than any detentions I set, I should think."

Lily looked torn for a minute, especially after seeing her husband's disappointed look at her, but then nodded. "Fine. This is more important."

Dumbledore sighed. "Lily, I can't say I support you on this – you don't want to drive your son away do you?"

Lily just looked at him, silently informing the Headmaster that she most certainly wasn't going to budge on this topic. The headmaster sighed. I tilted my head as I watched him.

'Dumbledore is being surprisingly supportive of our wish to stay in Slytherin."

'As Headmaster he is supposed to be above House rivalries. Besides, he was a teacher when Voldie was a student, wasn't he? Maybe he realised that mothering students can actually set them on the wrong path.' Harry reasoned.

'True. He had been so adamant about killing Alyssa though.'

'For the safety of our classmates. He relented as soon as we proposed our viable alternative option.'

"On your head be it." The Headmaster sighed. "Sorry boys, but you're going to be rooming with your brother for the rest of the term."

"Just rooming?" Lily asked pointedly.

"Well, yes. Harry is a member of Slytherin House. Even as Headmaster I have no power to ban him from his common room. In fact, only a petition by Slytherin House themselves, approved by Severus here, could remove them from the Slytherin communal areas."

Lily huffed, clearly not pleased by this hitch in the road, but didn't protest any further. She walked over to us and, despite our attempt to get away, pulled our stiff body into a hug, pressing a kiss to our forehead. I quickly wiped it off, not wanting any mark of affection from Lily right now.
"It's for your own good." Lily promised. We narrowed our eyes and didn't reply, but simply moved closer to our godfather and father. Severus immediately wrapped an arm around our shoulders.

Charles reappeared then, an excitable Dobby at his heels. The House-elf was clutching a dirty grey sock in his hands. Charles was grinning widely, but his smile fell when he caught wind of the tension and the visible distance between us and Lily. Our brother stared at Lily.

"What did you do?"

Lily looked resigned. "What makes you think it was me?"

"Dad is looking disappointed at you. What. Did. You. Do?" Charles repeated his question between gritted teeth.

"Lily has removed us from the Slytherin dorms and has us placed in Gryffindor for the remainder of the term. She tried to ban us from ever talking to Draco ever again." Harry answered when it appeared Lily wouldn't. Lily flinched as we reverted back to her given name, but I couldn't summon enough guilt to care.

Charles glared at Lily too. "Slytherin House and – I can't actually believe I'm saying this – Draco Malfoy are the best things that ever happened to Harry and Percy. Admittedly Draco can be a proper git sometimes, but he is a true friend and learned to accept Harry and Percy before we even did. So what if his Dad is a right old piece of work? Surely you of all people know not to judge people on their family. I mean, Aunt Petunia?"

Lily flinched. "Don't talk badly of your Aunt. She… she tries."

James sighed. "We should head home. For what it's worth boys, I don't approve of this. Come along Lily. We've done enough damage here."

Our parents flooed away, and we glanced up at our brother. "What's with the elf?"

"Malfoy senior was abusing him. I couldn't in my right mind leave Dobby with him." Charles shrugged. "Headmaster, we – Dobby and I that is – were wondering if you had any work Dobby could do for you in school?"

Dumbledore agreed, suggesting that the technicalities could be sorted out in the morning. He suggested we got checked out in the Hospital wing before heading to bed. We would, of course, be excused from our first lessons tomorrow to allow us to catch up on some sleep and recover.

Severus accompanied us though the dark corridors to the Medical Wing. We walked in silence, simply enjoying each other's company without actually discussing anything.

Upon reaching the medical wing we found Ginny sitting in bed, with Ron in a chair next to her and Mr and Mrs Weasley also at her side. A little further down Lockhart was babbling nonsense to himself, commenting on whatever took his fancy. We rolled our eyes, and shared a grin with Charles.

Madam Pomfrey hurried over to us and manoeuvred Charles and us into beds, checking over our various cuts, bruises and scrapes. She tutted and mumbled things to herself, forcing ill-tasting potions down our throats and – after stripping us of our robes – spreading various creams over our cuts before bandaging them up.

The Mediwitch gave us a grave look when she noticed the round scar on our shoulder that Alyssa had given us. It had a slight golden sheen from where the phoenix tears had reacted with the basilisk...
venom to neutralise it.

"You certainly like picking up odd scars and marks, don't you? And don't think I didn't notice the various cuts you gained over last summer either. You are a walking disaster, I swear! I should wrap you in packaging charms to keep you safe, I should." Madam Pomfrey told us seriously, a warm light in her eyes giving away her humour at the situation. We didn't honestly think that she found us getting hurt funny – she'd be a rather bad Mediwitch if she did – but Madam Pomfrey certainly seemed to find the situations that we landed ourselves in quite the source of amusement.

Once we had finally be bandaged back together to our Mediwitch's satisfaction we joined our brother at Ginny's side. She was still a bit pale, but was looking a far shade better than she had when we had last seen her.

"Thank you so much for saving young Ginny, dears." Molly thanked us, hugging us close to her chest.

I shook our head. "We're only sorry we didn't notice she was in danger earlier."

"Nonsense." Mr Weasley waved my apology off. "You're only twelve. You can't carry the whole world on your shoulders just yet. None of the teachers noticed, so we can hardly hold it against you, can we?"

Grudgingly admitting he was right, we sat on a bed next to Ginny's, listening to everyone talking quietly for a few minutes before slowly succumbing to the siren's call of sleep.
Chapter 57

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I am a horrible author for leaving you for so long :( I am terribly sorry about that. I don't really have an excuse, I've just been busy I'm afraid.
I hope you enjoy this and I have some more chapters in reserve (hopefully I post them in the right order this time :P) so my next update should be soon :D
Until then, enjoy!!

Chapter 57
Percy's Point of View

A sharp pain shot through our side, forcing us awake. I yelped, still slightly too sleep-dazed to understand what was going on for a moment. Then I noticed Seamus Finnegan's smug face, and outstretched wand.

I gritted my teeth as I realised– for the third time this week – we had hit by a stinging spell courtesy of one Seamus Finnegan's. Apparently Seamus had a bone to pick with Slytherins, which was probably because Draco liked going round with Vincent and Gregory and taking the mick of his ignorance of several Wizarding Customs due to how he was muggle-raised, despite being a half-blood.

I glanced round the room, looking for Charles or Ron. Both, of course, weren't there. Probably showering, if the steam coming out the bathroom was any guess. The first time Seamus had woken us with a stinging charm Charles hadn't been there, but Ron had and he had immediately stuck up for us, threatening to punch him if he tried the same tactic again.

Ron had, we'd noticed, grown to like us over the last week, since we had saved Ginny and been exiled from our Slytherin dorm.

Lily, on the other hand, was still adamant that she was right. James had sent us a letter of apology, and had explained that he definitely didn't agree with Lily and was working on changing her mind. So far, it wasn't working.

'Hey, hey!' Harry exclaimed. 'Cool down, Perce.'

I blinked, and noticed the curtains were flapping as my magic responded to my bubbling emotions. I pulled Harry upfront and sat in the back of our mind, taking a few calming breaths.

'Sorry Harry.' I mumbled. 'She makes me so mad, that's all.'

Charles came back in the room then, and took one look at our disgruntled face and Seamus' mix between smug and scared expression and sighed. Silently asking with his eyes if we were ok. Harry gave him a small nod and rolled our eyes. Charles snorted and came to sit on the side of our bed.


"Well, at least you didn't say good morning. I can't say we particularly like waking to stinging
charms. Who knows, tomorrow – when we don't actually have to wake up early we might just return the favour."

Ron burst into laughter as he came back into the room. Seamus took a step back, not looking at all smug now.

"Hey, hey!" He protested. "You don't mess with a man's weekend lie in!"

We smirked. "Lucky you're not a man yet then, isn't it?"

Charles laughed, pulling the covers off us. "Come on, grumpy pants. Get dressed before we miss breakfast."

The day of classes dragged. As everything was back to normal, we didn't have to be escorted the class by teachers, but the lack of the chamber excitement left nothing but the boring lessons. The fact that the teachers kept giving us disapproving glares didn't help none either. McGonagall gave us a glare that warned us she was looking for any excuse to put us in detention.

"Mr Potter, since I can see you are so very intrigued by my lesson would you like to remind me what spell we are currently studying?"

I suppressed a sigh. "Orchideous, used to transfigure an object into a bouquet of flowers."

"And since you are so knowledgeable as to not need to pay attention in my lessons, would you care to perform the spell?" Professor McGonagall gave us a tight smile.

I waved my wand over our quill, incanting "Orchideous."

A beautiful bouquet of moonlace appeared, the flowers still closed tight, for they would only bloom under a full moon and loving care. Harry sighed, realising my mistake. I loved moonlace, so of course it would be the flower I chose to transfigure something into, but it wouldn't just bloom like a non-magical flower.

"Clearly you do need to pay attention, Mr Potter, if you find yourself incapable of producing a bouquet of blooming flowers." Professor McGonagall pursed her lips. "Detention with me tonight, we'll find the gaps in your knowledge then."

"Professor, with all due respect, you said at the beginning of this class we wouldn't be casting until tomorrow. And there was nothing wrong with Percy's bouquet other than his choice in flowers. Moonlace only blooms under certain conditions, after all." Harry protested.

Charles kicked us under the desk but we couldn't care less if we were annoying McGonagall further. We knew her detention wasn't really about our spell.

"If Percy knew it was a bad choice, then why did he go ahead with it?" Professor McGonagall raised an eyebrow.

Harry raised one of ours right back at her, understanding her second meaning perfectly, but choosing to ignore it. "Because we were put on the spot and his favourite flower was the first that came to mind. Problem?"

"I will still be seeing you in detention tonight, Mr Potter. I will not tolerate disrespect in my class!"

Charles kicked us again and this time we did actually shut up, but still decided to spend the remaining ten minutes of the lesson glaring at McGonagall.
"Potter, stay behind please."

We withheld a groan, but stayed in our seat until the last student – our brother – had trailed out the room.

"Potter, I know you think I'm just being stupid, but you are – no matter what you think – one of my lions. I know you have urges to go off and do something incredibly reckless every now and again, but I'd rather you didn't follow them. I'm trying to look after you while you are here and I am your Head of House." McGonagall tried to explain.

"Oh really." I snapped. "Well sorry to burst your bubble, but female figures "looking after us" has never really gone so well. Lily forgot us for years, then – while still trying to apparently "make it up to us" goes and tries to band us from seeing our friends. And ok, so you have a point that maybe we shouldn't have gone off to save Alyssa, but it is actually none of your business what we do!"

McGonagall took in a sharp intake of breath. "Percy, please. I know you're hurt at the moment, but don't take it out on everything else."

"You know, do you?" I gritted our teeth. "How could you possibly –"

Before I could finish my rant Harry took over. I relinquished control pretty quickly. I really wasn't it the right state of mind for this conversation, and we both knew it. At least Harry had the foresight to stop me though before I landed us permanently in detention.

"Professor, you may have gathered, but neither of us are in the mood to be discussing Lily right now. We're already late for potions. Would you mind letting us go?"

McGonagall sighed, but let us go. We paused a moment outside her classroom before heading for Myrtle's bathroom. We were too wound up to even think about going to lesson, so Alyssa seemed our best bet. She was very glad to see us. It had been our first chance to get away and see her since that night. She was still missing a fang, but the white stub of one re-growing could be seen peeking out of her pink gum.

$Harry! Percy!$ Alyssa wrapped us up in her coils. $I almost thought you might not come back!$ 

We chuckled. $And miss our darling Alyssa's company? Not for the world, Alyssa.$

Her coils tightened before releasing us. Then she asked us what had happened since. We explained Lily's punishment and the insufferable Gryffindors and how despite being closer to Charles we hated our new rooming and how the teachers were getting on our last nerve.

$Your mother, Lily, this is?$ Alyssa asked. We nodded. $You won't like this, but she is trying to look out for you. Admittedly she could have chosen a better method, but the facts are there. And look at it this way – at least you have your mother to look after you. I was born from a chicken egg with a toad sitting on top of it! I had to find my place in this world myself. At least you have your mother to help you with that.$

$Yeah…$ I pouted at her logic. $Doesn't mean I have to like her for it.$

We rubbed the scales around the still raw, but mostly healed eyes of our friend and sighed, for what must have been the fiftieth time that day. We knew it was far too late to save her sight, then grinned, remembering why that horrific event saved her life.

$Oh, oh!$ Harry burst out. $But guess what? Lily agreed to let us keep you as a familiar, so Dumbledore isn't required to kill you. Since you can't kill anyone with your gaze anymore, and as
long as we prevent you from biting anyone, you can be out familiar! If you want of course. We are required to shrink you however…” Harry looked down, expecting a refusal for that term.

$I accept.$ Alyssa hissed, drawing out her sibilant sounds with glee. $Can I come with you now?$

$Sure.$ We smirked. $I can't wait to see our roommates' reactions.

We had spent time researching long term shrinking spells during our first week of imprisonment and so were well practised with the spell we had chosen. First however Harry pulled a small bracelet out of our pocket.

$The charm needs something to be fixed to, do you mind?$

Alyssa shook her head so we cast the spell, tying it to the bracelet which we simply held against her scales until she was small enough for it to fit around her neck like a collar.

Alyssa coiled around our left arm and shoulders as we readied to leave. We had already missed all of potions, which had been our last lesson of the day, so no doubt Charles and Draco were looking for us.

Sure enough, Draco was already in Myrtle's bathroom when we reached it. He gave Alyssa an impressed look. "Charles is looking for you. We noticed you bunked potions. Severus more than a little mad about it."

Suddenly our feet were very interesting as we refused to meet our friend's eyes. "McGonagall kept pressing us, and we just couldn't sit in lesson another minute. We can deal with Percy's ADHD on a good day, but this really wasn't one."

Draco pulled us in for a hug. "Harry, Percy, I think this has been a bad week for you."

We shrugged noncommittedly. "True."

"Come on. Might as well get Severus' fury over with."

Strangely enough, Severus wasn't actually mad when we reached his office. He pulled us into a hug and informed us he had cancelled our detention with Professor McGonagall. He then told us that we were spending the weekend sleeping in his quarters, and Draco would as well. There was nothing wrong or inappropriate about a man spending the weekend with his godsons. In fact, the Headmaster himself had recommended it, with permission from James.

We grinned.

"Thanks Severus." Harry hugged our godfather tightly. "Have you met Alyssa, by the way?"

Alyssa poked her head out our robes at the mention of her name and hissed a drowsy greeting at Severus.

"She's gorgeous." Severus murmured. "It's such a shame Fawkes hurt her. Such a rare species. But so pretty."

Draco rolled his eyes. "Isn't she just. You may want to whip up a batch of anti-venom, just in case though, Severus."

"Invent, more like." Severus grinned. "Nobody has actually invented Basilisk anti-venom yet."

"Phoenix tears work." Harry pointed out and we rolled our shoulder as it twinged with remembered
pain. Alyssa murmured an apology, but we waved it off.

$Alyssa, we don't blame you. We blame the psychopathic Dark Lord that we killed for it.$

Alyssa laughed, the sibilant sound making Severus cringe slightly, and touched his left forearm. We winced, remembering his days as the Dark Lord's puppet. Moving swiftly on, Severus had a house-elf summon what we needed for our impromptu sleepover, and we all set up camp on his Livingroom floor.

I don't know what it is about creating massive dens to sleep in, but it gives you a whole sense of security that I don't think we've ever really experienced anywhere else. It's as if the thin sheet walls block out all the troubles of the world, and you're just safe with your friends inside.

We stayed up chatting late that night, and by the time we finally drifted off to sleep we had a massive grin on our face.

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Potter Manor

James and Lily were arguing. Again. It was a rather old argument really by now. Lily couldn't understand why everyone couldn't just see that she was trying to protect her family, and the only way to do that was to keep the Malfoys as far away from Harry and Percy as physically possible! James couldn't understand why his wife was so blind as to the fact that she was driving their sons away and making them hate them by isolating them from their friends. As much as he wanted them to be Gryffindors, the truth remained – they just weren't.

"Lily, please. Can't you see what you're doing? How many letters have you sent Harry and Percy? And just how many have they replied this week? You're worried about them getting hurt, but sometimes they need to make their own decisions. They're not five anymore for Merlin's sake! They're twelve, nearly thirteen." James sighed. "You just need to let them grow up."

Lily shook her head, tears streaming down her cheeks. "But they're my boys! I can't just let them get close to the man that tried to kill every muggleborn in the school!"

"Tom Riddle is gone now. We have only sketchy proof at best that Lucius even knew what the diary could do!" James pulled her in for a hug. Lily sobbed harder, realising how badly she was messing up, but too proud to stand down.

"I can't back out now. He'll never respect me." She said, her voice shaky.

"Then find some way to make it up to him. How doesn't matter. But I'm not about to lose our boys again, understand?" James watched as Lily nodded, before sighing again, and picking up his pretty red-haired wife and carrying her to bed. They both needed sleep rather desperately. The rest of the conversation could wait until morning.

