The Sea Of Monsters

by Kako

Summary

Sequel to "The Lightning Thief." Everything only seems to go downhill as Percy keeps on living, and he has to wonder if his unique powers were a gift or simply the Fates' idea of a joke. If that was all he would ever be, a game for higher beings to play, a toy for them to tear apart, he wasn't sure living was all that worth it anymore. **ON HIATUS- I don't have my book with me, and can't update with any new chapters. I promise I will get to updating once summer's over! With extra chapters to make up for this! I apologize so much!**

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
The smell of waffles wafted into the cluttered kitchen, blue breakfast food being placed on the oak wood table. The plate thunked as it was set down, and Percy stared at the meal with a strange sense of foreboding.

Their apartment was a cozy little place that felt a lot bigger without a certain sleazy poker player. It was cold outside in the early morning but warm within their walls, busy city noises being blocked out by the sound of the frying pan and clattering of silverware. He picked up his fork, holding it in his hand, and poked at his waffle.

Sally pulled out the chair across from him at their quaint dinner table, and he flinched at the squeaking its legs made as they raked the floor. His mom smiled at him brightly, and he aimed a ghost of the grin back at her before turning back to his food.

Percy stabbed the waffle with the side of his fork, cutting through the blue food and impaling it with his silverware. He brought it to his mouth, closing his lips tightly around the fork and pulling it out slowly. He chewed at a snail's pace, not so much to savor but to try and get lost in the buttery taste, but against his tongue it felt more like sandpaper.

Sally frowned at him. "Percy, are you alright?" He put down his fork, grabbing for the glass of fresh orange juice at his side, and he took a gulp of the sour drink.

It washed the traces of waffle from his mouth and clawed down his throat. Percy wrinkled his nose, letting the glass set back on the table top. "Yeah," he finally answered. "I'm fine."

She raised an eyebrow. "School, or..." She didn't need to finish. Percy knew what his mom was thinking.

He gave a small shrug. "I think Grover's in trouble." Percy tapped his hand against his thighs, feeling the fabric of his jeans against the tips of his fingers. "I had this dream last night."

Sally pursed her lips. He knew that his mom didn't like talking about his "other life," but he also knew she would break their illusion of normalcy for his satyr friend.

"I wouldn't be too worried," she consoled. "If there was a problem, I'm sure we would've heard from camp." She faltered at the last word, and he narrowed his eyes.

"What is it?" She shook her head, the top of her brown hair catching the light of their overhead lamp and making it shine like a halo.

"Nothing," she promised. He sighed, pushing away his plate, and she looked at him sadly. "I'll tell you what. This afternoon, we'll celebrate the end of school. I'll take you and Tyson to Rockefeller Center."

He perked up slightly at the sound of his favorite skateboard shop, and being able to put a grin on his school friend's face was tempting. Even so, something about the offer bothered him.

"Wait," Percy said. "I thought we were packing me up for camp tonight." She finished the last of her waffles, standing to put away their dishes, and he watched her with confused eyes colored like his father's domain.

His mom set their plates in the sink, turning towards him and leaning her back against the counter.
"About that," she fidgeted. "I got a message from Chiron last night."

He blinked. "What did he say?" She crossed her arms, large sweater setting over her willowy form.

"He thinks that it might not be safe for you to come to camp just yet," Sally told her son. "We might have to postpone."

Percy felt a wave of fear clamber up in his chest and wrap around his heart. It was gone the instant it came, instinct coming in to calm him down. He needed a solution, not stress.

"Postpone?" He repeated. "Why wouldn't it be safe? Mom, I'm a half-blood. It's the only safe place on Earth for me."

"Usually, dear. But with the problems their having-"

His composure melted away. "Problems? What problems?"

"Percy..." He settled down, hands clenched into tight fists. He had been waiting to leave for too long, feeling all too much like a duck sitting in a pond of false tranquility. "I'm very, very sorry."

"About what?" His mouth felt dry. "Sorry about what?"

"I was hoping to talk to you about it this afternoon," she continued. "I can't explain it all now. I'm not even sure Chiron can. Everything happened so suddenly."

Percy's mind was reeling. What had happened? How could he not go to camp? The teenager had about a million questions to ask but their clock decided to chime in at the half hour, biding them to hurry.

Sally looked relieved. "Seven-thirty, dear. You should go. Tyson will be waiting." He made to object but she cut him off. "Percy, we'll talk this afternoon. Go on to school."

He wanted to push, but he saw the fragile look in his mother's eyes, like her insides had turned to glass that might shatter all too easily. And she was right about one thing, after all. He couldn't keep Tyson waiting. His friend was scared of traveling underground alone.

Percy gathered up his things, stopping at the doorway. "Mom, this problem at camp," he said. "Does it have anything to do with my dream? About Grover?"

She wouldn't meet his eyes. "We'll talk this afternoon. I'll explain as much as I can." He nodded, giving her a reluctant goodbye and a kiss on her cheek before heading out. He jogged downstairs, rushing to catch the Number Two train.

As he stepped outside, he glanced at the brownstone building across the street. It was another dark hue against the ashy skies, but for a second, he thought he saw a dark shape in the hazy sun; a human silhouette against the wall, a shadow that belonged to no one.

It only rippled and vanished, leaving him even more alone.

Meriwether College Prep was a progressive school tucked away in downtown Manhattan. It was the kind of school where kids sat around in bean bags instead of chairs and the teachers never gave out
grades. The laid-back style suited him well enough, and he never minded going.

Percy didn't know if that same mindset had come with him today. He stuck close to his friend on the large break ground, swinging back and forth on a hanging tire while Tyson glanced nervously around. The guy was huge, taller than any of the adults, and he had a kind of face Percy could never truly meet.

The tire creaked as he put his weight on it, and he dug his heels into the chips of wood, slowing the motion. Tyson looked at him curiously. "You okay?"

He opened his mouth to answer, interrupted swiftly. The school bully had managed to sneak up on his friend, and Tyson screamed, swatting him away with surprise. He put a bit too much strength in the defense and sent the bully flying, landing on his backside several feet away.

"You freak!" He yelled, face red with embarrassing and anger. "Go back to your cardboard box!"

Percy flinched. Tyson lived in a cardboard refrigerator box off 72nd street, adapted by the school as a community service project to make students feel good about themselves. Despite his massive size and scary looks he was a big softie, and the kids liked to use that to their advantage.

Tyson's chin trembled. "Take it back, Sloan!" Percy snarled. The kid just sneered.

"Why do you even bother, Jackson?" Sloan got to his feet, and Tyson backed away from the tire set as the bully approached. "You might have friends if you weren't always sticking up for that freak."

Percy balled his fists, glaring up at Sloan from where he sat. "He's not a freak. He's just-" he faltered, the bully only laughing. His friends at the sidelines joined in, and it was almost like he had twice as many of the large guys chiming in. Percy huffed at the commotion.

"Just wait till later, Jackson," Sloan smirked. "You're so dead." He went to join his cronies, flipping the teen off as he went, and Percy resisted the urge to stick Anaklusmos through his chest.

Percy abandoned his tire, heading to his sobbing friend. He had to reach up on the tip of his toes to pat Tyson on the back, but it seemed to slow the tears. He sniffed.

"I am... I am a freak?" Percy shook his head.

"No," he promised, gritting his teeth. "Matt Sloan is the freak."

Tyson trembled. "You are a good friend. Miss you next year, if I, if I can't-" he choked on his tears. Percy frowned. The school hasn't decided whether he would be invited back next year for the project. He didn't know what Tyson would do alone.

"Don't worry, big guy," Percy comforted. "Everything's going to be fine." The grateful look Tyson gave him only made him feel worse.

Percy sighed. The sound went unnoticed in the loud buzz in his history class, talking filling up the study session. Books filled the surrounded shelves, windows blocked by flowing curtains and leaving the inside fairly dark. It smelled liked dusty papers and whiteboard markers, teacher at the front too engrossed in her book to shush her class.
The demigod fiddled with his pencil, twirling the object between his fingers. His textbook laid open in front of him, flipped to some random page, but his dyslexia scrambled up the letters and gave him a headache at every paragraph. Percy exhaled through his nose, giving up on the worksheet for a while.

He opened his binder, shuffling through the papers and dumping them on one side. Percy looked at the picture taped to the inside of his folder. It was a photo of Annabeth, blonde hair tucked into a bandana as she posed in front of the Lincoln Memorial like she had designed it herself. He allowed himself a small grin, and it felt almost alien on his face.

The daughter of Athena had emailed the picture to him after spring break and he had kept it to remind himself of what he was coming back to. She had offered to send him some pictures of Luke but he had refused the offer. He wasn't sure he was ready to see those blue eyes again, even if they were behind a camera.

Percy wished Annabeth was here. She would know what to make of his dreams, would know how to help him. He made to close his binder, yelping when a pair of greedy hands reached out and tore the photograph from where it was. He snapped his neck up, Matt Sloan's mischievous eyes glimmering at him.

"Hey!" Percy protested. Sloan checked out the slip of paper, eyes widening.

"Woah, Jackson," he whistled. "This your girlfriend? She's hot." He blushed furiously.

"It's not like that!" He shouted. "Just give it back!" Sloan chuckled, handing it over to his cronies, and they started to tear it apart. Percy's heart lurched.

"Stop!" He stood, lunging forward, but there was nothing to grab. Matt tripped him and he fell to the ground, slamming against the rough floor. Due to his desk being in the very back their teacher didn't even look up, and he knew he was alone on this.

He got to his feet, leaning his hand against his desk for support, and Sloan merely watched. "See my new friends?" The bully asked, gesturing to the group of new kids. "They're moving here next year. I bet they can pay the tuition, too, unlike your retard friend."

"He's not retarded," Percy grunted out, seething. He almost thought he heard thunder outside, but if lightning had flashed through the skies outside, the curtains obscured the sight.

Sloan rolled his eyes. "You're such a loser, Jackson," he taunted. "Good thing I'm gonna put you outta your misery next period."

Percy growled, and the floor shook as he stood. Sloan and his buddies were saved by the bell as it rang, noise echoing through the halls. The bully ruffled his hair as he passed out the doors, and Percy could only glare at the ground.

"Percy!" It sounded like a girl's voice that had called him. His shoulders stiffened, glancing around, but there was nobody there. As if anyone would be caught yelling his name.

The teenager kicked a chair as he passed, backpack not nearly as heavy as the invisible weight stress had left on his shoulders.
The gym was huge. Its ceiling stretched up above their heads, shiny floors squeaking under the weight of their sneakers. Banners hung on the white painted walls, lights shining from the spotlights and making the place brighter. Percy glanced nervously around the room, pulling on his tie-dyed shirt out of habit.

The PE teacher was sitting at his desk in the corner, reading some sports magazine. He looked up when Sloan called. "Coach Nunley?"

Tyson moved closer to Percy. "Eh?" The coach barked, glancing up from his read.

Sloan smiled that crooked grin of his. "Can I be team captain?"

Percy blinked, spotting the rack of dodge balls shoved up against the wall. They were little spheres of hell, and he wasn't looking forward to being pelted with them today. The teenager sighed through his nose.

Coach Nunley hummed something in affirmation, waving a hand dismissively as he turned back to his magazine. Sloan chuckled under his breath, striding up to the center of the court. He started calling out all his usual cronies and some of the new exchange students they had gotten today, filling up his team with buff and muscular jerks.

That left Percy's team. They had Tyson, which was a pretty fair advantage, seeing as he was a tank. Unfortunately, he was as weak-willed as all the others when it came to having dodge balls pelted at your face, and had a knack of running as far back as possible from the onslaught. All the other kids were small and skinny, some sniffling, most having received their fair share of bullying at school. It wasn't the best set-up for Percy, admittedly.

Sloan spilled the rack of balls, the rubber spheres rolling across the floor and bouncing only slightly. Tyson nudged his best friend. "Scared," he murmured. "Smell funny."

Percy glanced at him. He doubted Tyson was talking about himself. "What smells funny?"
"Them." He pointed at the group of burly exchange students. "Smell funny."

The visitors were growling and cracking their knuckles, and Percy thought that they resembled caged
animals eyeing their prey. He distinctly wondered where they had come from. Likely from the pits of Tartarus.

He really hoped it was only a joke.