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Camp Half-Blood

A scream ripped through the early morning air, waking up all the campers. Within minutes, they had all assembled at the top of Half-Blood Hill, watching Thalia's tree with horror. They were all dressed in an odd assortment of pyjamas and armour, most of them missing leg greaves or their breast plates only buckled half correctly.

The last to arrive were Chiron and Dionysus, both of whom looked rather disgruntled for being woken up at such a time. Chiron – much to the campers' amusement – had his tail in rollers, which
seemed to take the seriousness right out of his grave expression.

Right in the centre of Thalia's tree was a deep, round infected wound that was oozing bright greeny-yellow sap. It wasn't yet clear how it was infected, but judging from the lustre already stripped from the tree, it was clear if nothing could be done, it wouldn't end well.

And curled up and base of the tree was little Leo, crying.

"I'm so sorry Annabeth. I should have noticed earlier, I should have been able to stop it, I…" Leo burst into a new round of sobs. His large brother, Beckendorf, scooped him up.

"Back to bed, little Leo. You're not to blame for this. Annabeth can't blame you." He soothed his brother, glaring at anyone who gave them a wrong look. Silena, Beckendorf's girlfriend, joined them, adding her own calm and persuasive words. While she might not have inherited her mother's charm-speaking gift, Silena still had quite the way with words, and – before they had even reached Cabin 9 – Leo had stopped crying, and simply held on to his brother for all he was worth.

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*The Forbidden Forest*

A young first year student glanced around himself, jumping at each small noise and every shifting leaf. He was lost, and the other beings in the forest didn't seem to want to help him at all. The large spiders had tried to attack him and the pony-men had shot him with arrows and the horned-horses had run away from him. Even the pretty sparkling fairies just blew dust in his face and darted off when he asked for help.

The little first year sat down by a tree, pulling at his yellow and black tie as he cried. All he had wanted to do was see the pretty horses the older years had talked about. And now he was cold and tired and the bad-beings had hurt him.

"Why are you crying?"

The voice was soft and gentle, like the bumbling brook he could hear beyond the bushes. The little Hufflepuff looked up, his eye ringed with red.

"I just came to see the pretty horses, but they ran away from me, and then other people tried to hurt me and I'm lost and I just want to get back to Hogwarts." He whimpered slightly, looking up at the pretty water girl who was still smiling at him.

"Well then, little one, just follow my waters upstream. My little brook starts not far from the edge of the trees. You're not far." The water naiad smiled warmly again.

"Thank you!" The boy smiled shyly. "You're pretty."

The naiad smile widened, and she held her hand out to the little boy she knew was quite special. Her Little Lords were Fated to go on many adventures with him, and it wouldn't do to keep them from each other.
Chapter 58

Harry's Point of View

When I woke up the next day, feeling much better than the day before, I were met by a very worried godfather. Severus was rushing to get changed, his hair still a messy from bed. Cautiously, I send a quick spell Draco had taught us at our godfather to sort out at least that problem for him. He gave us a dark look when he felt the magic seep over him, but when we gestured to his hair, Severus smiled.

"Thank you Harry." Severus said distractedly.

"What's going on?" Draco's voice was slightly slurred with sleep, and I grinned, but also sent our godfather a questioning look.

Severus sighed. "Some first year Hufflepuff has managed to get himself lost. Last his friend's heard he was off to look at the 'pretty ponies', in the forbidden forest."

I sat up immediately, pulling on our own clothes after persuading Alyssa to lie on the still-warm pillow for a minute. Percy was yet to wake up, but I had no doubt he would disagree with my decision to help.

"We're coming." I said. Severus opened his mouth to refuse, but I gave him a look as Alyssa curled around our arm once more now I had stopped moving. "Severus, like it or not, we know the forest better than anyone here – except perhaps Hagrid. And the creatures trust us. We'll be of more use to you than anyone."

Severus grumbled. "If anyone asks, you had detention this morning, yes?"

"Sorry for forgetting our homework, sir!" I grinned at him, "We'll hand it in on Monday."

Severus narrowed his eyes. "Yes you most certainly will you impertinent imps!"

Ops. Looked like our godfather had actually forgotten that we had supposed to hand in our essay yesterday. I offered an angelic smile, and Severus shook his head at me.

"That shouldn't be as effective as it is."

Draco was still sleepy, but gathered enough energy to snort at us.

"You go run round the forest. I'm going to sleep some more."

I chuckled, and followed our godfather through the castle to the forbidden forest. Being a weekend, the halls were deserted bar for a few teachers hustling about, no doubt looking for the missing Hufflepuff.

Hagrid was already waiting by the edge of the forest for Professor Snape when we arrived. If he was surprised to see us accompanying our godfather, the large man didn't show it. He merely offered us a smile then turned to talk to the school's potion master.

"Apparently the little tyke wandered into the Forest last night looking for the unicorns." Hagrid looked worried. "But, of course, unicorns don't take well to men. I just hope he isn't hurt."
Professor Snape nodded, his movements stiff with apprehension, but otherwise he showed no other outwardly signs of concern.

"What's the boy's name?" I asked.

"Tyson. Tyson Jackson, I believe." Our godfather answered us.

Hagrid grinned. "And no, before you ask, we haven't asked the centaurs yet. They seem to be in a situation of rather high alert this morning."

"Hm."

I put our fingers to our lips and let out a piercing whistle. It took a minute or two for anything to happen, during which I listened to our godfather questioning Hagrid some more on the first year, and the cold air finally managed to wake Percy up.

'What's going on?' Percy yawned, slurring his words slightly.

I smiled mentally at him. 'A first year has gone missing, presumably in the forbidden forest. We have 'detention' with Severus, so are helping look for him.'

Percy nodded, accessing my memories to get the full details. We chatted idly to each other, debating over who to ask for news.

'I called the unicorn herd. Hopefully at least one of them will answer.' I told him.

A moment or two later, a movement caught our eye. Slowly plodding out through the trees was a pearly white unicorn, a faint parting in the fur of its neck telling of a once terrible wound. We grinned at the sight of her, easily recognising the beautiful creature whose life we had saved last year.

'Young lords.' The mighty beast dipped her head in greeting. 'Is something the matter? You have never actively called us before, preferring to seek us out yourselves.'

"We apologise for disturbing you, but a young first year has gone missing. We don't suppose you've seen a young boy in Hogwarts robes in the woods have you?"

'Boy? Maybe. There was a young male in your robes attempting to approach us under the moon's gaze last night.' Our friend replied. 'But he unnerved us, so we stayed away.'

I nodded. "Do you know what happened to him?"

'The centaurs drove him away, near the spiders.' A shiver ran through her white coat. 'What happened after that, I don't know. The tree nymphs may, however.'

We thanked her again, pressing a small kiss to her nose, and bade her farewell.

It was odd, I thought, not having a name to call her friend by. But the names of unicorns were all but impossible for anyone to twist their tongues around, so we chose not to risk insulting our friends by trying.

"That seemed to be a rather one-sided conversation," Severus commented, raising an eyebrow at us. We laughed.

"By your standards maybe. We heard her loud and clear."
Hagrid beamed at us for that. "A horse-whisperer huh? You'll be taking Care of Magical Creatures next year no doubt?"

"It is definitely on our list to consider." I agreed. "Anyway, our friend suggested we ask the Nymphs. She lost track of Tyson after the centaurs apparently drove him away."

"Ask the Nymphs?" Hagrid looked sceptical. "They're nothing but gossip-lovers on the best of days."

We chuckled. "Ah, but gossip has a basis of truth, does it not?"

Our morning was spent following up various trails. Severus and Hagrid drifted off to search on their own, losing faith in our trails as more and more turned up empty. Severus did place a charm on us to let him know if we were safe, and ordered us to send up red sparks if we needed urgent help. Agreeing, we disappeared deeper into the Forest, where we knew the spiders dwelled.

Alyssa hissed, and made herself scarce, telling us she would go find our white-haired hatch-mate while we visited the spiders she hated so. Realising what a good idea this was, I thanked her, reminding her to hunt on the way back as well. A hungry basilisk was a potentially dangerous one, after all.

Aragog was a nice chap. He offered us the information he could, explaining how his children had attacked the boy. Strange he kept referring to Tyson as "the one-eyed one", which made little sense, but considering how the spider had eight eyes, who were we to question how he saw things? Maybe he simply meant one pair of eyes, which was more of a mouthful to say.

Anyway, if I could give Aragog one small piece of parenting advice, it would be to pass on his good manners to his children. After all, attempting to eat your guests was hardly good hospitality. Riptide got a little work out, before the spiders all fled from the glowing bronze weapon.

'I've got a weird feeling about this Hufflepuff.' Percy admitted after we had left the spiders' hollow. 'Normally – though they wouldn't ever admit it – the centaurs and unicorns and Nymphs like to protect the younger students. So what's so odd about his one?'

'Maybe.' I paused and thought about it a minute. 'But they have been helpful in giving us genuine leads. Maybe he got too close or something? Insulted them accidentally? He sounds like a muggleborn, so as a first year he probably wouldn't know how to treat the creatures who dwell here."

'As possible as that is, I think it might be more than that.' Percy said softly, his unease filtering through our bond. 'And believe me, I'm not saying he is definitely the cause, but something in this situation is wrong."

"Excuse me."

Our head jerked up to see a young Naiad sitting in her stream, a few feet away.

"You're Lords Harry and Percy Potter, aren't you?" The Naiad beamed, bowing her head at us. I coughed, embarrassed.

"Um. Yes." Percy scratched the back of our neck.

"The rumour mill says you're looking for the badger boy."

'Badger boy?' Percy laughed. 'What?'
'Hufflepuff? Their crest is a badger, remember?'

Percy sent me a blushing face. 'Shhh!'

The Naiad was watching us expectantly. "Oh, sorry, yes we are. Do you know anything that might help us find him? The whole forest appears to have seen him, but nobody can tell us exactly where he is now."

The Naiad giggled. "I found him near my stream last night, and was guiding him back to the school when he fell asleep. I left him in a small hollow sacred to Pan for safety. If you follow me?"

Nodding, we paddled through the stream after her. The hollow seemed to be quite a way upstream, almost at the very edge of the forest, but it was bordered with thick holly and rhododendron bushes, making it only accessible via the stream. The grass was lush and green, and the sunlight filtering through the leaves was warm and bright. A small impression in the long grass hinted at Tyson's location, and we hurried over quickly. We trusted the Naiads to have kept him safe, but we wanted to see for sure that he was alright.

Tyson Jackson was quite tall for his age – possibly about the average height of a second year. He had a mass of thick dark curls on his head. His cheeks were still slightly round with baby fat, the sharp lines of adulthood yet to appear. His teeth were crooked, but his smile was infection as he slept. He was curled up in a ball, his slightly too big robes swallowing him up.

His family couldn't be too rich, I surmised, otherwise they would have brought him a properly fitted robe for each year, rather than one too large to grow into over the next few years.

'Should we wake him?'

'Yeah. Send for Severus and Hagrid too.' I agreed. Percy waved his wand, shooting green stars into the sky, signalling to the searching teachers we'd found the missing boy, and he was safe.

"Tyson? You need to wake up, mate." Percy said, gently shaking the Hufflepuff. Our vision seemed slightly fuzzy as we watched him open his wide brown eyes, almost as if we were looking through a glamour… Which was ridiculous of course. Why would he hide his eyes behind a glamour?

"Who… who are you?" Tyson gazed up at us wide-eyed, and we smiled softly. He had an accent, not unlike Annabeth's really, the sounds distinctively different to our ears. Clearly Tyson didn't originate from the UK. We'd try and guess where in the States he was from, but our accent pinpointing system wasn't that accurate yet.

"Percy and Harry Potter, pleased to make your acquaintance." Percy bowed in a silly manor, making the first year giggle.

"Percy? Harry? Where are you?"

Professor Snape was calling us from just beyond the wall of holly and rhododendron foliage. We grinned. "Give us a minute. We'll come to you, Professor."

Percy held out a hand to help Tyson up. "Coming, big guy?"

Tyson positively beamed, accepting our hand. I'm not going to lie. The first year weighted a tonne. It was only Percy's strict exercise routine that kept Tyson from pulling us off our feet. We paddled through the stream, thanking Pegaia, the Naiad who looked after him for us. We send a quick drying charm at Tyson's robes before leading him back to where our godfather was.
"There you are!" Professor Snape drew himself up tall, glowering down at the tall first year, who was failing to hide behind our much smaller frame – which was quite hard considering we were far from the tallest in our year. "Do you know how much trouble you've caused? There's a reason the Forbidden Forest is forbidden you know! You could have been killed! You reckless imbecile!"

Tyson, at this point, looked like he wanted to cry. Professor Snape was scare enough on a good day, let alone when you succeeded in really hacking him off.

"We should get Madam Pomfrey to check him over." Percy reminded Severus. "He's been in the forest all night. We checked him over, but…"

"Alright. Off you go. But you'll be hearing from me later, Mr Jackson. Mark my words."

We quickly extracted the terrified Hufflepuff from our godfather's clutches and ran him up to the hospital wing.

"Mr Potters. What is it with you and my hospital wing?" Madam Pomfrey looked resigned, manhandling us over to our usual bed in her hospital.

"No, no, no!" I protested. "Really, Madam Pomfrey. It's actually not us for once. Tyson Jackson –"

The Mediwitch spun around, spotting the tall first year who had entered behind us. She eyed him quickly for any injuries before she started casting spells.

"He's perfectly fine." She declared. "Perhaps a little cold, but that's nothing a good hot drink and night's sleep won't fix. You two run along now and warm up. I presume the other staff have been informed of Tyson's whereabouts?"

"Professor Snape should have informed them by now, yes." We nodded.

After leaving Tyson in the capable hands of his classmates, we retreated back to Severus' quarters, where Draco was no doubt only just waking up.

Sure enough, Draco was still sitting in his pyjamas, reading one of our godfather's potion journals as he waited for Severus and us to return. He had a blanket wrapped around him, and his socked feet poking out the bottom. Alyssa was clearly curled up with him, her dark head standing out starkly against the pale skin of our neck.

He looked up when we entered the room, his sharp grey eyes meeting ours questioningly, his body stiffening slightly before his mind clocked on, and he relaxed. We smirked at him. Last time Draco had mistaken someone else for us, it had ended up being the Runes teacher, and his informal address had put Draco in detention for the night. Of course, calling anyone other than Percy and I a two faced backstabbing blood-traitor would probably have him in a duel, so Draco was probably quite lucky with the detention.

We grinning, remembering what we had done to warrant such a title. It had been over a Quidditch Match, and after we had won several bets on the Gryffindor Team our entire house had been a little heated, especially after Gryffindor where placed first for the Quidditch Cup after that game.

"All safe and sound, I presume?" Draco drawled, raising an eyebrow questioningly. Alyssa hissed drowsily in greeting too.

Percy nodded, and we curled up on the sofa next to him, burrowing under the duvet next to him. Draco protested at the draft of cold air, but shut up after noticing how tired we were. We hadn't noticed when actually looking for Tyson, but the trekking all over the Forest had been quite tiring,
now we had stopped.

For a good hour or two we lay next to our friend, listening as he read out of the journal to us. By the time Severus returned, we were half dozing, content as we listened, warm under the covers and blocking out the rest of the hectic word outside the threshold. We'd worry about our homework and end of year exams tomorrow. Right now, we just wanted to pretend none of that existed.
Chapter 59

Percy's point of view

It was announced, the day following our retrieval of the first year Hufflepuff that the mandrakes were only about a week off harvest. The potion itself to un-petrify our fellow students wouldn't take long to brew – maybe a few hours at most. Harry and I – needless to say – were delighted at the news. We had quickly hurried to the medical wing to tell Luna and Annabeth, as soon as the breakfast was over.

Before we could reach Annabeth and Luna however, a small voice called out a greeting to us.

"Hello, Harry and Percy."

Tyson Jackson gazed at us from his bed, his eyes wide with… admiration? Adoration? I'm not quite sure what, but he looked much, much younger than a first year with his wide eyes and round face. I flashed him a lazy grin, side-tracking from our mission to see the big first year whom we had saved from the Forbidden Forest yesterday.

"Hey there, Tyson. You still here?" I pulled a face, careful to keep our back to Pomfrey's office as I did so. Being such a frequent visitor here, we didn't want the fiery Mediwitch mad at us.

"Madam Pomfrey wanted to keep us in for the night, 'just to be safe'." Tyson explained, his eyes darkening with his upset at the situation. "I told her I was fine, but she didn't believe me."

"Just her job, we guess. Nobody particularly likes being bed-bound in the hospital wing, but we daresay she's saved some lives by doing so." We admitted. We had a bit of a love-hate relationship with the Mediwitch, we guessed. We respected her, not only as our senior, but also as a talented Mediwitch. We were also – obviously highly grateful to her for treating our various (and numerous) injures. However, we rarely ever expressed this to her, because she was constantly shoving us into her hospital-wing beds and keeping us there for what we considered an incredibly long amount of time.