Sloan had the coach's bright green whistle in his hands. He threw Percy a sly wink before blowing on the tiny device. The sharp screech rang through the gym, swallowed by the sound of a mass of students diving for the middle of the court- at least, on Sloan's team. Percy had to make room for one of his teammates, spying as he ran to the exit while shouting a surrender in Urdu. Several of his fellow students opted to hide behind the wall mats, while the rest simply cowered in fear and tried to not look like targets.

"Tyson," Percy called out. Luckily, his friend had stuck by his side. "Let's get-

A dodge ball rammed right into his gut. Percy grunted in surprise and pain, sliding down hard on the cold gym floor. The other team exploded in laughter.

Percy's eyesight went fuzzy, and he coughed, stomach sore. He felt like he had just gotten the Heimlich maneuver from a gorilla. How could anybody hit that hard?

Tyson yelled out, breaking him from his reverie. "Percy, duck!" He rolled out of the way as another ball whistled past his ear at the speed of sound. It hit one of the wall mats, and the kid hiding behind it yelped.

"Hey!" Percy shouted at Sloan's team. Tyson helped him up, steadying him to his feet. "You could kill somebody!"

One of the visitors grinned at him. Tattoos ran along his chiseled arms, and somehow, he looked almost larger than he had before. Larger and meaner. His biceps bulged underneath his T-shirt. "I hope so, Perseus Jackson!" He taunted. "I hope so!"

The way he said Percy's name sent a chill down the son of Poseidon's spine. Nobody had called him that, not anyone that didn't know his true identity. Nobody that wasn't a friend... or an enemy.

The missing piece of the puzzle clicked inside Percy's mind, and then it was complete. What had Tyson said? They smell funny.

"Monsters," Percy whispered, a thing of horror to himself.

The kids were no longer kids. Between a blink of his eyes they had grown into eight foot tall giants, wild eyes gleaming and teeth set at points. Sloan screamed, dropping his dodge ball, and his friends made for the doors. One of the giants threw a ball with perfect accuracy, hitting the door and slamming it shut like magic.

Percy knew it wouldn't budge. He caught Sloan's gaze from across the gym, brimming with fear, and felt a surge of anger. Sure, he had never liked the bully, but that didn't mean he deserved this.

"Let them go!" The teenager demanded. His voice cut through the chaos, and it was almost as if everyone grew a bit quieter at the words. One giant, flimsy name tag reading "Joe Bob" looked at Percy curiously.

"And lose our tasty morsels?" He questioned, almost sounding genuinely surprised. "No, son of the Sea God. We Laistrygonians aren't just playing for your death." The mangled mess of letters shoved into a word rang in his ears. "We want lunch!"
He snapped his beefy fingers. Suddenly, a new rack of balls appeared on the gym floored, but they weren't made of rubber. The dodge balls gleamed, surface crafted in celestial bronze, and their outline was tinged with smoke to show they bore extreme heat. They must have been searing hot, but Joe Bob picked one up with his bare hands.

Percy stepped back as the frenzied screaming picked back up. "Coach!" He shouted, and the teacher looked up dreamily. If he saw anything abnormal he didn't let on, turning back to his reading, Mist shielding his fragile mortal sight from the horror show.

A giant named Skull Eater threw a ball. It sailed over his head, blowing a crater into the ground. Another cannonball whooshed past his shoulder, headed towards the wall mat.

"Cory!" Percy screamed, the student's name clicking in the panicked recesses of his consciousness. Tyson took charge, diving forward and pulling the kid out seconds before the ball made contact. It seared burn marks into the mat's spongy surface.

Percy thought hard. "Run!" He ordered his friends. "To the other exit!" The registered what he had said, making to the opposite door, but it was closed just the same with another wave of Joe Bob's hand.

"No one leaves until you're out!" Joe Bob screeched. "And no one's out until we eat you!" He launched his own fireball, and Percy's fellow students scattered like ants.

Percy searched for Anaklusmos, hands colliding against pocketless gym shorts. A wave of anxiety washed over him, heart skipping a few beats. His pen was in his jeans, tucked inside his locker room and outside the gym. He was defenseless.

Another cannonball came streaking towards him, blazing with flames in a clean arch that cut through the air. Tyson pushed him out of danger's way, but the explosion still blew him head over heels. Percy lay dazed on the floor, dyed shirt peppered with sizzling holes that tainted the fabric. He groaned.

Just across the center line, two giants were snarling at him. "Flesh!" One bellowed. "Hero flesh for lunch!" They both took aim.

Tyson started. "Percy needs help!" He declared, diving into the way, and his best friend screamed. He watched in horror as the balls speed at him, but the feeling dulled into a shocked amazement. Clumsy Tyson managed to catch both searing spheres of flame in his hands, hurtling them back to their surprised owners who only managed to look scared as they exploded across their chests.

The giants disintegrated into twin columns of smoke, dust dissipating into the air. It was a sure sign they were monsters, souls being dragged back down to the pit with Kronos until they rose millennia later. It was an endless cycle, killing these beasts and others like them, that demigods have and will be forced into until the end of time.

And Percy supposed that included him, too.

"My brothers!" Joe Bob roared. His shirt ripped along the outline of his muscles. "You will pay for their destruction!"

"Tyson!" Percy said. "Look out!" The warning pushed off his tongue just as another comet hurtled towards the two. Tyson just had time to swat it aside, and they watched as it flew straight over Coach Nunley's head and landed in bleachers.

Kids were running around and screaming out to the gods, trying to avoid the smoking craters in the
Crowds of students were still banging on the exits, calling for help. Percy made out Sloan standing petrified in the middle of the court, watching in disbelief as comets of flame flew around him.

The coach hadn't looked up. He was taping his hearing aid as if the explosions were giving him interference. Percy held in a shriek of bottled down stress. Surely the whole school could hear the noise. Someone had to come for them.

"Victory will be ours!" Roared Joe Bob. "We will feast on your bones!" Percy glared at them. "Dude," he muttered. "You're taking this dodgeball game way too seriously." The Laistrygonians didn't bother with a response, three of them hefting large bronze dodge balls and taking their aim.

Percy knew they were dead. There was no way Tyson could reflect all those cannonballs on his own, and his hands had to be seriously burned from blocking the first ones. Without his sword, well, what could he do?

An idea popped into the flitting expanses of his mind. Percy wasn't a hero just because of his sword skills. He was a child of Poseidon, and even more, he had something no other demigod had been gifted with before.

He had the powers of the three king gods, and damn it to Hades, he was going to use them.

Percy ran to the locker room door. "Move!" He yelled at his teammates, and they made way for him. Percy's outstretched hand reached the exit, doorknob a lost cause. He knew the rest was up to him.

He shut his eyes tight, being met by wavering darkness. The hero concentrated, focusing his raw energy into one heavy blow. He reached out to the Underworld stewing below their feet, to the oceans washing away their land, to the skies stretching endlessly over the Earth. Percy felt the power forming in his gut. Opening his eyes, he gave a shout-

-and the fragility of his concentration vanished as a kid shoved him out of the way. It was a difficult thing to call on command and now his efforts were dust in the wind, but he owed the kid his life. As it happened, the cannonball that had been making a literal crash course to his head hit the door, spitting open the wood and revealing the locker room behind.

The cannonball banged into the lockers in the back and blew them apart, dimming away in the wreck. Kids swarmed through the large hole in the door, and Percy himself was about to go in when a roar full of bloodlust echoed through the gym.

He turned back just in time to see Tyson punch Skull Eater in the face. The giant crumpled, leaving Tyson heaving over a mess of golden sand. He faced Joe Bob, but the last monster had held his ball wisely, waiting for the right opportunity. Percy barely made out the bronze comet as it flew.

"No!" Percy screamed. The outburst left his throat aching, but he couldn't force himself to care. He saw as the cannonball collided into his friend, and as Tyson was launched back, his fury buckled out from the cage it had been locked inside from the depths of his gut.

The skies boomed, and the ceiling was lit by an extraordinary strike of lightning. The power of it blasted the roof to pieces, causing the construct to rain pieces of the building over their heads. It missed any people below, crashing onto the ground and forming larger craters than the ones left by the cannonballs. Flames caught to the burning school, and the sound of the fire alarm rang distantly in his ears.

The kids stared at astonishment from their hideout in the locker room. Percy blinked warily and
Tyson through the rubble. His friend had collided with the far wall, back hitting the mat and pillowing the hit. He was sitting stunned on the ground, gazing blearily at the wreck that used to be their gym.

Percy's knees wavered. A rush of nausea buzzed around his clouding head, and he stumbled to the ground. His lunch came in the form of vomit, spilling out onto the floor, and he had to make an effort not to fall into the mess. That little show had taken more power than he had, and it was a miracle he hadn't blacked out.

The hero raised his head weakly from his kneel. Joe Bob was blinking at him, astonishment sprawled out over his ugly features. "B-but how?" He demanded. "You are a child of Poseidon! How are you able to control Zeus' sphere of power?"

You tell me, he wanted to retort, but the words didn't quite make it out from his lips. The giant narrowed his eyes, stepping towards his shaking form, but he turned rigid as one of Medusa's victims before he could make it too far.

The shimmering, crimson coated tip of a sword poked through where his belly button would have been. Percy recognized the blade of *Anaklusmos* piercing through Joe Bob's midsection, and the wielder of his weapon was revealed behind a gust of golden smoke.

Annabeth looked just as she had in her photo. Her blonde hair was pulled back into a ponytail, clothes disheveled and face flecked with sweat. Her stormy grey eyes had a crazy tint to them, as if she had run a million miles chased by ghosts.

Matt Sloan, watching from the front of the locker room door, made his presence known with a stutter. "But that's- that's the girl-

Annabeth threw *Anaklusmos* at his feet. Sloan yelped, tripping backwards and hitting the lockers. The sword's blade shimmered in the sunlight from above, embedded in the wooden floorboards like a bronze Excalibur.

"And you," Annabeth barked at him, "lay off my friend."

The gym was in flames. Kids were running around screaming, sirens wailing in the distance. A garbled voice was blowing through the intercom, and a line of teachers could be heard trying to get through the locked exit door.

The daughter of Athena turned to him. Immediately, her gaze grew concerned. She opened her mouth to speak but he beat her to it in the way of stammers. "Annabeth? How did you- how long were you-

"Pretty much all morning." She tucked a strand of blonde behind her ear, and Percy spied the baseball cap shoved in her back pocket. "I've been trying to find a good time to talk to you, but you were never alone." She looked up to the open skies as he tried to work with the new information. "I can't imagine how you were able to do this."

He was still several steps behind. "But..." He trailed off for a second. "I don't- I don't understand."

"Neither do I," Annabeth mused. "Your powers are getting out of hand. All because of some idiot getting in the way."

He furrowed his eyebrows. "What?" His eyes darted to Tyson, still dazed on the floor. Annabeth met the gaze, and there was a certain kind of disgust in the look he couldn't comprehend.
"Meet me outside," she ordered. "And you better bring him, too."

Percy's mind was spinning. "What?" The teachers had gotten through the far door, and were making their way to him.

"No time!" She urged, pulling out her Yankees cap. "Hurry!" Annabeth disappeared, leaving him in the ruins of his battle.
Annabeth was waiting for them in an alley down Church Street. The sidewalk underneath was stained and dirty, almost as dirty as the polluted skies peeking through the crack of buildings overhead. Grover would have been appalled.

She pulled him and Tyson off the street just as a bright red fire truck came wailing down the road. "Where'd you find him?" She demanded of him, pointing at his friend.

Under different circumstances, Percy would have been overjoyed to see her. They had become close friends over last summer, even despite the hatred between Athena and Poseidon (and their children), and she had worked with him to try and figure out more about his strange powers. Along with that, she had been the thing keeping him grounded with the pressure of this new world of mythology before him and the gaping chasm of disappointment left by Luke.

But Percy had just been attacked by cannibal giants, Tyson had saved his life three or four times, and all the blonde demigod could do was glare at the guy like he was the source of all their problems.

"He's my friend," he defended, watching her eerie grey stare shift to him.

"Is he homeless?" Percy spluttered at the question.

"What does that have to do with anything? He can hear you, you know. Why don't you ask him?"

She looked at him with surprise. "He can talk?"

"I talk," Tyson admitted. "You are pretty."

Annabeth backed away in disgust. "Gross!" Percy leaned against the dirty alley wall, feeling the exhaustion from his recent show of powers, and all he wanted was a warm bed and for everyone to get along.