"Yes, well." We heard Madam Pomfrey's no non-sense voice behind us. "It's nice to hear people admit that every now and again."

We turned around, beaming at the school's Mediwitch. "We never admit it, but everyone knows Hogwarts would be lost without you."

Madam Pomfrey's lips twitched upwards in a small smile, but didn't speak anymore on the topic. Instead she gently pushed past us to check on her newest patient, checking his temperature and vitals.

"Well, you're all clear I suppose." Madam Pomfrey sighed. "If I release you, you won't go running back into the woods, will you?"

Tyson shook his head ferociously, his eyes wide as he thought of the forbidden forest. "No, no, no! The mean pony-men and spiders are there! And the pretty ponies didn't even like me…"

We hid a laugh, ducking our head at the way our younger friend phased his sentence. Luckily, Tyson didn't notice.
'Hey Harry...' I asked, uncertain. 'Is it me, or does Tyson's quality of speech slip when he's emotional?'

Harry pondered over it for a minute. 'Maybe. It's a little hard to tell but... you may be right. Given half the time we've talked to Tyson have been in emotionally stressing situations, it's not exactly as if we have enough proof to really call that a conclusion.'

'Still.' I sighed. 'He's a strange boy.'

I glanced at Tyson's face, but I couldn't quite seem to look beyond his slightly crooked teeth. His slightly shabby second-hand uniform was handing off the picture rail above Tyson's head, the new tears from his nightly trample through the Forbidden Forest easy to pick out from the carefully stitched up old ones.

"Good to know you've learnt your lesson. I leave you to get ready to go now." Madam Pomfrey disappeared back into her office. We shared a small smile with Tyson.

"We're just going to go see Luna, but we'll see you later?" I told Tyson, phrasing the last part as more of a question. But I guess I shouldn't really have had any doubts that the young Hufflepuff would want to see us around. He nodded enthusiastically, climbing out of bed to give us a huge bear hug.

After offering our goodbyes to Tyson we carried on to the end of the Medical Wing where Luna and Annabeth lay, staring unblinkingly up at the ceiling.

"Hey guys." I offered them a grin. "You'll never guess what – Madam Sprout's mandrake crop is almost ready to be harvested, meaning you'll be back on your feet in absolutely no time!"

Annabeth and Luna, rather predictably, didn't respond. But we'd gotten used to that over the months of them being petrified. Hades, they couldn't even hear us! Sighing, we sat on our friends' bed, and spent the next half an hour telling them about all the ridiculous nonsense currently going on in our life before Madam Pomfrey finally kicked us out to do something useful like revise for our upcoming end of year exams.

Alyssa was already coiled on our chair by the fire when we reached the common room, and everyone was giving her a wide birth – with the exception of Draco, who appeared to be trying to console our friend. Upon spotting us, a look of utter relief spread over our normally stoic friend's face.

"Potter, please, what is up with Alyssa? She won't let any of us near our seats." Draco all but begged.

$Alyssa?$ We hissed quietly, holding out a hand to the shrunken Basilisk, who quickly coiled around our arm and neck.

$The nestlings were trying to touch me.$ She sulked. $I don't like being attacked.$

I laughed, turning back to Draco. "Seems like some 'nestlings' were attempting to pet her. She's quite conscious of her personal space."

Some of the older years send us offended looks, and I burst out laughing again.

'Really? Flint was trying to pet Alyssa?' I chuckled. 'That's too good.'

"God a problem, Potter?" Higgs demanded.
"Can't you tell from her marking's that Alyssa is a poisonous breed? And you tried to pet her!" Harry shoved me back, smoothing out our breathing so we'd stop laughing. "You should take more care in future, who knows when a snake might bite?"

Higgs started to turn purple with anger, and while Flint looked slightly pink with embarrassment at his mistake, he didn't seem offended by our amusement in the situation. So after a moment of concern at our captain's reaction, Harry returned our attention to Higgs, who was pulling back his fist to hit us.

'Now that is not very becoming for a pureblood, know is it?' I muttered, sniggering at the thought of Higgs' not quite so pure bloodline that he was so stuck up on. Harry shushed me.

'Percy, brother darling, you're not really helping me defuse the situation, the situation which – may I add – you started.' Harry sighed, making me pout.

'You're no fun. Higgs is so fun to poke fun at though. He does it back too!'

Harry simply glared at me in his 'you-are-better-than-that-aren't-you way. I pouted again, sulking and muttering things under my breath about stupid do-good brothers.

Flint managed to grab Higgs' elbow before he actually hit us, but it was a close call. Alyssa hissed at the older boy menacingly, flashing fangs dripping with venom.

$Try it.$ She hissed, the threat obvious even to non-Parselmouths. $Just try and hurt my nestlings.$

"Shh." Harry placated our scaly friend. $He won't hurt us. I won't let him. And if you hurt him, Dumbledore will have the authority to get rid of you, and we don't want that.$

Higgs sneered. "What are you doing? You can't imitate a snake, mudblood. It just hacks them off!"

"Who said anything about imitating?" Harry raised an eyebrow. He straighten our face out to be perfectly blank in the guess-if-I-joke-or-no way we loved to use on Charles. Higgs, it appeared, fell for it even better than our brother, and growled before turning round and storming off in a huff. I snorted.

'Well, we'd rather be a mudblood than you, git!'

Harry shushed me again (and I pouted, again) before settling down as if nothing had happened, and pulling out our potions book from our bag to start revising. Draco stared at us for a moment before following suit, quickly followed by Blaise and Theo, who quietly raised their voices every now and again to clarify something.

The first week of our end of year exams passed without note. Harry, naturally, completed our tests with all the effort of lifting a finger. Honestly, I hate him for that. Why is it I can't concentrate enough to even decipher half a sentence of the exams yet he can stay on task for the whole hour long! I know he's my twin soul, but still… He blocked me out as well! I was left nattering on about everything and nothing and he just left me to it!

We saw a lot of Tyson during that week too, he was constantly drifting round our normal haunts in the dungeons, library and spot on by the Lake. He didn't appear to be following us however, so I assumed that he had always been around, we'd just never noticed him. Like how you can't stop hearing the ticking of a clock once it works your way into your ears. Not that I mean to say Tyson was as annoying as a ticking clock, he was just there.

We chatted a lot, and he told us about his foster mother, Sally, and her new husband Paul. He told us
about how Sally was the nicest woman on Earth, and how she had saved him off the streets, and like
to back cookies. We smiled and in return told him about some of our adventures as a child, sneaking
through the mansion's rafters or into the woods to see the werewolf pack.

We started to see the large first year as a younger brother. Annoying at times, but ours to protect and
embarrass.

Draco often ignored Tyson when he joined us to quietly start working. Not that he didn't like Tyson,
but that his parents were much more likely to get mad at him if he started talking to a Hufflepuff than
ours were. Tyson was unnerved by this at first, but let it go after we explained the situation to him.
Slytherin politics were – as ever – a long list of restrictions and power plays.

Finally though, the week was up and the mandrake's had been prepared. By Sunday evening there
were at least half a dozen familiar faces back in the Great Hall, Annabeth and Luna's and Hermione's
among them.

Annabeth grinned at us as she walked into the hall, and accepted our hug with dignity. I think most
of Slytherin was relieved to see them back as well, if only for the sake of the points we had lost being
late to class after visiting her. Draco was genuinely relieved to see Annabeth and Luna too, claiming
he now had backup to help stop us from doing unpredictably stupid things. We grinned at that.

Considering how much school they had missed, anybody who had been petrified had been made
exempt from the end of year exams. It was amusing to see how despite everyone else celebrating
Annabeth and Luna and Hermione couldn't look more scandalised by the matter, demanding notes
and information off their peers and requesting assignments from their teachers.

Annabeth, Luna and we snuck away the following evening to Iris Message Leo. Harry and I had
been slightly concerned by the lack of communication from Leo. We tried to IM him as often as our
homework schedule would allow, which we hadn't been able to do for a few weeks, but Leo still
IMed us twice a week regardless. Last week, however, Leo hadn't contacted us at all, which was
worrying to say the least.

Unfortunately, our IM with Annabeth and Luna did nothing to calm our fears. We messaged him at
what would be early in the morning at Camp, when he should have been only just waking up.
Instead, we found him dressed in full (oversized) armour, patrolling the camp boundaries with
Clarisse and Beckendorf.

"Leo!" We called his attention. "What are you doing?"

Leo snapped around, a look of relief passing over his face when he saw us. "Percy, Harry – and
Luna and Annabeth! It's brilliant to see you again. We're patrolling the boundary. The border can't
protect us anymore, so we have to do it ourselves."

"What are you talking about?" Annabeth looked horrified. "Thalia's tree protects camp though."

Beckendorf and Clarisse noticed as now, looks of guilt on the faces as they looked at Annabeth and
Luna. "Thalia's tree… someone poisoned it. Annabeth, Luna… Thalia's tree's dying."

Annabeth recoiled at Clarisse's words, and Luna came out, her normally misty eyes clear and
shocked.

"What?!"
Chapter 60

Camp Half-Blood

Everything at camp had changed in the short week since Thalia's tree had been poisoned. The barriers had been noticeably weakening with every day as more and more monsters were able to breach them. Unfortunately, these weren't your everyday monsters like wind spirits or telekhines – they couldn't breach the barriers quite yet. No, it was the larger scale monsters – Cyclopes, Laestrygonians and Hellhounds. The older campers were run ragged just trying to protect their younger siblings who couldn't hold their own in a fight yet.

Mr D was as useless as ever, suggesting that if all the kids just got themselves killed he would be free from his punishment. Chiron had tried arguing with him, and pleading to the gods for some help, but the gods did what they do best in a crisis – ignored the desperate pleas of those who still honoured them. To make the situation worse suspicion was thrown upon Chiron for poisoning Thalia's tree due to his connection to the Titans, who were rumoured to be rising after Harry and Percy's quest last summer.

Zeus ordered Mr D to find a replacement for Chiron ASAP and then get rid of their old hero trainer. Better to be safe than sorry.

Of course, this did very little indeed to calm the couple of hundred worried kids in Mr D's unloving care. Their trainer – and the one responsible adult in charge at camp – was being kicked out and they were to be left at Mr D's tender mercy? Hardly the best situation. And knowing their oh-so-caring director, they could bet their new trainer wasn't going to be a particularly pleasant character either.

Leo mused over this as he lay in bed, too tired to change out of his clothes from that day. He'd only need to redress in a few hours anyway. Why waste the energy? The gentle hum of machines around him slowly lulled him into a daze, drifting on the edge of consciousness, but proper sleep evaded him for a while longer.

Leo was woken after a few hours of patchy sleep by his oldest brother Beckendorf, calling him for the early morning patrol. Clarisse was already waiting outside when he appeared fully armed from Cabin 9 five minutes later, still rubbing sleep from his eyes.

The borders were deathly silent as they patrolled them; not even the birds sang to herald the dawn. Something was wrong. Well, Leo supposed, it couldn't get worse right? The back of his neck prickled, like he was being watched, and Leo spun round, only to let out a quiet sigh of relief a moment later.

"Leo!" Harry and Percy called from within the rainbow tinted Iris Message, confused by his whereabouts at such a time in the morning. "What are you doing?"

Leo smiled tightly, relief plain on his face, especially at the sight of Luna and Annabeth beside Percy and Harry. After months and months of his friends trapped in a frozen state after an attack it was great to see them. "Percy, Harry – and Luna and Annabeth! It's great to see you again. We're patrolling the boundary. The border can't protect us anymore, so we have to do it ourselves."

"What are you talking about?" Annabeth looked horrified, disbelief ringing clear in their voice as she shook her head. "Thalia's tree protects the camp though."
Beckendorf and Clarisse noticed their friends in the Iris Message, recognising the familiar and friendly voices. Almost identical looks of guilt and sadness spread across their faces as they looked at Annabeth and Luna, understanding her close bond with the girl in the tree. "Thalia's tree… someone poisoned it. Annabeth, Luna… Thalia's tree is dying."

Annabeth recoiled at Clarisse's words, her sharp eyes misting over as Luna was forced to take control, despite her mental state being no better than her sister's. Their voice shook with shock and fear as Luna begged with her eyes for the joke to stop.

"What?!"

Leo flinched back, unable to meet her distraught grey eyes. "We don't know for sure… But I'm so sorry Annabeth, Luna. I was talking to Thalia that evening – it feels like talking to you sort of… but I should have noticed earlier, maybe Chiron could have done something, she wouldn't be…"

"Leo, we've told you this numerous times!" Clarisse growled, "it's not your fault. You couldn't have known. Gods know you didn't do it yourself."

Luna shook themself. "Leo. Why would you ever think we'd blame you? How could you possibly be to blame? Don't make me come there and hit you, Leo Valdez!"

Despite her strong front, Luna's voice hitched towards the end of her rebuke as her distress at the situation surfaced. Harry and Percy, Beckendorf, Leo and Clarisse tactfully ignored her hitch and the topic moved on slightly.

"Chiron's been blamed. Ask anyone at camp; we don't think him capable in anyway of poisoning Thalia's tree, but the gods… well. What is our lowly mortal opinion worth compared to theirs?" Beckendorf grunted, narrowing his eyes in distaste, "Zeus only knows who Mr D will replace him with…"

"*Mr D* is being allowed to choose Chiron's replacement?" Percy buried their head theatrically in his hands. "This is bad. We're dead. We'll see you down at Uncle's yeah?"

Luna slapped him, laughing slightly in that strange way people do when upset but find something funny. "Stop exaggerating, you Gryffindor-brained nitwit!"

Percy flashed her a playful grin, not-so-subtlety trying to cheer his friend up.

"You joke," Clarisse huffed, "but rumour has it he's inviting an old friend from the Fields of Punishment."

"What?" Harry's emerald eyes blinked in surprise as he took control off Percy. "Is Zeus allowing that? That's… he can't be serious. This is just one of those ridiculous rumours, right? Like when we supposedly stole Chiron's tail-curlers."

"Um, Harry?" Leo giggled. "That rumour actually had some accuracy in it, remember?"

Harry and Percy's cheeks reddened with embarrassment. "Ok, so maybe not the best example, but still?"

"Most rumours have a seed of truth in them…" Luna hummed. "Keep us updated, yeah? We only have another week, then we'll be joining you guys at camp."

Leo nodded before waving a hand through the Iris-Message. He exchanged a look with his brother and cousin before sighing, and gripping his sword. Nodding, the trio continued as they were before,
quietly following the well-trodden route around the boundaries.

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Harry's Point of View

The last week of school flew by in a mix of practically useless final classes and piling up of classes coupled with advertising our options for courses for next year. We had yet to finalise our decisions, but Care of Magical Creatures, Arithmancy and Ancient Runes looked like good choices for us. Percy for Care of Magical Creatures, Arithmancy for me, and Ancient Runes because I was interested and Percy could actually read the Runes with his Ancient-Greek wired brain. Potions, Transfiguration, Charms and History of Magic were all compulsory at this point, as was Astronomy. Both Percy and I agreed divination, for all it was supposedly an 'easy OWL' didn't look worth our time. That is what we have the oracle for, right? Besides, Cousin Apollo might not appreciate our attempt to butt into his field of work.

Actually, wait, I lied. There was one thing that made our final week of school slightly abnormal. The night before we were due to go home, we had a strange dream.

We were standing in a deserted street in a small beach town. Thunder rumbled overhead, punctuated by flashes of lightning. Rain was pelting down around us, all but bouncing off the tar-macked road and pouring into the already full drains. The palm trees lining the pavement were being whipped around by the winds, almost bent in half by the force. Pink and yellow stucco buildings lined the streets, their windows boarded up. A short distance away we could feel the ocean churning behind a row of hibiscus bushes.

'Florida.' Percy said without thinking, before pausing. 'Huh? How did I…?'

I shook our head. 'Who knows… gift of Poseidon maybe?'

A clatter of hooves stopped our thoughts in their tracks. Turning quickly, we spotted our half-goat friend running for his life, fake shoes clasped tightly in his hands and crutches discarded somewhere one the way as he sprinted as fast as he could.

We paused. Leo had told us Grover left last September on his quest. A quest that he had always wanted to go on, but no Satyr had ever returned from. Danger was expected, but the look of sheer terror on our friend's face had us at a loss. Grover was a naturally cautious goat-man. He wasn't afraid of fighting to protect his friends, but that didn't mean he sought out fights. But to see Grover this scared made us wonder what horror was chasing him.

A bone-rattling growl cut through the storm, and a shadowy figure appeared at the end of the street. It swatted aside a street lamp, and released another growl as it was showered in sparks.

Grover stumbled, releasing a small whimper of fear, muttering to himself. "Have to get away. Warn them."