He glanced at Tyson's hands, which should have been badly scorched from the onslaught of flaming bronze dodgeballs they had faced just before. He found himself shocked. "Tyson," Percy muttered, "your hands aren't even burned."
"Of course not." Annabeth reprimanded him like he had overlooked the most obvious thing in the world. "I'm surprised the Laistrygonians had the guts to attack you with him around."

He recognized the word from before, but still couldn't pronounce it. The world swarmed about his vision. "What exactly are those things?"

"They're a race of giant cannibals who live in the far north. Odysseus ran into them once, but I've never seen them as far south as New York before."

He attempted again to pronounce their name, but his tongue was too heavy. Or maybe it was his head? "What would you call them in English?"

She considered. "Canadians." He wanted to laugh but decided it would ache too much. "Now come on, we have to get out of here."

"The police'll be after me." He didn't want to mention how the world might give under his feet if he moved too much.

"That's the least of our problems," Annabeth assured him. "Have you been having the dreams?"

"The dreams," he repeated. He thought back to the nightmares of his goat friend in a wedding dress. "The ones about Grover?"

Her face paled. "Grover? No, what about Grover?"

He shook his head. There wasn't time to explain. "I'll tell you later," he promised. "Why? What were you dreaming about?"

Her stormy eyes glinted. "Camp," she answered. "Big trouble at camp."

"My mom was saying the same thing! But what kind of trouble?"

"I don't know exactly," Annabeth told him reluctantly. "But something's wrong. We have to get there right away. Monsters have been chasing me all the way from Virginia, trying to stop me. Have you had a lot of attacks?"

He frowned. "None at all. Until today, really."

"None? But how-" her eyes found Tyson. "Oh."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Tyson raised his hand, as if this was a class still in session.

"Canadians in gym called Percy something. Son of the Sea God?" Annabeth exchanged looks with her friend. Percy didn't know how to explain, and he well enough did know they didn't really have time for this, but Tyson discovered the truth after almost getting killed protecting the teenager.

"Big guy," Percy began. "You ever hear those old stories about the Greek gods? Like Zeus, Poseidon, Athena-"

"Yes," Tyson interrupted, blunt as ever. Percy continued uncertainly.

"Well, uh, those gods are still alive. They kind of follow Western Civilization around, living in the strongest countries, so like now they're in America. And sometimes they have kids with mortals. Kids called half-bloods."

"Yes," Tyson repeated. He sounded like he was still waiting for Percy to get to the point.
"Oh, well, Annabeth and I are half-bloods," he said. "We're like heroes-in-training. And whenever monsters pick up our scent, they attack us. That's what those giants were in the gym. Monsters."

"Yes."

Percy stared at him. His large friend didn't seem surprised or confused in the slightest about what was being sad, which kind of surprised and confused him himself. "You believe me?"

Tyson nodded. "But you are son of the Sea God?"

"Yeah," he confirmed. "My dad's Poseidon." Tyson frowned, like the conversation suddenly seemed out of the ordinary. "But then-"

A police siren wailed, the car it belonged to racing down past their alley. "We don't have time for this," Annabeth urged. "We can talk in the taxi."

"A taxi all the way to camp?" Percy asked. "You know how much money that would-"

"Trust me."

Percy hesitated. "What about Tyson?" He asked. He could imagine the chaos that would entail if he brought Tyson- Tyson, who could barely handle the bullies at their school- to a camp full of sword wielding, magic using, pubescent children of the gods.

And yet, on the other hand, he couldn't leave his friend here. "He's not staying here," Percy reinforced. "He'll be in trouble, too."

"Yeah." Annabeth looked grim. "We definitely need to take him. Now come on."

Percy didn't really favor the way she said that, like Tyson was a disease they needed to cart off to the hospital to cure, but he followed them down the alleyway nonetheless. The small group snuck their way down the streets with a burning school at their backs, smoke swallowing the sky.

Annabeth eventually stopped them on the corner of Thomas and Trimble. "Here," she told them, holding out an arm at the corner of the crossroads. It was empty, street lights still going off and on in the classic trio of colors to direct the nonexistent cars. "I hope I have one left."

In better light, Percy was able to fully see his friend. She looked even worse than she had in the shadows. A cut scrapped her chin, blonde hair that was pulled back in a ponytail tangled with twigs and grass. Her jeans were slashed at the knees with what suspiciously looked like claw marks.

She rummaged through her pockets. "What are you looking for?" Even though it was empty it wasn't silent, and Percy was worried a cop car would come cruising from the wave of sirens in the near distance looking for some delinquent school-bombers. There wasn't any doubt Sloan had twisted the story to their disadvantage. Percy wouldn't be surprised if he got to add "bloodthirsty cannibal" to his outstanding criminal record, right next to his being the subject of a worldwide manhunt less than a year ago.

Fun.

"Found one," Annabeth breathed out in relief. "Thanks the gods." In her nimble fingers was the golden grace of the Olympians in the way coin; a drachma. It had the likeness of Zeus stamped on the front and the Empire State Building on the opposite side.

"Annabeth," Percy said numbly, "New York taxi drivers won't take that." His protest was as weak
as his knees, which felt they were about to collapse on him at any moment.

She ignored him, as per usual. "Stêthi," the daughter of Athena shouted in Greek. "Ô hárma diabolês!"

"Stop," Percy murmured under his breath. "Stop, Chariot of Damnation." It didn't really make him feel excited about whatever her plan was.

She threw her grace of gold into the street, but instead of the sound of metal clattering on the asphalt, it sank through the ground and disappeared. And for a moment, nothing happened.

Then, just were the coin had fallen, the asphalt darkened with sudden shadows. It melted into the pool in the shape and size of a parking space that began to bubble with crimson like blood (did blood boil? he had to ask himself) and they could only watch as a car erupted from the ooze.

It was a corpse of a taxi, dull and cloudy grey with the shape of a New York carriage. Literally cloudy, even, woven from smoke to the point that he could see right through the structure. There was a sign with words but they were words tortured by his dyslexia, and with his pounding head he didn't attempt much more than a curious glance.

The passenger window rolled down, revealing the face of an old woman with her eyes obscured by her mop of grizzled hair. It curled around her twisted ears and into the nostrils of her long, pointed nose. She spoke in a rumbly way he hasn't heard before. "Passage? Passage?"

"Three to Camp Half-Blood," Annabeth said for them. She opened the back door and waved at him to get in as if it were a perfectly normal occurrence.

The woman screeched, pointing at Tyson. "Ach! We don't take his kind!" Percy narrowed his eyes, but he was too exhausted to say anything. Why was everyone picking on the big guy?


"Done!" The woman screamed. "Now get in!" Percy's knees finally buckled. Annabeth hurried to catch him but Tyson was there first, large muscles arms keeping him upright.

"Friend is hurt," he muttered worriedly. "You okay?"

"I'll be fine, big guy," Percy promised. "Just help me to the magic taxi." Tyson obliged, walking with him to the cab. The interior was also smokey grey, but it felt solid enough under his weight. The seats were cracked and lumpy, which he supposed was no different than most taxis, but it was heaven after running around like he had been.

Tyson, of course, was after him, leaving Annabeth to squeeze in last. The door shut next to her. There was no glass separating them from the old lady like there usually was with these things, but then again, it wasn't just one old lady like he had thought. There were three of them, all crammed into the front seat, each having the same stringy hair that covered their eyes and bony hands to pinch at their charcoal colored sackcloth dresses.

The one driving was the one to speak. "Long Island! Out-of-metro fare bonus, ha!" She floored the accelerator, and Percy's head slammed across the backseat. He groaned, vision swimming, imagining how Luke would look at him curiously with large observing blue eyes and ask him if he was okay.

And then he stopped imagining. A pre-recorded voice coming from the overhead speaker (could cars made from smoke have speakers?) did some to help with distracting himself, though the force
helping his migraine ruin his day should've been distraction enough. "Hello! This is Ganymede, cup-bearer to Zeus, and when I'm out buying wine for the Lord of the Skies I always buckle-up!"

There was something amusedly childish about this situation that had a certain novelty he couldn't appreciate quite at this moment. Percy looked down, finding a black chain in place of a seatbelt. He wasn't that desperate just yet.

The taxi sped around the corner of West Broadway, and the lady sitting in the middle squealed nervously. "Look out!" She ordered. "Go left!"

The driver retorted swiftly. "Well, if you'd give me the eye, Tempest, I could see that!" Percy's blood ran cold. Give her the eye?

He didn't have the moment needed to question as the driver swerved to avoid an oncoming delivery truck, running over the curve with a thump that rattled his jaw and flying into the next block. The world was a blur that made his head dizzy behind windows not made of glass but grey.

"Wasp!" The third hag said to the driver. "Give me the girl's coin! I want to bite it."

"You bit it last time, Anger," the driver, Wasp, wailed. "It's my turn!"

"It's not!" Argued Anger, reminding him of bickering children. The middle one by the title of Tempest screamed at the red light, but instead of breaking, Wasp floored the accelerator and rode up the curb. They zoomed around another street corner and knocked away a newspaper box, leaving Percy's stomach somewhere back on Broome street.

"Excuse me," Percy nearly whispered, voice clawing from where it had sought refuge in the bottom of his throat. "But, uh, can you see?"

"No!" Screamed their driver.

"No!" Screamed Tempest from the middle.

"But of course!" Exclaimed Anger, pressed against the shotgun window.

Percy looked at Annabeth across from Tyson. His forehead pressed against the seat in front of him, material feeling strangely like leather. "They're blind?"

"Not completely," Annabeth answered. "They have one eye."

"One eye?"

"Yeah."

"Each?" He asked hopefully.

"No."

One eye total, then. Percy felt nauseous.

Tyson seemed to share his train of thought, groaning loudly. "Not feeling so good." Percy's heart thundered, because he had seen Tyson get carsick before on school field trips, and it was not something you wanted to be near to when it happened.

"Hang in there," Percy all but begged. He raised his voice. "Anybody got a garbage bag or something?"
He went unheard of over the old ladies' squabbling, and Percy didn't have the energy to do much else in order to gain some attention. He looked over at Annabeth with big, sad eyes.

"Hey," she scolded, holding on for dear life. "Gray Sisters Taxi is the fastest way to camp."

"Then why didn't you take it from Virginia?" It seemed like the reasonable thing to do, but who needed reasonable when you could have this, anyway?

"That's out of their service area." Her tone was too matter-of-fact, and now Percy felt like the one about to be sick. "They only serve Greater New York and surrounding communities."

"We've had famous people in this cab!" Anger boasted. "Jason! You remember him?"

"Don't remind me!" Wasp scolded. "And we didn't have a cab back then, you old bat. That was three thousand years ago!"

"Give me the tooth!" Anger tried to grab at Wasp's mouth but the driver simply swatted her hand away.

"Only if Tempest gives me the eye!"

"No!" Tempest screeched in denial. "You had it yesterday!"

"But I'm driving, you old hag!"

"Excuses!" She declared, followed by; "Turn! That was your turn!"

Wasp swerved hard into Delancey Street, squishing Percy and Tyson against the door. She punched the gas and shot up the Williamsburg Bridge faster than Percy would have preferred. At the sudden rush his fingers sparked nervously, and Tyson yelped to avoid the electricity.

"Sorry," he groaned out, feeling like a pancake. Tyson looked like he had questions, but more than that, he had carsickness, and they were all thankful the big guy decided to wait for his answers.

The three sisters were starting to seriously fight, slapping one another as Anger tried to grab at Wasp's face and Wasp tried to claw off Tempest's hair. Percy could see that they had no teeth save for Wasp's yellow incisor, and with their hair cleared he was able to see the sunken eyelids in place of eyes. Except for Anger, that was, who had one green eye terribly bloodshot as if she had been drinking for years. It stared at everything hungrily like it couldn't get enough of what it saw.

Eventually Anger, with the advantage of sight, yanked the tooth out of her sister's mouth. Wasp steered off toward the edge of the Williamsburg Bridge, screaming nonsense that took up the small car.

Tyson moaned pitifully. Percy was right there with him. "Uh," he started, "if anybody's interested, we're all going to die!"

"Don't worry," Annabeth assured, sounding very worried. "The Gray Sisters know what they're doing. They're really very wise." He didn't feel reassured. They were, after all, skimming along the edge of a bridge one hundred and thirty feet above the East River.