We still couldn't see exactly what was chasing him, but we could hear it muttering and cursing, and feel its heavy footsteps coming closer and closer to where we were standing, shaking the ground beneath our feet. Grover dashed around a street corner before faltering. He'd managed to run into a dead end; a small courtyard of shops. He didn't have time to back up. One of the shop's doors had been blasted off by the storm; 'St Augustine Bridal Boutique', the sign read.

Grover hastened inside, diving behind a rack of wedding dresses.

The monster's shadow passed in front of the shop. We held our breath, even though we knew that we weren't really there and the monster couldn't sense us, but by Merlin it certainly felt like we were! It
moved past, and we instinctively took a breath. The stench of the monster was horrendous – a mix of wet sheep wool and rotten meat and that weird disgusting body odour only monsters have, like a skunk living off Mexican food.

Grover trembled behind the rack of wedding dresses, and all was silent save for the rain. Grover took a deep breath, hoping the thing – whatever it was – was gone.

Then lightning flashed, and the whole shop front exploded and a monstrous voice bellowed "MIIINE!"

Waking up to the dark Gryffindor dorms was a relief to say the least. No monster, no storm. Just the gentle hissing of Alyssa as she slept, and the steady breathing of our other dorm mates. But the terrified face of our friend lingered even after the horrors of the monster and the storm had faded. We hoped it was a dream, but that annoyingly accurate intuition seemed to think otherwise.

We sat in bed for a while, waiting for our dorm mates to wake as we pondered what the best action to take might be. IMing camp for news would be useless at this point, as they would no doubt be fast asleep. And if Grover really was in danger, IMing him would do no good – either Iris would be unable to find him, or it would potentially put him in even more danger.

Sighing, we finally managed to fall back asleep for half-hour before we needed to get up for breakfast. We'd consult Annabeth and Luna then.

I woke up before Percy, surprise, surprise, and it wasn't until halfway through breakfast until he did finally wake, still groggy from sleep. Our chat with Annabeth and Luna was rather short, after we realised that neither of us had any drachma's left to IM camp, even if we wanted to. We were going camp tomorrow, but it seemed rather urgent to leave even for a day. Grover could be killed in that time. Or worst, eaten.

We somehow managed to sit through the train ride back, however, Luna and Annabeth, and Percy and I fidgeting in our seats the whole way back. Theo and Blaise kept giving us odd looks, but Draco managed to shush them after whispering something to them. He seemed to understand best when something to do with our godly side of the family was going on, even before we told him what.

We bid goodbye to all our friends on the platform at King's Cross, promising to write to them. Habitually, we exchanged greetings with their parents as well, as it had now become a custom whenever we went home for the holidays. The Malfoys were civil as ever, although Lucius did raise an eyebrow at the sight of Alyssa wrapped around our neck. Nobody mentioned the Chamber of Secrets – a silent pact of sorts. We hadn't told Draco, and we weren't going to tell him of his father's involvement; that was a matter within the family.

Tyson caught us afterwards when we were making our way over to where our parents, Charles and Annabeth and Luna were waiting for us. His mother – a charming woman by the name of Sally Jackson – thanked us for helping him in the Forbidden Forest, and for befriending her son. We smiled, stuttering a reply that her gratitude was unnecessary – how anyone couldn't like Tyson and his bubbly attitude was quite beyond us really.

Sally's American accent shouldn't have been surprising, considering that moving country wasn't a big deal in this day and age, but upon her mention that they lived in New York, and if we had free time while we were at camp (Tyson apparently had relayed to her the tales we had told him of Camp during our week of waiting for Annabeth to wake) we should swing by to visit. We thanked her, but tactfully left no obligations to do so (goodness knows what might happen this year with Thalia's tree poisoned, monsters attacking camp and Chiron banishment.
Finally reaching our family, we grinned and hugged our dad, but ignored Lily. We hadn't forgotten she'd banned us from our Slytherin dorm, and forgiving her certainly wasn’t the first thing on our minds.

"Sorry for the hold up. We ran into Tyson after saying bye to the guys. His mother wanted to thank us for helping him out when he strayed a bit too far," we explained, ignoring Lily's hurt but unsurprised look at our deliberate failure to greet her. Annabeth and Luna noticed, giving us their 'you-will-be-talking-to-us-on-this-matter-later' look. I mentally sighed, but nodded.

"No problem. Charles has yet to escape the Weasley's look." Dad grinned, nodding at where Charles was being hugged by Mrs Weasley. We chuckled and watched as Charles managed to escape, bidding Ron and his brothers (and Ginny) farewell. He was red-faced and nearly out of breath by the time he reached us.

"Shall we be off?" Lily asked, waving her wand to shrink our trunks and pocketed them. Alyssa hissed when she got too close to us, and the red head gave the snake a weary look, as if to ask if she was against her as well. If Alyssa's comment about her was anything to go by, I'd be pretty confident to say Alyssa was with us on this one. As much as our reptilian friend was all for us getting closer with our family given she never knew hers, she understood that Lily and us needed to sort out our issues; pushing the matter wasn’t going to help.

Mercifully we took the floo network home – not the nicest way to travel, but it was preferable to side-along apparition or portkey – at least we didn't have to be accompanied by anyone this way.

The manor was as clean and organised as always; dinner was ready on the table and a bed for Annabeth was already made on our bedroom floor. We'd arranged for her to stay the night then portkey over to Camp with us tomorrow afternoon, to hopefully arrive in time for activities to start.

After dinner, we unpacked and repacked for camp (including all our summer homework) in order to be all set for tomorrow. Then Annabeth and Luna and Percy and I sat down on our bed, talking about this and that for a while.

"What was that earlier at the train station? Between you and Lily?" Annabeth asked, clarifying at our raised eyebrow.

"Oh." I scowled. "We told you Lily exiled us to Gryffindor as punishment for getting involved in the Chamber of Secrets business?"

Annabeth and Luna nodded.

"Well, we still aren't talking after that. We don't care if she was just trying to protect us or some other valid reason, we didn't need her two years ago; we can still make our own decisions now. She's just too overbearing!" I huffed.

Annabeth met our eyes, her gaze searing into us. "Be that as it may, but at least she cares enough to make the effort."

I immediately felt guilty, remembering Annabeth and Luna's situation at home. "Sorry, you're right. It's just… she shouldn't have the right to interfere with our lives like that! She tried to ban us from seeing Draco as well!"

Annabeth hummed. "That's too far, I'll admit. But talk to her about it. If her wounded glances are anything to judge by, she wants to make it up to you."

We didn't reply for a while. I wasn't sure if I wanted to forgive Lily, but I could tell that Percy was
hurting still from the distance between us. He had always wanted a closer connection with Lily though, and I could never really refuse him (those puppy dog/baby seal eyes are proper killers – I'd like to see any of you stand up against them!).

"We'll try. But only if she does. Percy wants to at least and I'm not going to hold him back." I offered. Annabeth smiled.

"That is all we ask. She doesn't deserve it anyway if she doesn't grovel." Annabeth grinned wickedly. "We're not at all saying let her off easily. Just give her the chance."

Lotus Casino, Las Vegas

A girl of about 12 with long brown hair was sat in the lobby of and expensive looking casino, another boy of about nine (her brother) sat next to her, fiddling with some cards. A tall woman in a suit and carrying a briefcase stood in front of them, her severe face looking rather creepy as she attempted to smile down at them.

"Come along children. I've been sent by your father to pick you up."
Chapter 61

Percy's Point of View

Lily woke us up the following morning. And considering that neither of us were awake yet, said a lot for the amount of sleep we still needed after hours of tossing and turning last night as we worried about Camp and Grover. I muttered under my breath about meddling mothers and decent hours of the morning. Annabeth kicked us for that, giving us the "you-should-have-been-up-a-while-ago-and-you-know-it" look we'd grown so used to last summer on our quest. I pouted, and Harry let out a long suffering sigh, but at Annabeth's glare we apologised to Lily, who nodded and offered Annabeth and Luna a small smile before disappearing back downstairs while we got changed.

Breakfast was… tense. I swear, you could practically cut the tension with a knife. Of course, the reason for that was probably Annabeth and Luna taking their seat before us, so the only seat available was across from Lily. Dad tried to keep the conversation going, and we did talk. Just, also deliberately didn't talk to Lily. Charles rolled his eyes at us, but didn't interfere. Dad ignored it, and Annabeth and Luna kicked us every now and then.

After breakfast, our friends made sure to corner us.

"Harry James and Perseus Potter! You are not going to camp without having made up with your mother first! Of all the demigods at camp you actually have two parents you care about you. We'll be damned if we see you ruin that!" Annabeth hissed.

Harry narrowed our eyes, and opened our mouth to snap back.

'HARRY,' I hit him mentally, 'stop it. You know about their step-mum.'

Harry shut our mouth and scowled. 'But it's still our life.'

'And they're just advising us on how not to mess it up!' I exclaimed.

Our friends' eyes softened. "Go talk to her. Please?"

We sighed, but nodded.

Lily was in the library when we tracked her down. We knocked lightly before pushing in. Lily's surprised green eyes met ours as she looked up from her book.

"Harry, Percy…" Lily sighed, "I owe you an apology. I over reacted at Hogwarts. I shouldn't have separated you from your friends. Not everyone is a carbon copy of their parents."

Her eyes were sad as she looked at us, and we wondered just how much our godly heritage was apparent. We were definitely James' son, but we were more than that, too. Not like Charles.

"Just… we aren't accustomed to people interfering with our affairs." Harry attempted to explain. "We need to breathe, you know? It's just… you weren't there for years. And now you're just trying to completely control our lives. It's just not… We don't like it."

We looked at our feet, unable to explain it. It was like she was trying to be a mother to us, far too soon. It wasn't that we didn't appreciate it, but after years of self-reliance we weren't accustomed to
other people taking the reins.

Lily nodded, and she promised to try and lay off. We nodded. I wanted to hug her, but... Harry wasn't ready for that. And as good as a brother as he was, always looking out for what I wanted, I wanted to wait for him this time.

"We'll try and not get involved in any more plots involving giant snakes then." I attempted humour. Harry hit me, and Lily gave me a despairing look.

"You brought that giant snake home with you!"

We glanced down at Alyssa, still wrapped around our neck, hissing in delight at the warmth she found there. She looked at us through eyes hazy with sleep.

"Yeah, but... look at her! Alyssa isn't going to hurt us."

I sighed, lightly running a hand along Alyssa's body, enjoying the smooth ripple of scales beneath our fingers. Alyssa hissed in delight again, requesting special attention to different places. Smiling, I complied, forgetting Lily's concerned green eyes hovering over us.

"How can you trust such a poisonous snake not to bite you?" Lily blurted out. I cast her a hurt look.

"How do you trust a friend not to lash out and stab you in the back? Alyssa is our friend. Just because she is a snake doesn't mean that she isn't as fully in control of her actions as you or we. It is prejudices like yours that prevent true bonds from forming between animals and humans."

Lily shook her head. "I didn't mean to insult her it's just... she's so..."

"Snake-like? Well, that kind of come with the species." Harry added dryly. "Snakes are very agreeable creatures unless threatened. Slytherins are very similar in that regard. They lash out when people hurt or threaten them."

Lily nodded. "Severus and I were best friends during our Hogwarts years. Your father... well, James humiliated him once, and Severus took it out on me when I tried to help."

Silence reigned for a while as we sat silently with our thoughts. Eventually, Annabeth and Luna came to see what had become of us. No doubt sensing the mood of the room, Annabeth and Luna spent the rest of the morning playing various games with us. Wizarding Chess dominated until Charles joined us, bringing a pack of Exploding Snap with him to 'liven up the party' as he put it.

Eventually, mid-afternoon came and it was finally the time when our portkey could take us to camp. We hugged Charles and Dad before exchanging awkward goodbyes with Lily. Luna of course rolled their eyes at us, before they hugged Lily themselves, thanking her and Dad for letting them stay the night. But, finally, we managed to escape, and were sucked into the tight spinning vacuum that was portkey travel, watching first England then the sea blur beneath us.

As it turned out, our portkey failed us over New York, most likely our favourite Uncle Z deciding to play with us. Luckily, we landed in the Wizarding district of New York. After our not so fortunate landing, we quickly glanced to check that Annabeth and Luna were ok. She was unconscious, but otherwise, a recognisable figure appeared through the crowd.

"Harry, Percy?"

We looked up into the beaming face of one Tyson Jackson, his mother hovering behind him.
"Are you two alright? That was quite the fall you two had. You aren't hurt are you?"

We looked around still a little groggy. "We're fine, thanks. Where are we exactly?"

"New York. You aren't anywhere near the nearest portkey or apparition points. What went wrong?"

We shook our head. "No idea. We were aiming for the Long Island Sound. Can you help us at all?"

Sally looked apologetic. "Our car is currently in for service. But surely your friend needs help?"

"She's fine really. Just the shock of the knock-out, I think." Harry said. Sally looked reasonably skeptical considering that we were 12 year olds.

"Well, at least come back to ours until she wakes." Sally offered. "Just to make sure she really is ok."

Harry and I thought about it a moment. 'That would be safest. We could make sure that they don't have a concussion or anything.'

'But camp, and Grover…' I worried. 'What about our other friends. Leo could be under attack this very minute!'

'Luna and Annabeth are here now, therefore they must be our top priority.'

Don't you just hate it when there is someone else there in the room with you who has to be the front of perfect sense and knowledge? Because that is always Harry, and as much as I love him, I care about others as well. Don't take me to be a cold-hearted guy, Annabeth and Luna are my best friends, but little Leo is like my brother too…

'Fine. Do you have any ambrosia?'

'We're fresh out, you know that.' Harry sighed. 'We have potions in our trunk, but I don't want to administer treatment for something they don't need.'

We sighed "That would be very kind, thank you Ms Jackson."

Tyson cheered. "Wooh! Percy and Harry get to come round! Are you guys on the way to camp? Can I come?"

"Um. It's sort of invite only…" I stuttered, trying to explain to our friend in the nicest terms possible that a mortal like him – no matter how magical – wasn't a part of our world. But, of course, without telling him that he was mortal or that we were part of some godly world.

Sally laughed, ruffling her son's hair. "You wouldn't want to go anyway, would you? We're going to Montauk aren't we?"

Tyson nodded, his grin almost splitting his face in two. We couldn't help but also smile as the younger boy was almost bouncing up and down due to his energy overload. Sally helped us to carry Annabeth and Luna the few blocks back to their small apartment, where we lay our friend on the sofa, and sat down to wait for her to waken.

"So." We glanced at Sally while Tyson grabbed us drinks. "Are you a witch? Tyson said you adopted him off the streets, but you seem very… adaptive… to the magical world."

"Yes." Sally smiled. "My parents were muggle, and I moved back into the muggle world, but I have a few connections. Tyson was a happy surprise."
Tyson came bundling back into the kitchen then, carrying a tray of glasses with various fuzzy drinks on it. We smiled, and filed out glass with coke, enjoying the boost of energy the drink gave us.

We chatted a while longer, filling the time with small talk. After a while, however, Tyson got bored and decided to teach us to play Mario Kart Wii. It was… interesting. We kept getting distracted by Tyson's far more superior driving.

Eventually, however, Annabeth and Luna did wake up, slightly confused at the sight of the unfamiliar apartment. We turned to look as we heard her wake, Tyson quickly pausing the game before doing the same.

Annabeth leapt back at the sight of Tyson, shaking slightly in fear. She looked at us pleadingly.

"Harry, Percy, please move back."

"What's wrong? This is Tyson, we told you about him before, remember?" I tilted our head at them, confused.

Annabeth shook her head. "No, look. Really look. He's… he's a Cyclops."

We looked at her in shock, before turned to look at Tyson, forcing our eyes up past his crooked teeth to focus on his soft brown eye. Huh?

'Tyson only has one eye…’ I shook our head. 'But he isn't a monster! He's a kid, like us.'

Sally sighed. "Please don't use that term. Tyson may not have been born mortal, but he is still my son you understand, and he is as much a person as you or I!"

"But," Annabeth whimpered slightly. "They can't be trusted! They trick you."

Tyson looked ready to cry by now. Even with this new revelation, we couldn't see him as a monster. Suddenly his babyish speech patterns made sense. He must grow faster than humans, considering how tall Cyclops could reach.

"Annabeth, look. Tyson can't be much more than a child. He's certainly younger than us. Don't judge him by others of his race. Sally is a lovely woman here, and we refuse to believe anyone raised by her could be anything other than a kind, loving child.” Harry said, putting an arm round the shaking boy.

Tyson leant into our embrace. For all the world he didn't look capable of even thinking up the kinds of plots Annabeth was insinuating he was carrying out. Sally, on the other hand, looked like the disapproving mother she was. Unlike Lily, who glowered at you in an 'apologise-or-die' sort of way, Sally seemed to have perfected a look of absolute disappointment, which was enough to make anyone feel well and truly awful.

It took a short while, but soon enough we had a still wary Annabeth and Luna on board with our 'this monster is a friend, not enemy' campaign, and sorting out the details of obtaining a cab with Sally while we entertained Tyson with more Wii.

Our plan ended up being Sally and Tyson accompanying us in a cab to Camp seeing as it was on route to their destination - Montauk. The journey was fine to begin with. However, we soon saw a slight flaw in our plan upon a branch in the road. Camp was still a few miles down on way, Sally and Tyson's cabin a few more miles further down the other.

Annabeth and Luna assured us they had a way of getting transport, so we helped them persuade
"Are you sure?" Sally, a few minutes later, was still unsure. "This… Chariot of Damnation? doesn't sound very safe…"

"Ma'am, the Grey Sisters themselves drive it. We couldn't be in safer hands. If we are Fated to get to camp, we'll get there alright. If not… well. Taking a different mode of transport wouldn't make much of a difference." Luna attempted to assure her in their 'we know everything will be ok' voice. Sally didn't take it.

"Is that supposed to placate me?"

"Miss Jackson, please. You know who are family are. Safety for us isn't like safety for you. It's as safe as we get." We sighed. Sally looked unsure, but Tyson was tugging at her elbow, and the cabbie was hurrying her up. She nodded.

"Be safe. Contact us when you get there?"

We agreed, unloading our trunks from the cab. Annabeth rooted around in one of her pockets before pulling out a drachma.

"Anakoche!" She shouted in Ancient Greek. "Harma epitribeios!"

Stop, Chariot of Damnation.

'Well.' I rolled our eyes. 'This is going to be Hades, isn't it?'

Annabeth threw her coin onto the tarmac, where is sank through and disappeared. We froze for a moment, waiting for something to happen. A few seconds later the tarmac darkened around where the drachma had fallen, melting into a rectangular pool about the size of a parking space. Then a car erupted from the ooze.

It was a smoky grey colour, with the appearance that it was woven out of smoke, like you could just walk through it. On the side was a band of words. GAYR SSIRES or something. Our dyslexia jumbled the letters, making the true meaning incomprehensible. Harry put the anagram together first.

'Gray Sisters. You know. The wise women whom Perseus sort council with before slaying Medusa?'

I groaned. 'I swear they only have one eye betwixt them.'

Harry turned green. 'That… that would be correct.'

The passenger window rolled down, and an old woman stuck her head out, her mop of grizzled hair, and mumbling like she was drunk or something.

"Passage? Passage?"

Luna opened the back door and waved us in as they replied, "Two to Camp Half-Blood."

The interior was smoky grey - following a theme - but it felt solid enough. The seat was cracked and lumpy - not much different from any other experiences we'd had in cabs. Admittedly there wasn't a Plexiglas screen separating us from the old ladies driving…

"Long Island - Out-of-metro fare bonus! Ha!"

The one driving cackled, before flooring the accelerator, slamming our head back against the
headrest. A pre-recorded voice sounded through the speaker.

"Hi, this is Ganymede, cup-bearer to Zeus, and when I'm out buying wine for the Lord of the Skies, I always buckle up!"

We looked back at the large black chain in place of a seat belt.

'No thanks.' I shivered. 'We aren't that desperate.'

'Yet.' Harry groaned.

Up front the ladies were arguing.

"Pemphredo!" The third lady snapped at the driver. "Give me the girl's coin. I want to bite it!"

"You bit it last time Enyo! It's my turn!" The driver, presumably Pemphredo, snapped back.

"Look out!" The middle lady screeched. "Go left!"

"Well, if you'd give me the eye, Deino, I'd be able to see that!"

'Hold up!' I shivered. 'Our driver can't see?'

Harry groaned again, our stomach turning as the desire to both puke and escape - in no particular order - rose up.

The women were fighting now, Enyo attempting to snatch the tooth from Pemphredo's mouth, even as Pemphredo hit Deino's head to steal their eye.

"We're going to die." I hissed at Luna, who smiled dreamily.

"Don't worry. The sisters know what they're doing. They're awfully wise."

"Very wise." Enyo bragged. "We know things."

"Every street in Manhattan. The capital of Nepal!"

"The location you seek." Deino added, immediately being hit by her sisters.

"They didn't ask yet. Be quiet! Be quiet!"

We shared a look with Annabeth and Luna. "So where are we searching for?"

"No!" They screeched. "Last time we told is was horrible!"

"Eye tossed in a lake!" Enyo agreed.

"Took us years to find it again." Pemphredo sighed. "Speaking of. Give it back!"

She whacking her sister Enyo on the back. A sickening pop indicated her success this time. Enyo grabbed for it, but only managed to bat it away sending it straight into our lap. Only years of handling foul potion ingredients allowed us to avoid flinching away.

"I can't see!" All the sisters yelled at once.

"Nice boy!" Enyo cried. "Now give it back."
"First explain." Harry demanded, his Slytherin nature showing true. "What is the location I seek?"

"No time!" Deina shouted. "Accelerating."

We looked out the window. Sure enough, the trees were blending into a blur around us as we sped by.

"Harry!" Annabeth warned. "They can't find our destination without the eye. We'll just keep accelerating until we break up into millions of pieces."

"First tell us." Harry insisted. "Or we'll throw the eye out the window."

"No!"

"Windows rolling down!"

"Wait!" They all screamed together again. "Thirty, thirty-one, seventy-five, twelve."

Sensing we would get no more from them, we tossed they eye to Pemphredo, who popped it into her socket and slammed on the breaks, drawing us to a screeching stop just by Half-Blood Hill.

One glance up the hill had us out the car, summoning our luggage as we went. For at the top of the hill a small battle was progressing between what appeared to be two steaming bulls and a small group of campers.

Of course, these couldn't be two ordinary pair of steaming bulls. They just had to be metallic, the size of a rhinoceros and red-hot too. Naturally, they had the ability to breathe fire as well.

The bulls were raging all over the hill, even past Thalia's tree inside the Camp boundary.

"Border patrol to me!" A familiar gruff voice commanded. Clarisse raised her spear, and the group rallied. Leaving our trunks where they were, I uncapped Riptide after pulling it from our pocket and sprinted up the hill, Annabeth and Luna hot on our heels as they wrestled to pull their dagger from its sheath at the small of their back.

"Reporting for duty." I flashed Clarisse a grin, stamping to attention. The daughter of Ares scowled at us.

"You! Team up with Chase and Valdez. Confuse the one on the right and attempt to maim it in anyway possible. We need these things out of action.

Leo, despite being by far the youngest of the patrol being aged ten, looked like he was in the best condition of the patrol. His clothes were scorched but he himself was unaffected by the flames.

"Leo, can you take it by the head? I'm going to try to cut off its horns."

Leo nodded, sending a quick blast of fire straight into the bull's eyes. Its gears groaned as it tried to retreat, only to meet our sword, sheering off a horn. A burst of fire shot from the hole, and I had to roll to avoid it. Annabeth succeeded the same to its other horn, receiving a bad burn due to her short-range weapon.

We stood up, and assessed the bull, which appeared to be regaining its balance. Leo suddenly appeared by our shoulder.

"Could you and Annabeth distract it? I want to see if heating it up some won't melt its gears."
We nodded, and Beckendorf - the other camper Clarisse had assigned to our bull - joined us. We slashed and dodged, feeling the heat rising from the bull get hotter and hotter as the minutes past. The bronze metal eventually began to shimmer as it melted, and the bull collapsed into a molten puddle.

Clarisse and her team had managed to slash their bull into tiny pieces by now, and we let out a sigh of relief. A startled hiss from around Thalia's tree had us jerking around in search for Alyssa. Silena was holding a sword out in front of her, waving it at our poor friend, whose tongue flickered constantly as she tried to judge her attacker's movements. We paled. It was so easy to forget Alyssa's blindness given how well she coped without her sight.

"Silena, no!" I yelled. "Alyssa's a friend!"

The campers stared at us in shock. Clarisse actually gaped at us. "That's a basilisk!"

We nodded. "And we happen to speak snake. Silena, please, back away. She don't want to attack, but you're scaring her.

Silena looked wary, but lowered her sword.

$Easy Alyssa. Shh.$ I soothed our friend, holding out an arm for her to wrap around. $We, Harry and Percy Potter, invite Alyssa to enter camp.$

After welcoming Alyssa through what was left of the barriers, we held her to our chest while she calmed before letting her coil around our neck. We turned, grinning at Annabeth and Luna and Leo, who were looking at us with slight exasperation before winking at Clarisse.

"Missed us?"
Chapter 62

Chapter Notes

I am so terrible sorry I haven't updated in gods knows how long! I had this chapter saved as a draft, because I've been moving them across from fanfiction.net (I slightly better at updating on that site). Someone kindly pointed out I wasn't up to date, so here's a long overdue update!

Besides that, I hope you all had great summers and feel free to poke me if I disappear for months at a time :)

Chapter 62

Percy's Point of View

We were saved from Clarisse's angry complaints at how we had 'completely got in the way a messed up her mission' by Beckendorf steering her away.

"Come on Clarisse. We need to get the wounded back to the Big House, and let Tantalus know what's happened." Beckendorf told her. He looked pained as he uttered Tantalus' name and we winced. Tantalus. I knew that name from somewhere… now where had I heard that name from…

"Tantalus? Like… feeding his son to the gods, sent to the fields of punishment, Tantalus?" Annabeth asked, shocked. "Shouldn't you be talking to Chiron? And where's Argus? He's head of security!"

Beckendorf shook his head, his eyes weary and his expression downhearted. Looking around, everyone was exhausted. And no, I don't mean 'I've-just-fought-two-fire-breathing-metallic-bulls' tired, I mean that bone weary, energy sapping, days without proper rest tired. Clearly Camp was in a much worse state than we had first anticipated.

'Chiron really has been fired hasn't he?' Harry sighed.

We turned to look back at Thalia's tree, the tall pine at the top of the hill that we had sped past in the rush to save Clarisse and her patrol. Its needles were a sickly yellow and a huge pile of dead needles littered its base. Halfway up the trunk was a deep puncture mark oozing green sap. Our vision blurred for a moment, and we saw Thalia, her normally pale face flushed as if she was running a fever. We could see the puncture wound on her leg, red and festering and flinched at the sight, horrified beyond words at her sickly image.

'We'll save her.' I swore. I couldn't tell you who I was persuading more – Harry or myself – but I promised all the same. Thalia was special to Annabeth and Luna. We'd never met the girl, but Annabeth and Luna were friends with her and – as the age old saying goes – a friend of a friend is our friend also.

Annabeth and Luna gave us a strange look. "You look at Thalia's pine tree like you see an actual person, not just a tree."

Luna's voice was as dreamy as ever, but the interest in her voice was genuine, standing sharply out in her tone, like nothing else we'd ever heard from her.
"Well, it is her tree isn't it? Surely it can't be alive if she isn't. It stands to reason she's in there somewhere." We replied evasively, turning away from Thalia's tree to follow the others down towards the Big House. The usual activities were going on - the arena was full of the Hermes and Demeter Cabins, practicing swordsmanship. The Hephaestus cabin were in the forges, and Apollo's cabin were at the archery range. All so normal. And yet… not. The same aching tiredness in Clarisse's border patrol was evident everywhere we looked. It was almost as if they knew it was only so long until some terrible unstoppable monster passed the borders and their lives would be ruined. But until then, they had to carry on. The life was missing from their actions. It was… odd.

Looking more closely, however, the danger was clear. Satyrs and counsellors were stock-piling weapons, the Dryads were clutching bows and arrows as they looked warily around them. The basketball and volleyball courts weren't in use. There was no one in the lake swimming or kayaking. Everyone was training or otherwise preparing for the worst scenario: war.

When we reached the Big House we found Chiron in his room, we heard his awful 1960s lounge music echoing down the hallway as we approached. Knocking once, we pushed the door open to reveal our old teacher packing his saddlebags. Annabeth ran up and hugged him.

"You aren't really leaving are you? We'd heard you'd been… replaced but you don't have to go, do you?"

Chiron offered her a warm smile, tinged slightly with sadness. "Hello, child. And Harry and Percy! You've grown so much this past year!"

I swallowed. Hard. "Is it true you're… you were…"

"Fired?" Dark humour glinted in Chiron's eyes. "Someone had to take the blame, and Zeus was understandably upset from the memento he had made in his daughter's name being poisoned. It could hardly have been blamed on Mr D."

Annabeth looked horrified. "But you couldn't possibly have poisoned Thalia!"

"And your belief in me is astounding." Chiron smiled. "But you know full well why I'm falling under suspicion, especially after last summer's events."

I was, as ever, confused. What did the lightning bolt being stolen have to do with Thalia's tree being stolen? Harry, the all knowledgeable one, rolled our eyes at me. 'Our dreams of the evil thing… Poseidon and Zeus mentioned 'father' when we asked them of it. Their father… Kronos. Who is also Chiron's father, according to some myths. Zeus would argue he has sided with his father."

'Oh.'

We didn't know what to say, so I just moved to hug Chiron as well. We'd grown close to our camp instructor last summer. He was much more like an old friend than camp instructor. I felt a lump in our throat at the idea of him leaving. Chiron was essential to everyday life at camp. We needed him here.

We stayed around until Chiron was fully packed, and escorted him to the border. Or, at least, we tried to. Mr D chose that exact moment to call everyone in for lunch. The new camp direct - the smug son-of-a-Cerberus – sat next to Mr D, smirking at all of us.

We sacrificed to Poseidon, praying – in the name of this poor guy's son Pelops (our dad's old lover, if rumours were to believed) – for help to survive this summer. Other than the usual wisp of sea breeze, we received no reply. Disappointed, I sat on our little table on our own. I pushed grapes round our plate, not really feeling like eating. Harry clearly felt the same, because he didn't badger me to eat for
As lunch was drawing to a close, Tantalus - who had been chasing a burger round his plate the entire time - addressed us all.

"Chariot racing has been a long standing tradition at Camp Half-Blood. It was abolished several years ago for what I consider to be rather trivial reasons. Therefore, as I'm sure you'll be delighted to know - I am reintroducing it. You have a week to form a team and construct your chariots. Next Saturday morning we will hold the race!"

Low-level chatter sprung up immediately as the various cabins began discussing designs and splitting up. We stared gloomily at our plate. You'd think, being sons of Poseidon and all, that Harry and I would have some idea about chariots. Horses - I can deal with them. But the actual chariot? There aren't any books in our library on constructing one of them!

Tantalus announced the prizes and forfeits for the winners and losers. I ignored him.

'A 'trivial reason'? ' Harry scoffed. 'If that's what this guy calls health and safety I'd love to see him fill in all the paperwork this summer.'

A movement in the corner of our eye caught our attention. Luna and Annabeth were sitting across from us, smiling. Before they even opened their mouth we could guess what they were going to ask.

"Do you want to team up with us?"

I sniggered as Harry paused, pretending to think about it for a minute. "Do we want to team up with two of the brightest girls at camp to create a chariot… Hm. You know what? I don't think that could possibly be a good idea!"

Luna giggled. "A yes then?"

We nodded. "You draw up the plans, we'll help with the physical labour and recruit the horses?"

Our plan made, we set to work. The next week was full of border patrols, camp activities and building the chariot. On top of that, Annabeth, Luna and we were put on cabin inspection duties. There was… a certain knack to it.

It's no secret that the Ares' cabin implant mines in their floor. *Where* they implant them, however, is another matter entirely. After almost losing a foot the first couple of days, however, we soon got to know where they were pretty well.

Cabin 11, Hermes' Cabin was also interesting to assess for how tidy it was, as almost every single square inch of the floor was taken up by either beds or roll mats. The typical reaction was just to give it near enough full marks, as long as the walls were clean, and nothing was hanging from the ceiling.

The cabin for Aphrodite's children was like walking into a perfume shop. I can tell you now, they seriously don't air their cabin out enough. Normally it was so tidy it was next to impossible to pick up even a speck of dust, but it appeared that the stress had even reached the paradise of the Aphrodite campers. Their clothes were bundled in a corner, waiting to be washed, and blood stains were clear on a few of them. The normally ordered makeup table was a mess from quickly discarding products as the girls (and some of the boys) had quickly skip through their morning beauty routine.

Annabeth and Luna's cabin had designs and spare paper in neat stacks on almost any available surface. It wasn't untidy per say, just quite full. In contrast, our favourite tinkerer's cabin was full of discarded bolts and gadgets that had escaped and rolled under beds or desks. Leo tried to explain that...
they had actually tidied, but we were rather sceptical.

The Zeus, Hera and Artemis cabins were ignored. Demeter's, Dionysus' and Apollo's cabins were just your average teenager's bedroom really. And our cabin... well. It's wasn't bad. But we had enough space in our expanded truck to be able to just chuck everything in there.

It was one of these mornings, inspecting the Cabins, that we managed to approach Leo about joining our team for the Chariot race. Between duties, we hadn't had time to catch up with him properly so Leo, deciding to tag onto our inspections for that morning, interrogated every little detail of our design from Annabeth and Luna in order to start to spin together his own improvements.