"Yes, wise!" Anger grinned crookedly at them through the review mirror with her newly acquired tooth. "We know things!"

The river water looked murky to his clouded eyes. "Every street in Manhattan!" Wasp bragged. "The
capital of Nepal!"
"The location you seek!" Tempest added. Immediately, her sisters pummeled her from either side, screeching.

"Be quiet, be quiet!" Wasp exclaimed.
"He didn't even ask yet!" Anger yelled.

"What?" Percy said. "What location? I'm not seeking any-"

"Nothing!" Tempest snapped, much too quickly. "You're right, boy. It's nothing."
He narrowed his eyes. "Tell me."

"No!" They all screamed.

"The last time we told, it was terrible!" Tempest said.
"Eye tossed in a lake!" Anger added.

"Years to find it again," Wasp moaned. "And speaking of that, give it back!"

"No!"
"Give it!"

They continued to argue, and Percy didn't see them getting anywhere with this. The car had started to drag on against the road, and he knew it was wasting precious time. Closing his eyes, the back of his head thudded against the seat, and he willed himself to concentrate once more.

Perhaps it was because his mind was already trying to draw him in with exhaustion that it was easier to drone out the sisters' yells and even Annabeth's own concerns directed at him. Deep beneath the zooming of the taxi's wheels the Earth rumbled, and the small quake was the largest tremor he could manage, even with all the training he had been undergoing.

It seemed to do the job, though too well for his liking. He had wanted to rustle the sisters and make them concentrate on not killing them all, but instead the jostle had Anger's eye flying out of its socket. She tried to catch it but only managed in hitting it with the back of her hand. The slimy green orb sailed into the air and landed right on his lap.

Percy's jumped so hard his head hit the ceiling and the eyeball rolled away. Yep, he definitely felt nauseous.

"I can't see!" The three sisters yelled.

"Give me the eye!" Wasp wailed.

"Give her the eye!" Annabeth yelled. He groaned in annoyance.

"I don't have it!" The blonde pointed.

"There," she instructed. "By your foot. Don't step on it!" No, no, no, no, no, there was no way he was picking that thing up.

The taxi slammed against the guardrail and skidded along with a grinding noise that our nails against
chalkboard to shame. The whole car shuddered as it billowed tufts of grey smoke into the untouched clouds as if it were about to dissolve.

"Going to be sick!" Tyson warned, and Percy really had it with the yelling. He wanted to curl up into a tight ball and let the world figure itself out.

"Annabeth," he muttered, "let Tyson use your backpack."

"Are you crazy?" She yelled, and he shouldn't have expected anything less from her. "Get the eye, Percy!"

Wasp tugged and yanked on the steering wheel, causing the taxi to swerve from the road. They hurtled down the bridge toward Brooklyn going faster than any human taxi, not that this was one by any standards, and the Gray Sisters screeched and pummeled each other and cried out for their eye.

Percy steeled his nerves. He ripped off a chunk of his tie-dyed shirt that from along the collar of his neck that was already falling apart from the burn marks. Using the large piece of cloth, he picked the eyeball of the floor.

"Nice boy!" Anger cried like she could sense he had her missing peeper. "Now give it back!"

He scowled. "Not until you explain." His shirt fell of the edge of his shoulder with the lack of a proper collar, as if it were oversized. "What were you talking about the location I seek?"

"No time!" Tempest swore. "Accelerating!" Percy looked out the window and out to the rushing scenery of trees and forests, blending together in one sickly green hue. They were already out of Brooklyn, heading through the middle of Long Island.

"Percy," Annabeth spoke, "they can't find our destination without the eye. We'll just keep accelerating until we break into a million pieces." The prospect didn't sound fun, but he was stubborn.

"First they have to tell me," he gritted out. "Or I open the window and throw this eye out into oncoming traffic." Or lack thereof, really.

"No!" The Gray Sisters wailed. "Too dangerous!"

"I'm rolling down the window," he warned, although he had no idea how to operate smoke.

"Wait!" The three screamed. He felt his breath catch in his throat. "Thirty, thirty-one, seventy-five, twelve!"

Their answer caught him more off guard than he was. "What do you mean?" Percy asked. "That doesn't make any sense!"

"Thirty, thirty-one, seventy-five, twelve!" Anger repeated. "That's all we can tell you! Now give us the eye! Almost to camp!"

They were long since zipping through the vast countryside of northern Long Island. Along the rush of greenery he could see Half-Blood Hill approaching them from ahead, with its giant pine tree at the crest. Thalia's tree, it was, which contained the life force of a fallen hero.

"Percy!" Annabeth snapped him to the present with the mere urgency in her tone. "Give them the eye, now!"
He decided not to argue, throwing the eye into Wasp's lap. The old hag snatched it up, pushing it into her eye socket like a person might put in their contact lens. She blinked. "Woah!"

Wasp slammed on the brakes. Their cab spun in tight donuts four or five times, raising smoke and dust into the air. They squealed to a halt in the middle of the farm road, right at the base of the hill.

Tyson sighed in relief with breath that smelled like peanut butter. "Better now." Percy knew what he meant. It had never been more relaxing in his life than in that exact moment.

He wanted to say something, anything, but Annabeth spoke first. "No time to stay here," she ordered them. "We have to get out right now."

Percy was about to ask why, right as he looked up at Half-Blood hill, and he suddenly understood. At the crest of the hill was a group of campers, and they were under attack.
Playing With Fire

Chapter Summary

Percy tries bull taming for a change of pace. (Follows the beginning of "Tyson Plays With Fire")

Chapter Notes

heh
hehhhh...
sorry? ;3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As soon as the three stepped out, the taxi squealed and bolted off back to New York, leaving the mess of a battle happening at Percy's home away from home behind. Percy couldn't really say he blamed them. Kids in full battle armor and dangerous looking weapons were all bunched up together at the crest of the hill, trying to fight against a pair of raging, roaring bulls. They were the size of elephants, coated in a gleaming, golden sheen, and Percy's eyes widened as one of them blew a large, billowing breath of fire at a kid who got too close, knocking the kid back and sending his clothes aflame. Shouts and screams were coming from the group, things that Percy could hear even from the side of the road. What worried him most was the fact that the metallic beasts were dipping in and out around the boundary line, swerving in from behind Thalia's tree. Something that shouldn't have been possible.