It was hardly surprising to find our chariot practically complete, with various gadgets lying on the floor around it, waiting to be fitted, with a snoozing Leo lying next to the next morning. How he avoided the Harpies we'll never know, but even Harry and I with our inexperience with technology could admit that it looked really high tech.

Finally, the day of the race dawned. Leo, Annabeth and Luna and we were up at the crack of dawn, getting everything ready. One last test run of the chariot, ensuring the horses were ready - fed, watered and mentally prepared for what lay ahead - before finally heading to the pavilion for breakfast.

As it turned out, it was remarkably lucky that we were up so early, because the border patrol hadn't yet made it out of their cabins when there was another attack. All we could see at the beginning was a small(ish) figure running from a gang of gigantic men. With a closer inspection we made out the smaller figure to be Tyson – what was he doing here? – and the larger gang throwing cannon-balls at him.

"Laestrygonians!"

Annabeth's surprise didn't last longer than a moment or so. She quickly grabbed their knife from its sheath at the back of their belt and rushed to the top of the hill. They might not have liked Tyson, being a monster and all, but they could hardly argue he wasn't a nice monster.

After a moment of dumb shock, I followed our friends' lead, charging up the hill towards Thalia's tree.

'Is it me, or does it seem like every battle ends up near Thalia? I swear she's a bigger monster magnet then we are, and she's half-dead!' I huffed to Harry. Possibly slightly insensitive wording about Annabeth and Luna's best friend, but it was true. Maybe being the sky-god's daughter had something to do with it. Who knows?

'More to the point.' Harry scowled, clearly unimpressed by where my ADHD had lead my thoughts this time. 'Laestrywhoigons? What are these things? Please tell me they're just the "cut and poof - glitter dust" type of monsters.'

As Harry prayed, I got slicing. Luckily, the Laestrywhoigons were - as Harry so elegantly put it - "cut and poof - glitter dust" type of monsters. Admittedly dodging the fiery cannon balls made my job a little bit harder, but Tyson was doing an excellent job at returning the hot-balls-from-hell (as I decided to dub them), and Leo was helping immensely by turning up their heat so even the heat-hardened Laestrygonies were forced to drop them. Within about ten minutes, we were standing on gold dusted pine needles.

Tyson beamed at us. "Percy! Harry! Mummy sent me to help!"
Annabeth and Luna, and Leo exchanged looks, as if wondering how on earth this over-large baby was supposed to help - or wondering what he was supposed to help us with. Either way, we just grinned back. Cyclops he may be, but bad guy he was not. Tyson was about as evil as a cuddly bear. The worst he had done was accidentally try to hug us to death (fortunately he understood our gasped out "We can't breathe" and let us go).

"Tyson!"

Hugging was painful, but the hurt look on Tyson's face the last (and only) time we had attempted to get out of a hug from him made us swear to never again. We invited him over what was left of the camp borders, and invited him to breakfast. The rest of the campers (who were awake at this point, and most of whom had watched the end of our little battle) watched with slight interest and hostility as we lead a Cyclops to the pavilion.

"Percy and Harry Potter." Mr D groaned when he saw us. "Why is it always you two? No - don't interrupt me, I don't want excuses! Sit down. You, monster. Come stand here."

We shot Tyson an apologetic look as we sat down at the Poseidon table, and watched as our friend reluctantly moved to stand by the disapproving looking Camp Director. Before anybody else could speak, however, a sea-green glow lit up the pavilion, standing out starkly in the watery dawn light.

A spinning sea-green trident hung in the air above Tyson's head. The boy battered at it, his eyes wide with innocent curiosity. I stared at it uncomprehendingly for a moment. Then a wide grin split across our face. We had another brother. A cute, baby-ish brother, but a brother all the same.

Mr D sighed. "Well, Potter. Looks like it's your problem after all."

We narrowed our eyes as he shoved Tyson towards us, laughing with Tantalus when he stumbled.

"He has a name. Tyson Jackson. Show more respect to our brother!"

Mr D stood up, his eyes glowing in a way that seemed to reek of madness. His long curly hair moved in an invisible wind. "Are you challenging me, boy?"

We shook our head, but didn't break eye contact. "No. Just politely reminding you who our father is."

Mr D and we glared at each other for a moment. Finally Mr D glanced away. We got the message anyway. He might not be dealing with us here and now, but we'd get our reckoning sooner or later.

Harry hit me mentally. 'Idiot! Do you want him to hate us?'

'I won't stand him bullying Tyson. Who cares what everyone assumes about Cyclopes? He's our brother. What is the point of family if we don't stand up for each other?'

Harry conceded, and led Tyson back to our table. Tyson sniffled slightly.

"Sorry. I don't want to cause any difficulty for you."

Harry glanced up at him, surprised. We hadn't though he had any need to apologise. He wasn't asking for such discrimination, was he? Harry smiled, and gently touched his shoulder. "Ignore them. If they're so blind that they can't see what a nice guy you really are, then their opinion is irrelevant anyway."

Tyson sniffed for one final time, and then smiled back. We chatted lightly about homework and our
weeks before breakfast finished. The heavy weight of watching eyes laid on our shoulders, and we shivered. You'd think, after two years of being watched for being the brother of the Boy-Who-Lived, we would be used to it, but it turned out that it still wasn't enough time to acclimatize.

Annabeth and Luna, and Leo pulled us away to tether the pegasi for our chariot, with an excited Tyson tagging along.

"Pony!" He giggled, pointing at the first pegasus he saw. The majestic creature reared back, scared of him. Monster! Bad!

"No!" I shook our head, patting the pegasus, Blaze. "Tyson is our friend. He's not threat."

Blaze wasn't to be calmed however, not while Tyson was here. Noticing the problem, Leo quickly reminded Annabeth and Luna how to use the various weapons and gadgets he had equipped us with before leading Tyson away to newly built hippodrome (a.k.a. a ploughed track in a grassy field with wooden seating built around it) to get a good seat for the race.

Together with Annabeth (Luna just watched, uninterested by the violent sport), Harry and I ran through the last minute checks. It was as we led the way towards the hippodrome that we noticed a loud noise coming from the woods. A flock of what looked like pigeons were perched in the trees, kicking up a fuss. Only… we couldn't put our finger on it, but cooing didn't quite describe the sound coming from them.

Putting our fears aside for the time being, I took over completely as Harry retreated. The last thing we wanted was a split-second miscommunication leading to us crashing the chariot, so Harry and I decided to let me take this race.

When all the teams had assembled - approximately one per cabin, give or take - Tantalus stood up to address us.

"I assume you all know the rules - two horses per chariot, a driver and fighter per chariot. Weapons allowed. Twice round the quarter mile track to win… Dirty tricks are to be expected. Just try not to kill anyone, yes? Then I'd have to punish you most harshly. No s'mores at the campfire for a week!"

 Automatically everyone in the hippodrome glared at the new camp director.

'No s'mores for a week. Is this guy real?' I gritted our teeth, our knuckles whitening around the reigns, which were already wrapped around our body. Harry sent a wave of calming presence over me.

'Cool it. You're going to need a cool head if we're going to survive this.'

I growled, but nodded. 'Got it.'

"Chariots to their mark! Ready? Go!" Tantalus shouted importantly, idle mindedly chasing a bunch of grapes around the platter in front of him.

The sound of pounding hooves thundered loudly in the early morning air. The Hephaestus Chariot - a marvellous iron and bronze vehicle driven by automaton metal horses - took the lead first, with the blood-red Ares chariot on its heels, its skeleton horses unbothered by the noise and destruction going on around it, as the fighters all began to attack each other.

A flash of green light sped through the air towards us from the Hephaestus cabin. I blinked and flinched, seeing a flash of sickly green spell light behind our eyelids. A bag of green flames landed next to us. I breathed a sigh of relieve. Just Greek Fire.
Annabeth, using my sword, Riptide, lifted and flung the bag behind us, moments before it exploded. Beckendorf bared his teeth at us in a tight smile.

"Sorry. But a race is a race."

"Fair's fair." I replied, grinning as Annabeth flung a pair of bronze chain and balls at his wheels so that the heavy weights and long chain wrapped around one of the chariot's wheels and axle locking it in place just as he turned a corner. The chariot was flung aside by its own momentum. Annabeth poked me to reassure she saw both Hephaestus campers safe.

A quick glance behind us saw Travis and Connor from Hermes cabin ram into the golden Apollo chariot, flipping it over. They laughed for the few moments before they got caught up in the crash, taking them down as well.

We were rounding the post for the first time when the flock of pigeons in the trees took to their air, making a horrible racket. They circles above the hippodrome, screeching something awful. Then, they dive bombed, attacking the spectators and charioteers alike, scratching and pecking at any flesh exposed. As a general rule, we charioteers were better off in our armour, but the spectators - most of whom didn't even have weapons - we're dealing well at all.

"Stymphalian birds!" Annabeth yelled at us over the noise. "If we don't stop them, they'll peck everyone to the bones."

"Nice." I grimaced. "But how to get rid of them?"

"Herakles used brass bells, creating the most horrible noise possible."

Harry had an epiphany at that, 'Chiron's collection!'

Annabeth appeared to have had the same idea. We spun our chariot around.

"To the Big House!"

Vaguely I remember hearing Clarisse (whose skeleton horses were completely unaffected by the birds) yelling at us to "stand and fight, cowards!" But we ignored her for now. If this didn't work, we were dead, without even a body for burial rites.

Luckily Chiron's boom box was still on his bedside table, where he'd left it. Grabbing one of the most repulsive CDs I could immediately find while Annabeth grabbed the boom box, we sprinted back to the chariot and got the horses galloping back to the track, where we could see the flames from the chariots a way away.

We pulled up to the finish line, and Annabeth readied the boom box. Perhaps a bit belatedly we prayed that the batteries weren't dead, but it turned out our fears were for nothing as the sound of Chiron's favourite - the All-Time Greatest Hits of Dean Martin - started up and the sounds of violins and moaning Italian filled the air.

The birds went nuts, flying around in circles and constantly bashing into each other in their hurry to escape. As they rose, Apollo's archers took aim, quickly knocking out the birds with their amazing talent of shooting five or six arrows at once. Minutes later the ground was littered with bronze-beaked pigeons.

The mess was bad. Everyone sported wounds of some kind. Most of the chariots were damaged beyond repair.
"Bravo!" Tantalus beamed.

We watched in amazement however, as the new Camp Director progressed to declare Clarisse the winner before turning on us with an ugly smile.

"And now to deal with the troublemakers who dared to disrupt this race…"
Chapter 63

Percy's Point of View

To say that Tantalus was being fair would be like comparing Mr D to a sober man. He refused to listen to any form of reasoning, raising Clarisse up high for finishing the race, and scorning us for saving the camp. We gave up after the first "Be quiet, boy!", recognising the tone of a man who doesn't intend to listen to what he was being told. Annabeth and Luna persisted a little longer, but soon they gave up too.

"Do you know what I think naughty misbehaving children deserve? Kitchen duty. You two are hereby sentenced to wash up for a week. That is, if your hands survive the first day." Tantalus laughed coldly, sending shivers down our spine. Feeling them, Alyssa decided to raise her head from where she had been wrapped around our waist for warmth.

$What is going on?$ She hissed, narrowing her eyes at a now quivering Tantalus. I smirked, and ran a hand gently down her spine, but didn't prevent her from slivering down our body to inspect the horrible man. She flicked her tongue at Tantalus, scenting him. She hissed, horrified at his scent. Idly I wondered if he still smelt like the Fields of Punishment, or whether that smell faded faster than his curse.

$Don't worry. Tantalus is just a bully. We'll deal with him later, yeah?$

"Y-you!" Tantalus was quivering now, "th-that's a basilisk! How… how aren't you melting? How are you still alive?!"

"What? Alyssa darling wouldn't hurt us. She's a magical familiar. Apparently as they mature, problems such as acidic skin become less of a problem." I grinned. "But with the dishes… you didn't say we couldn't use our "powers" did you?"

"No." Tantalus smirked again. "Not that your water skills would help you much anyway, mini Poseidon."

I gritted our teeth, but didn't reply. We'd heard the rumours of what the harpies used to clean the dishes. Guesses ranged from normal soap to acid to lava… We weren't sure, but if I had to guess based off Tantalus' large smirk it would be lava. After all, he was suggesting it had nothing to do with a water based substance.

Alyssa hissed, not liking Tantalus' expression.

$Please, Harry and Percy. Make me fully sized again! I'll kill the hatchling tormentor. Who does he think he is?$

I chuckled. 'Tempting. Very tempting. Please Harry?'

'No! Harry shook our head. $Sorry Alyssa. Mr.D will kill you if you harm a single hair on his head, and unless you have a track free record we're unlikely to be able to keep you.$

Alyssa let out a disappointed hiss, but argued no further, returning to us and settling herself around our shoulders. I smiled at her, feeling just as put out. I knew Harry had a point – my brother always did. But why couldn't the fun option also be the reasonable option for once?
Tantalus, looking really put off by our hissing, dismissed us. Annabeth and Luna looked furious.

"Did you see his face? That smug child-killer! We had done absolutely nothing! In fact, we saved his sorry life! And he punishes us with *kitchen duty*!"

"Why exactly is that the worst punishment camp offers? I mean, we've heard the rumours but I would have thought something like cleaning out the stable or washing the toilets with a toothbrush would have been far worse." Harry spoke softly, aware of Annabeth's sharp temper. Our friend took in a breath, then released it slowly. Even for her, that outburst had been extreme.

When Harry's words sunk in, Annabeth burst out laughing. "Washing the toilets with a toothbrush? Are you serious?"

I nodded sincerely. That was, without a doubt, the worst detention we'd ever had to deal with. Overseen by Filch, of course. Who else would set such manual labour? Apart from our godfather on a bad day, of course.

Mucking out the stables had been a punishment set by the Potter House elves after we'd accidentally fallen asleep in the forest near full moon when we were seven. That had taken us most of the day, because even with the amount of exercise I like doing, shifting wheelbarrows of heavy manure was a draining task.

"Washing up duty involves washing up just under one hundred dishes, along with all the pots and pans that were used to make dinner. Split two ways... we might just make curfew if we skip dessert." Annabeth sighed. "Prepare yourself for a long night."

Before we could discuss the matter further Tyson found us. The energetic boy begged a tour of camp. Pushing all other thoughts aside (namely our punishment, Thalia's tree and our strange recurring dreams of Grover that we had been worrying over for a while now) we led our younger half-brother around, pointing out the cabins, the basketball court, the lake, the forge, the lava climbing wall... the works, you know.

We spent the afternoon at the forge – it had been the last stop on Tyson's little tour, and he had wanted to make something. Remembering that Cyclops were the workers in Poseidon's underwater forge, I supposed it was in his blood. Beckendorf gave us a tutorial on sword making while we were there as well, so we supposed it certainly hadn't been a wasted afternoon.

That evening we began our punishment. It took us a few attempts to remember the spell, but we soon had a heat-protective spell protecting our skin and were able to dive into the mountains of dishes. Harry remembered reading a spell to get the dishes to wash and dry themselves, but he couldn't remember what the actual spell or wand movement was and we had no idea whether it worked with lava as well, so we voted this the next best option.

The Hecate kids, undoubtedly sensing some magic going on, peered round the door at one point, grinning when they noticed how we had dealt with our problem. They also asked if we'd play a game of their odd Quidditch, we agreed to. Well. Harry agreed to, I just nodded and went along with it.

As we washed the dishes, we talked to Annabeth and Luna about our dreams.

"We've been dreaming of Grover recently." Harry brought up the topic, knowing that it must be important no matter how inconsequential it may have been. "It's nothing huge. Just... small things, you know? Some of it seems like nonsense. Sometimes he tells us stupid things like 'he likes sheep', but more often than not we just get glimpses of a cave, or these huge sheep."
Luna focused her gaze on us. She wasn't judging us – Luna wouldn't do that – and after we'd told them the details of our first dream she knew we wouldn't make this up.

We washed in silence for a little while as we all thought it over. There was something familiar in our dreams that was on the tip of our tongue, we just didn't know what. In the end we just promised to inform them on any other dreams we had, and both wearily left the wash-hut, leaving behind huge piles of clean, tidily stacked dishes as we escaped to bed.

Tyson was already sound asleep in his hammock when Harry and I crept quietly into our cabin. He was clutching at something wrapped in a pit of cloth, and smiling brightly in his sleep. I couldn't help but smile indulgently at him. Despite his monstrous appearance, Tyson was a softy at heart, it wasn't hard to see.

Careful not to wake our half-brother, I quietly changed into our pyjamas and all but fell into our hammock, asleep almost as soon as our head hit the pillow.

A restful sleep apparently wasn't on the agenda tonight. We were swept up into a dream that was as bizarre as it was scary.

We were in a cave

Grover was, naturally, in a wedding dress. It didn't fit him very well. The previous white hem trailed on the ground behind him and was caked in mud. The lacy neckline kept falling off his shoulders, but what skin it might have revealed was covered by the tatty veil he wore to conceal his face.

Behind him we could see the harsh rocky walls of a cave, illuminated by a few sparsely placed torches. A wooden cot with a straw mattress stood in one corner, and across from it was an old fashioned loom and a three legged stool. A length of white cloth was strung up on the loom, with more spun cotton in a basket beside it, waiting to be woven into the cloth.

Grover stared at us, his eyes wide with delight like a child who had finally managed to get that one chocolate frog card they had been searching for. "Oh, thank the merciful gods! Can you hear me?"

Our brain heavy with sleep, we were slow to respond. I was still looking around the cave, taking in the sharp stalactites hanging from the ceiling, and the heavy stench of livestock in the air. The smell of damp goats and sheep in particular, we could hear them bleating as the sound echoed around the cave. A huge boulder, the size of a night bus, blocked the "room's" only exit, suggesting there was a larger cavern beyond it.

"Percy! Harry!" Grover groaned. "Please. I can't project any better. You have to hear me!"

"What?" I glanced back to him. "Project what?"

Grover opened his mouth to reply, but before he had the chance a monstrous, familiar voice bellowed from behind the boulder. "Honeypie! Have you finished yet?"

Grover flinched, a terrified expression crossing his face. He put on a falsetto voice and called back, "Not quite, dearest! A few days more!"

Clearly the voice was unimpressed. "Bah! It's been two weeks already, hasn't it?"
"N-no dearest. Just five days. That leaves twelve left."

There was a moment of silence, and we could almost hear the voice trying to mentally work out the maths. However his arithmetic couldn't have been much above the qualities' of a five year olds, because he agreed. "All right, but hurry! That veil has to come off soon! Hah!"

Grover, his face still pale, turned back to us. "Help me! I don't have time! I'm stuck in this cave. On an island near the sea."

Harry gave him a serious look. "Thanks. Those are such absolutely brilliant directions."

"I don't know exactly where! I went to Florida and turned left."

I giggled as Harry gave him a really disappointed look. Grover, looked desperate, however, and apologetic; Grover knew he was asking the impossible, and he really didn't know any better directions.

"Look, it's a trap! This is why no satyr has ever returned from this quest! He's a shepherd, and he had it. Seriously, the nature magic is so powerful it smells like the great god Pan! Us satyrs come here thinking we've found him, but then they get trapped and eaten by Polyphemus!"

"Poly-who?"

The name was familiar, but I couldn't place it.

'The cyclops. From Odysseus travels?' Harry knew. Of course he did.

Grover ignored me. "I almost got away. I made it to St. Augustine."

We recognised that name. "But he followed you. I presume the dress is from that bridal boutique?"

"That's right!" Grover looked delighted. "My first empathy link must have worked then. I swear, this dress is the only thing that's keeping me alive. He thinks I smell good, I've had to pass it off as goat-scented perfume. The dress and his bad eye – it's still half-blind from the last time someone poked it out – are literally all that's stopping him from realising what I am. But even that's not going to work. He gave me two weeks to finish the bridal train and he's getting impatient!"

I burst out laughing. "Let me get this straight, this Cyclops thinks you're some lady Cyclops and wants to marry you?"

Grover nodded, and the dead serious expression on his face had me stop dead. "Hades. We'll come rescue you. We promise. Where are you?"

"Where else?" Grover gave us another helpless look. "The Sea of Monsters."

Harry nodded. 'We'll look it up later.'

"Look, guys... I'm really sorry about this. The empathy link... I didn't have a choice. Our emotions are connected now, so if I die..."
"Let me guess, we die too?" I took the morbid route.

"There's a chance you won't." Grover looked really apologetic. "You might still live for years in a vegetative state. But um... Getting me out of here would be a lot better."

"Honeypie!" Polyphemus bellowed. Did he even have an inside voice? "Dinner! Yummy yummy sheep meat!"

Grover whimpered. "Hurry! I have to go."

"Wait!" Something he said suddenly struck me. "You said 'it' was here. What's it?"

But the dream was already fading, and we hardly heard his last words. "Please don't let me die!"

We woke with a start, and fell out of our hammock, all tangled up in our blanket as we hurried to find Annabeth and Luna. Luckily it was already morning, and they were already on route to find us for the morning rounds.

"We had another dream."

A quick explanation later and Annabeth looked quite impressed.

"He found it!"

'Found what?' I grumped. 'Stupid Americans being so cryptic."

Harry chuckled at me. 'But we British are always their villains, aren't we? They must have some fun, mustn't they?'

'Maybe...'

Harry took pity on me and interrupted Annabeth's mutterings. "Found what, exactly?"

She looked up, surprised. "The Golden Fleece, of course."

'Of course. What else could their possibly in the entirety of Greek Mythology.' I said sarcastically to Harry, who grinned.

"Brilliant. That could –"

"– save Thalia's tree!"

The duo grinned at each other. I sighed, and could practically hear Luna doing the same as our twin-souls had their little geek session. After a few minutes of self-appreciation (as I liked to call their mutual "I-know-all-this-amazingly-useful-but-normally-useless-stuff" moments) Annabeth and Luna recalled our Cabin-check duty, and we got to work.

Annabeth kindly let us wake up Tyson, and left our cabin till last as we'd been in such a rush to find her this morning. As such, we went in reverse order, picking up Leo along the way and finally ending with our cabin to bring Tyson to the breakfast pavilion.

Surprisingly as we ate it was Clarisse – who still looked a bit battered up from the attack yesterday – who brought up the situation of the failing borders and Thalia's tree. Well, it was only really initially surprising. Clarisse was afterall best known for roughing up the newbies and her cabin's ruthlessness
in the war games, despite her strong sense of duty and loyalty to the camp.

"We need to address the situation of the weakening borders." She said, standing up and looking directly at Mr D. "Large numbers of Demigods was manageable under the protection of the borders, but as they're failing monsters are being drawn in larger numbers every day."

"Oh?" Mr D looked unimpressed. "So what do you suggest we do about it?"

Annabeth stood up this time. "We need to find a certain magical artefact – the Golden Fleece. We believe it to be located within the Sea of Monsters."

Tantalus smirked at her input to the conversation. The son of a Cerberus was definitely against anything to help us, we could just tell. "And, Little Miss Athena, how do you expect to find it? The Sea of Monsters is a vast area. You'd need to be a little bit more precise than that."

They ducked their head, glancing our way for help. I was stuck, desperately trying to think how to give more precise instructions, especially with the best information Grover having given us being "I went to Florida and turned left". Tyson tugged at our sleeve and we glanced down with a smile, if a little forced.

"Mommy said to remind you of some coordinates. I just remembered. She said you'd need them." Tyson began searching his pockets for something. Then it clicked, and I remembered.

"Thirty, thirty-one, seventy-five, twelve."

Every head turned towards us as I spoke. Tantalus sneer grew.

"Thank you for those meaningless numbers. Care to elaborate, boy?"

"They're coordinates. Thirty degrees, thirty-one minutes North, seventy-five degrees, twelve minutes West. The Grey Ladies gave them to us. They're the coordinates of Polyphemus' island, where the Golden Fleece is." I gave him my best Draco smirk, much to Harry's amusement.

Tantalus looked lost for words, and he glared at us for a moment before speaking once more. "You can't seriously be suggesting I send a quest based on such –"

A steady chant grew up, growing louder and louder the more Tantalus protested. "Quest! Quest! Quest! QUEST! QUEST!"

Finally, with a slight prompt from Mr D, Tantalus gave in. "Alright! Alright! I'll give you your quest! And I know the perfect hero to lead it!"

He waited, holding us all in suspense before a horrible smile stretched across his face. "Clarisse!"

I won't deny that we weren't disappointed by his choice. But arguing with that twisted man wasn't going to work. All we could hope would be to convince Clarisse or, that failing, set out on a quest alone to save our friend. We weren't going to risk Grover's life, not for the world.

The entirety of the campers followed Clarisse to the big house for her audience with the Oracle. We all stopped at the doors, and waited anxiously for her to come out again. When she did she was pale and worried looking. We bit our lip.

Prophecies often weren't all they first appeared to be, but that didn't make them any easier to bear when hearing them the first time. Putting on a brave face, Clarisse raised a fist into the air. "We have a quest!"
Chapter 64

Harry's Point of View

It wasn't until just after lunch that we managed to corner Clarisse. She had been kept up in the Ares cabin, making preparations and finding her companions. The large Ares girl took one look at us and shook her head, before even listening to us.

"You can't come, guys. No way. You had your quest last summer. This time it's my turn. Besides… my father would kill me if I let you take the credit again." Clarisse all but whispered the last sentence, clearly nervous of angering Ares.

Percy wrung our hands, his nerves echoing my own. We had to do this. We had to rescue Grover.

Percy turned on the pleading baby seal eyes.

"We don't want the credit, Clarisse. This is your quest, your glory. But please, let us save Grover."

The guilt in Clarisse's normally unreadable eyes was disconcerting and off-putting. Percy sighed, knowing what we were going to hear even before Clarisse voiced the words; "I can't. I can promise you that I'll look out for Grover – I'll try and save him. But I can't take you with me."

With one last glance our way, Clarisse moved off. Disheartened, Percy sat down on the porch of our Cabin. He put our head in our hands and began tugging at the messy locks of black hair, desperately trying to think of something.

"Hey, hey!" I poked him mentally. 'We had a backup plan, remember?'

'What, sneak out? Let's be realistic here, Harry. We don't have resources or transport. What exactly are you expecting us to do?'

'Have faith. Poseidon owes us from last summer, right? Surely he'll help us out here.'

Percy wasn't completely convinced, but he perked up a bit.

A gentle swish of our cabin door, and the slightly heavy footfalls approaching alerted us to Tyson's arrival. Our friendly brother Cyclops sat beside us, and threw an arm over our shoulder comfortably. His gentle cow-like eye blinked at us.

"Brothers!" The delight at the title in Tyson's tone made us smile. "What's wrong?"

"Clarisse won't let us go with her on her quest. We were considering sneaking out anyway but… would you be ok here at camp alone?" Percy met Tyson's gaze, trying to convey our concern in that look. Tyson merely smiled widely.
"I'd come with you of course. What else are brother's for?"

Panicked, we opened our mouth, but Tyson simply glared at us.

"If you are going, then I am too. Mummy sent me to help you. I can't do that if I'm stuck at camp. Besides..." Tyson suddenly found his shoes very interesting as he mumbled. "Some people aren't nice here. I want to stay with you!"

Percy immediately felt guilty. Now don't get me wrong, I felt sorry for Tyson too, but 'not nice' people were still a heck of a lot safer than the real monsters we were going to face.

'Percy... we can't. He'll get hurt. You can't seriously want that.'

Percy shook our head. 'No, but you also know how truly horrible people can be. They don't always hurt you physically, but sometimes emotional hurt is just as bad.'

'We already need to look out for Annabeth and Luna, and then Grover when we find him. Tyson can't even fight!' I pleaded, unwilling to take our younger brother into danger.

'Harry!' Percy laughed. 'Annabeth and Luna are as skilled as we are, if not more after all their years at camp. And Grover isn't useless either – he protected Annabeth and Luna and Luke to camp didn't he? Let Tyson come. He can't seriously get into that much trouble.'

'Fine.' I conceded with a sigh.

"Alright, pack your stuff then." Percy grinned. "But you'll be protecting us from Sally if you get so much as scratched on this journey."

We left Tyson to quickly pack a bag – ours we had packed earlier, in the hope that Clarisse might take us. We wondered down to the beach, hoping that our prayers to Poseidon might reach him better there.

"Lord Poseidon, if we may be so impertinent to ask, we need to save our friend Grover, and the camp as well. If you could help us with some form of transport into the Sea of Monsters, then we would be very grateful."

If the sea god heard us, he made no sign. Just the warm sea breeze blowing salty air in our face, and the steady lap of waves against the shore. Percy turned a smooth flat pebble in our hand, having picked it up off the sandy beach. Frustrated by the lack of response, rose our hand to let the stone fly into the ocean, but a light touch stopped us.

"He heard you, don't you fear."

Spinning around, we saw a young man in jogging clothes smiling at us. We narrowed our eyes at him. Only demigods could cross the barrier, and strong monsters. The barrier hadn't weakened to the point yet that mortals could cross. So what was this man – a demigod, or a monster? His smile had a familiar mischief to it, but we couldn't quite place it.

"How would you know?" I knew I was snappish, but I was on edge at the ease this man had snuck up on us.

He smiled again, but this time the mischief was replaced with a sad, solemnness. "We always listen to our children, especially because we can't raise them in person. If your father can't hear you, it will be because he can't, not because he is ignoring you."
We stared at the guy blankly. This wasn't Poseidon – he seemed to have genuine taste in his jogging outfit, which the sea god seemed to be lacking in his choice of Bermuda shorts. Before we could reply to the god (or at least, I assumed that was what his strange comment alluded to him being) his phone rang.

We watched with curiosity as he pulled the device from his pocket. It glowed with some blue light – possible an anti-monster shield? – and two snakes were curled around it. The man answered the phone with barely a glance at the caller ID.

"Hello?"

The silence drew on as he listened to the other person talking. The pair of snakes writhed next to his ear, on the phone's pull-out antenna.

"Look, I'm sorry, even if he is chained to a rock with vultures picking out his liver, without a tracking number we can't track his parcel… Brilliant, a gift to mankind, we get a lot of them… Never mind, listen – just refer him to Eris in customer services. I got to go."

He hung up, and turned back to us. "Sorry about that. Never get a job in the delivery industry, all you get is 'my parcel is late' or 'this wasn't complete'. It's awful I tell you."

Nodding warily, we watched as he sat down with a sigh beside us, moving to put his phone away. "You have snakes on your phone." Percy just blurted out, before looking slightly contrite. "Sorry, that was rude, we shouldn't interfere…"

"That's fine!" The man laughed. "They don't bite. Martha, George, say hello. Hello. It was a rather odd experience, hearing the English spoken within our mind, even as we translated the hissing Parseltongue.

Hello, sea-son. A female voice chimed in afterwards.

Hearing the voices of her kind, Alyssa poked her head up from under our shirt. $Snakes. I hear snakes.$

The god did a double take, shocked by the appearance of the Basilisk. He looked between us and the snake a few times.

"You have a basilisk."

"Don't worry," I teased, "Alyssa doesn't bite. Often."

Alyssa tasted the air, flicking her tongue at the man in front of us. She hissed softly in gentle warning. $The man is not human.$

$No, he is a god. The question, is which…$

The god chuckled. "Would you like to guess, or should I tell you?"

We held up one finger in the universal "give-me-a-minute" gesture. After puzzling it out for a few minutes, the snakes started getting excited.

Can we do it? Please can we?

Full power mode! Please!
The god grinned, and in a wash of light, his phone grew and expanded into a familiar wand, with George and Martha wrapped around it. A caduceus, just like the one in prime place on Cabin 11.

"Lord Hermes?" I raised an eyebrow in question. Of all the gods to visit us, Luke's father was not at the top of who might visit us list. Though it might explain why he was so familiar – Luke definitely took after him. The blinding grin was answer enough.

"You heading off to save your friend and camp, then?" Hermes smiled. "Friends and family are worth fighting for, aren't they? Even breaking the rules."

We nodded distantly, wondering where this was going. Hermes blue eyes twinkled merrily.

"Martha, may I have the first package?"

The female snake unhinged her jaw, and belched out a stainless steel canister. The sides were decorated with red and black depictions of what looked like the labours of Herakles. Percy grinned.

"Herakles! I think he's one of my favourite constellations." Percy exclaimed happily.

I snorted. 'Because of his exceptional bad luck. Is that really a good reason for favouring a hero? You know, he was also a massive twat, right?'

Percy mentally stuck his tongue out at us. 'If you always expect the worst, you'll never be disappointed. Why shouldn't I set my targets low? Then I can only be excited when I over-achieve on them!'

I rolled my eyes at him, but didn't bother replying. Percy had a… unique outlook on life.

"...limited addition," We tuned back into Hermes talking, "Of course, it would be worth more if I had the whole lunchbox, but... Here. As a gift."

He passed it to us. We rolled it other in our hands, noting how no matter which way we turned the flask, it remained cold facing the same direction. North, unless I was very much mistaken.

"Thanks... Is it some sort of glorified compass?"

Hermes chuckled again. "I'd never thought of it like that. It holds the winds, cousin. So just be careful to only open it a crack to aid your travel. Otherwise you'll release them all. Now, for the second gift... George?"

George grumbled, but opened his jaws wide to give Hermes a bottle of what looked like multi-vitamins. Shaped like Minotaurs and Hydrias and Chimeras. The messenger god handed them over with a wink.

"Now this is very potent stuff, cousin, so only use them if you absolutely have to. You'll know when."

With that one cryptic message, Hermes suddenly became serious, his smile dropping off his face. "But if I may ask one favour... if you see my son out there on the high seas... don't give up on him. There is room for redemption in everyone. He's not a bad person, just he's been influenced by a less than kind life."

We nodded, and smiled slightly. "You can't choose your family, but you can fight for it to be how you want it to be. If we see him, we'll talk to Luke."

With a grateful smile, Hermes snapped his fingers, summoning two duffle bags. "I've packed some
extra stuff for you to smooth your journey along – after all, you aren’t going to get any support from camp if you’re going out without permission.”

I dipped our head in thanks. "Thank you, Lord Hermes. May the gods be with you."

Hermes moved off, shrinking his caduceus back into phone form, picking up a call from what sounded like Demeter, so appeared to be threatening his flower service should she not get her way. A few minutes later Annabeth and Luna, trailed by Tyson, appeared with their bags. Tyson also had ours swung over his shoulder. We grinned at them, waving.

Annabeth’s grey eyes narrowed, focusing on the duffle bags and the flask and pill bottle we were holding. We quickly summed up Lord Hermes visit, leaving out a few parts (mainly Luke). Our friend nodded slowly. Tyson grinned and handed us our bag.

"So how are we getting out of camp?" Annabeth asked. "Clarisse is due to leave in an hour – her father has given her a steam-powered battle ship to aid her travel. We could use that as cover when everyone sees her off?"

Percy nodded excitedly, eager to break the rules, the little Gryffindor. "We could head out though the forest, then head to the coast after we’ve made it past the borders."

The plan set, we waited by the edge of the woods for about half an hour, chatting and mock sparring, trying to look as casual as possible while we waited to hear the loud clamour that would be camp seeing of Clarisse and her chosen companions. Annabeth also went off to find Leo, and reappeared a few minutes later, having obviously dragged our young friend from the forges.

"You're going away again, aren't you?" Leo asked, his eyes sad.

We nodded. "We have to save Grover."

'I don't want to leave him behind again.' Percy voiced what we were both thinking.

'But at the same time, I don't want him to get hurt.' I nodded in agreement. 'Beckendorf would murder us for even asking him.'

Luckily, Annabeth and Luna took the decision from us. "Leo… You've been on the streets before, and you've been training here a year already. The Sea of Monsters is – as the name suggests – a fair shot more dangerous than the streets but you could still come with us, if you wanted."

Leo looked up, delight in his eyes, before he dropped his head again. "Beckendorf would have my head if I snuck out."

Beckendorf was a strong influence over his younger siblings. Being cabin leader of cabin 9, he dealt with everyone – small insecurities to nightmares to misbehaviour. After being alone on the streets for so long, and then Annabeth and Luna and us having to disappear off to school, Leo seeking his brother's approval in important things was most understandable. It made us smile too, because last summer Leo definitely would have leaped at the chance regardless. I was nice knowing that he knew people worried about him now.

"Message me? As often as possible?" Leo begged, meeting our all our eyes as he made us promise. Behind him we started to hear the noise of camp parading Clarisse and her companions to the ship. We promised, but also made sure he knew that as often as possible could still be very rarely, especially in such a monster-intensive place.

Leo nodded, then pulled a bracelet off his wrist, strapping it around ours. He tapped the metal plate
in the centre of the bracelet, and the metal expanded, creating a solid celestial bronze shield. It was currently undecorated, but the mere quality of the craftsmanship was beautiful beyond belief.

"Stay safe, ok?" Little Leo grinned at us.

"You too, Little Guy." Percy grinned back, shouldering our bag. "See you on the other side!"

We crept out through the forest, fortunately managing to avoid any monsters in our way as we travelled. A good hour or two of trekking later, we finally passed through the tattered remains of the camp border, and heading in the direction of sea.

It admittedly wasn't until we reached the beach that we found a plan of how we were going travel. We spotted a cruise ship in the distance. If we could just reach that ship, we could steal a life boat, which Percy was pretty sure he could definitely control and no doubt that flask of wind Hermes gifted us with would further aid our travelling…

I explained this reasoning to Annabeth and Luna and Tyson. "So. Any ideas of how to reach the cruise ship?"

"Fish-ponies!" Tyson exclaimed, pointing behind us. In the shallows stood three sea-creatures which looked not unlike horses, except for the fact that they had fish tails instead of back legs.

"Hippocampi." Annabeth nodded, impressed.

Sea-lord! Little sea-lord! The happy voices of the hippocampi filled our head, and we smiled indulgently.

'Hello. We don't suppose you'd be able to help us over to the cruise ship, do you?'

Yes! Yes! Help the sea-lord!

"Well they're willing to help us." Percy summed up for Annabeth and Luna's benefits, laughing as Tyson had already mounted a large rainbow coloured hippocampus, and was splashing around with him.

Warily, Annabeth and Luna allowed us to help them onto their steed, before we swung up onto the remaining hippocampus. With a few more words of encouragement, we were speeding through the waves, spray dampening our faces as the hippocampi swam over the waves, appreciating our (well, mainly Annabeth and Luna's) need to breathe air.

When we reached the ship we manage to climb up onto a lower deck. As we walked around though, we noticed that none of the passengers seemed particularly surprised to see us climbing over the rails. In fact, most of them seemed to have rather blank expressionless faces. Something was wrong. Really wrong. However, until we turned the corner and ran face-first into our… least favourite cousin, that we realised how badly 'wrong' summed up the situation.
Chapter 65

Harry's Point of View

Luke had taken up occupation in the ship's captain's room. What had happened to the original ship's captain was something that we absolutely refused to think about. Whoever he was though, he must have had an interesting taste in decor. ('Or her,' Percy added, 'let's not discriminate.') The large wall-sized window overlooking the back of the ship was bordered with red and gold patterned curtains. Actually, pretty much everything from the double bed to the sofa to the desk to the rug was painted in Gryffindor colours. I squinted at the gold box in the corner, and shuddered.

'Is that a sarcophagus?'

Percy send me a mental nod. 'Is he a vampire? Does he sleep in it do you think?'

I sniggered. The mythology was all wrong, but the idea of the perfect traitor son of Hermes sleeping in a sarcophagus was certainly amusing. Of course, the luxurious double bed suggested that Luke didn't actually sleep in the sarcophagus. Which probably meant it had more sinister uses. I shivered. Nope. Not going there. Dead things were icky.

Alyssa, who had hidden inside our Camp Half-blood top when we had ridden the hippocampi and since fallen asleep, stirred and tasted the air. She slithered around under our shirt before peeking her head out. Luke's wide-eyed gaze of not-quite horror at the sight of shrunken basilisk poking her head out the neck of our shirt made us giggle.

'Say hello, Alyssa.' I hissed at her, the sibilant sounds filling the silent room. 'Meet Luke, the guy who betrayed us last summer.'

Alyssa hissed dangerously, venom forming on her fangs. Luke flashed us a disarming smile.

"Calm down, Harry, Percy. We aren't trying to hurt you here. We simply need you out of the way for a little while." Luke's honey-toned voice fell upon closed ears. Annabeth and Luna turned an interesting pink, glowering at Luke as they struggled against the huge bears holding us captive.

"Don't you dare!" Luna shouted. "You expect us to sit around and do nothing while everyone at the camp is slaughtered?! While Thalia's tree dies?! Go to Tartarus, you heartless cur!"


Tyson's cow-brown eye watered. I highly doubted he understood what was being said anymore that we did, but the slight against him for being a monster was impossible to miss. We narrowed our eyes.

'Brother, I don't like him.' Percy muttered. 'I didn't like him before, but I especially don't like him now. Talking to Luna and Annabeth like they disgust him. Has he seen the company he's been clearly staying in recently?"
I nodded, but didn't reply. Instead I focused on our little brother, trying to catch his attention. I tilted our head and widened our eyes. Tyson met them, caught in the emerald intensity of our stare. Using the small amount of legilimency we had to project my thoughts at him.

'Tyson! Tyson, it's me, Harry. Just ignore him. He's a big fat hypocrite who doesn't deserve your emotional response to his words.'

Tyson sniffed. 'So Annabeth and Luna like me?'

I faltered, unsure how to answer the question. Annabeth and Luna were still apparently wary of Tyson for being a Cyclops – the story behind that semi-rational fear was not exactly something I was especially looking forward to. Despite that, they both seemed to be fairly comfortable around our half-brother, especially since getting to know him better. Before I could even start to conclude how I was going to answer Tyson's question, Percy spoke up. *Tyson, of course they still like you. Villain fighting 101 – never listen to the nonsense being sprouted. Ask for clarification at a later date away from danger.*

Tyson beamed again. *Thanks Percy!*

Crisis avoided, we turned out attention back to our female friends, who were still spitting angrily at Luke.

"– no right, Luke Castellan. She sacrificed herself to save us. And now you're destroying her and the only sanctuary demigods have left? Go to Hades!"

Luke's face froze, emotionless. The sudden mask thrown up gave us slight hope in Hermes request. He may be misled, but perhaps there was still a part of him that cared. Luke turned to the two large bears standing behind us. When he spoke disappointment hung on every word; "Put them in the brig. You don't understand yet the terrible wrongs being committed against you here. Think on it a while. Perhaps then you'll realise what Thalia's sacrifice really meant."

The two large talking bears that had been holding us securely up to this point – preventing us from charging head first at Luke among other things – seemed to take Luke's orders to heart, dragging us through the length of the ship and down several stair cases before quite literally throwing us into an empty room in the bottom of the ship. We landed in a heap, only just managing to untangle all our limbs before the door shut with an ominous clang and snick of a bolt being shut. Alyssa hissed in complaint of being squashed when we were thrown to the floor quietly, but soon quieted down as we stroked her spine gently, lulling her to sleep absentmindedly. We sat and watched each other a while, taking in the situation.

"How, of all people, did we run into Luke?" I groaned, rubbing my hand where the faint scar from Luke's scorpion last summer still reflected a faint shimmery white in the dim light of the room. *I mean, Luke abandoned ship with the gods, so why was he hanging around so close to camp? Unless he had a role in Thalia's poisoning… but that makes no sense! Why destroy the only safe haven for demigods? He can't have raised an army to storm Olympus in a year. So it would make more sense to recruit from camp then weaken it when he was ready to attack…*'

'…unless he has an ulterior motive.' Percy chipped into my interior mutterings.

'But what could he gain from killing Thalia?'

"The Golden Fleece!" I started, hitting our head. Annabeth and Luna and Tyson stared at us, and we almost laughed at the question marks that we could imagine floating above their heads. Suddenly Annabeth's lightbulb clicked.
"No..." she whispered, "you think Luke is after the Fleece? I mean, we know it's a powerful artefact, but it increases the natural fertility of a habitat and helps heal..."

"Heal what?" I whispered. "Want to bet it's something to do with that sarcophagus?"

We all shuddered, Tyson pulling a particularly disgusted face that made Percy giggle internally, despite the horrific scenario we had interpreted. Hopefully not the actual scenario we would be facing but Hades, knowing our luck... it could be anything.

It was Luna who broke the silence, her dreamy voice cutting through it strong with optimism. "Don't let the nargles mess with our heads. They like buzzing around depressed thoughts weighing them down."

"First we need to escape before its worth even worrying about Luke." Annabeth agreed. "Right, we need a way out of that door."

Percy and I let our gaze sweep over the very bare room. The room was just a storage room, no windows, solid metal walls and the one single door. Our holsters had been taken off us, and Riptide had yet to return to us. So, all in all, it was looking a little hopeless. With a disappointed sigh, Percy banged one of our fists against the door. In his frustration, Percy also sent a wave of magic into the movement, lighting up our hands and destroying the glamours we had cast to disguise the unicorn blood marks. Today it was shaped as a trident, and glowed fiercely with the magic, acting as a condensed channel for our magic in place of our wands. The metal beneath our hand grew hot, making us jolt away with a cry and the door began to melt under our fist.

"Son of a Fury!" Percy yelped, frantically blowing on our burnt hand. Annabeth grabbed it, gently by the wrist, examining the injured limb with a practiced eye. With nothing to hand they could do nothing to treat it, but advised we didn't touch the burn or agitate it until we could treat it.

Meanwhile, Tyson was examining the door. He peered through the fist-shaped hole before grinning delightedly. "Brother, look! No guards."

I double checked, just to make sure Tyson hadn't missed anything. Not that I would have expected him to. Any guard out there would have no doubt have heard our racket or seen the door melting. I smiled and gave Tyson a thumbs.

"Do you think you might be able to reach the bolt through the hole, Tyson?" Annabeth asked tentatively. "Cyclops obviously have a level of heat resistance so..."

"Sure!" Tyson beamed at Annabeth and Luna, delighted that they had acknowledged him as useful and not monstrous. He pulled at the soft metal a little, widening the gap to allow his hand and arm to manoeuvre comfortably through it. After about a minute of shifting and fumbling Tyson finally managed to grab the bolt and slide it open. He grinned that wide smile that pulled on our heartstrings as it begged for approval and praise.

Tyson, while coming from a loving home with Sally Jackson, was pretty much friendless at school, and seemed to soak up all the attention we gave him. It was obvious in his insecurity over Annabeth and Luna's trust in him and his constant looks checking our reactions and searching for ways to prove himself that Tyson was waiting for us to ditch him at any moment. Knowing the feeling all too well from our parents Percy and I fumed inwardly at the conditioned reaction in our half-brother.

"Nice job!" I ruffled his hair affectionately. "Let get out of here."

We snuck up carefully through the ship, ducking and hiding at any hint of someone nearby until we
eventually succeeded in making it back to Luke's room to claim our weapons and belongings back. In a stroke of luck the room was empty when we knocked gently before letting ourselves in. Unfortunately it was when we attempted to leave that our problems really started.

We opened the door just as Luke did, and all of us froze for a moment in surprise before Percy instinctively shot out a disarming spell at Luke, throwing him back against the wall of the passageway. Twin growls vibrated from behind the doorway.

"Bloody hell!" Percy cursed. "Run!"

Annabeth, gripping her knife, slashed at one of the bears, hitting his right arm. The bear flinched back. His brother slammed a paw into us, tearing our t-shirt and grazing the back of our shoulder. Percy twisted, uncapping Riptide and sliced the monster's chest in retaliation. Tyson sprinted on ahead, glanced back every few moments. A swift kick from Percy then sent the bear facing us falling back in surprise, right into his brother's path. The pair went down in a mess of limbs and we sprinted away as if the Furies themselves were after us.

By this point of course the noise of battle had alerted the rest of the ship to our presence, and monsters seemed to be appearing from everywhere. There were the little foot soldiers – harpies and hell hounds and little dog faced demons. While not particularly challenging on their own the sheer number of them made the idea of standing and fighting suicidal. And that was without counting the horrible snake ladies and giant crabs that we caught glimpses of periodically, slithering towards us at high speeds or nearly crushing us under their great bulk before we managed to flee in a different direction.

I lost count of the amount of corners we turned, stairs we climbed and low-level monsters we turned to dust before we finally hit the main deck and open air. Grabbing Annabeth and Luna's hand, Percy immediately rushed for the edge of the ship, making sure Tyson was following. We quickly checked that Alyssa was still safely wound around our waist, then turned to face our female companions.

"Trust us?" Percy asked Annabeth and Luna, urgency deepening our voice. They nodded, eyes wide with adrenaline and fear. "Tyson, jump!"

Grabbing our female friend we jumped over the side, knowing that (as a son of Poseidon too) Tyson would make the jump into the water just fine. Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. We saw Luke appear from the same door we had escaped the inner decks from, and saw him clench his jaw in anger. Tyson jumped a second later, suddenly understanding. An arrow, shot by a boy – a demigod, I recognised him from cabin 11 last summer – grazed our cheek before hitting Annabeth and Luna's shoulder. Then we slipped over the side of the ship and lost sight of our enemies. Percy and I focused on the water below, making it surge up and meet us gently, rather than hitting it hard. Before we reached the water though we noticed more bows appearing over the side of the boat, aiming at us. There was a loud twang that seemed to resonate as the archers let loose their arrows a slightly different times. Before they reached us the water closed around us, and Percy commanded the sea to form a large wave above us, misdirecting the arrows.

Tyson smiled at us, breathing as easily as we did under the water. The sea water soothed our wounds, healing our burnt hand and cuts. A thumping to our chest drew out attention to Annabeth and Luna, who by this point were definitely in need of air, the cold water having knocked it out of them. A gentle push to the water around us collected a bubble of air around their head, not unlike the bubble-head charm. They smiled, one hand still holding their impaled shoulder.

"Thanks." The sound was muffled by the water, but we still understood, and shot her a grin back. A giggle behind us from Tyson had us turning back to our brother, to where the large rainbow hippocampus from before was rubbing his head fondly against Tyson's stomach. Exchanging a look
with Annabeth and Luna, we grinned.

"Tyson, will your friend take us to shore?"

'Of course little lords.' The Hippocampus replied to us immediately, before Tyson himself could ask. Our one-eyed brother grinned.

"Rainbow is the best pony ever!"

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to try and edit my story this summer so I can get back to regular updates because I know there are numerous spelling errors and gaping plot points (lots of you are very good at pointing these out to me, so I'll try and get on them :P)

So, until next time, enjoy your lovely summer holidays :)

Smartiepants :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!