Percy didn't have anything worthwhile to say, so he was glad Annabeth spoke up first. "Oh, man," were the only two words she managed, staring up at the catastrophe that had overtaken their camp, and Percy shared the same sentiment.

He heard a familiar voice, sounding gruff yet loud, shout over to the scrambling kids chasing the huge, golden bulls around. "Border partol, to me!" Percy's eyes scanned until he found her, looking for that familiar daughter of Ares, only getting more sight on the violent spectacle before them. Despite the shout, all the demigods were too scattered around to rush to here and form a stronger defense. Most were too injured, laying around in the badly burnt grass surrounding the massive pine tree on the hill that was supposed to protect against instances like this in the first place. One kid was even running around and screaming as he tried to douse a fire sticking to the plume of his helmet. It was chaos, but Percy finally found her.

"It's Clarisse," Annabeth said, and sure enough, the larhe, muscular girl in shining bronze battle armor called out again, but no one heard her, or could come. She was carrying the broken end of a spear, the other half lodged in one of the bulls, doing no damage to the monster as it simply just charged more furiously around and tried to target the girl especially. She was holding off considerably well on her own, but Percy doubted that would last too long. "Come on, we have to help her."
Percy nodded silently, uncapping his ballpoint pen and letting Anaklusmos spring out. He didn’t know if he even needed it with all these weird, insane powers of his that had been springing up out of nowhere as of late, but it was best not to get cocky or reliant on things that drained him so badly and where painstakingly difficult to control. On the other hand, it was also hard to believe that Riptide would do him much help here, seeing as Clarisse’s impossibly huge and menacing staff was doing even less damage lodged into that bull’s shoulder than a papercut would.

He pushed that passing thought away, and held his sword even tighter. "Tyson, stay here. I don’t want you taking anymore chances."

"No!" Annabeth was quick to speak up, but he couldn't imagine why she would protest against a statement like that. "We need him."

That hadn't been the answer he had imagined. Percy only stared. "He’s mortal. He got lucky with the dodgeballs, but he can’t-"

Annabeth only cut him off. "Percy, do you know what those are up there? Colchis bulls, made by Hephaestus himself. We can't fight them without Medea's Sunscreen SPF 50,000. We'll get burned to a crisp."

Sometimes, Percy couldn't really believe half of the things he heard in this world. "Medea's what?"

Annabeth ignored him, just beginning to rummage through her backpack, while Percy frowned and watched her. "I had a jar of tropical coconut scent sitting on my nightstand at home. Why didn’t I bring it?" Percy blinked in confusion, but decided it was just best not to question his friend sometimes. Or any time.

"Look, I don't know what you're talking about," he finally spoke up, having watched Annabeth search her bag for a while, but his patience was wearing a bit thin as another kid cried out from pain up the hill, and his fingers clenched tightly around the hilt of his bronze sword when a large roar rang out into the air. "But I'm not going to let Tyson get fried."

She looked up at that. "Percy-"

"Tyson, stay back." He only interrupted, raising his sword. "I'm going in."

He saw Tyson try to protest, but he didn't stop running, his feet racing across the grassy fields, his breath catching in his throat from the anticipation of battle. Clarisse hadn’t stopped yelling at her scrounged up patrol, trying to get them in a phalanx position, and he had to admit, it was a good idea, but not too much less was ought to be expected from the daughter of the god of war. A few campers had finally started to listen, and a line of kids stood shoulder to shoulder, holding up large bronze shields and locking them against the enemy. It would have been impressive if there were more than six of them doing it.

Annabeth caught up with him fairly quickly, darting past him by his side with her bronze dagger in hand. He watched as she taunted one of the bulls until it tried to chase her, and in the blink of an eye, she turned invisible, seeming to vanish, using her baseball cap to do so. He had to admit, it was clever. The other bull just charged Clarisse’s line, and in that exact moment, the first one lost interest in trying to find Annabeth, heading for the buffed girl all the same.

Percy knew Clarisse could take a lot. She was strong, with a tough attitude and cruel eyes just like her father's, and she wasn’t just made for battle armor- battle armor was made for her. Even so, Percy didn't see any way that she could take on two, massive golden bulls charging her from either side with only a broken spear, and he wasn't anywhere close, only merely halfway up the hill.
"Behind you!" He yelled out the words, his voice echoing over the hill. "Look out!"

Percy shouldn't have spoken, and he recognized that in an instant. Clarisse was startled, instinctively turning to try to find where his voice had come from, and that ruined any opportunity she could have had to get out of the attacks heading her way. Percy desperately tried to call on his powers, any powers, tried to reign some kind of control over the things that had been controlling him since he stepped into this camp, but to no avail. He could only watch as the first bull made her way right into her shield.

It knocked her back into one of the large patches of smoldering grass in the fields, breaking the phalanx of her shield. The second bull charged right past the place where she had been before, luckily, but not before spraying the defending campers with a large breath of flames, breaking even more of Camp Half-Blood's defense. Unfortunately, it turned right around and starting charging right for her again, just as Percy made his way towards them.

He just managed to grasp Clarisse by the straps of her armor and pull her away, chest heaving from having running so far. Just as the bull charged by, he extended his sword arm and let Riptide's sharp tip scrape badly against the side of the ebull's golden exterior. It creaked and groaned, but didn't seem even the slightest bit deterred, yet Percy couldn't pay too much mind to it right now.

It hadn't even grazed him, but he could feel the sheer heat it gave off, could feel the burning sensation hanging in the air where it had passed. Strangely enough, it made him shiver, even if he was the furthest thing away from cold at that moment.

Clarisse, of course, was furious after having gotten over her daze from that all. He admittedly hadn't expected much less. "Let me go!" She pummelled his hand. "Percy, curse you!"

He dropped her instantly, still heaving softly, winded from the run and adrenaline that made his heart pump almost painfully. They were at the inside slope of the hill by now, with the whole of Camp Half-Blood down below them. The Big House, training facilities, cabins... all of it at risk if these bulls got past them.

Annabeth shouted out at the campers to spread out and keep fighting, just as the first bull made a wide arc around them. It headed straight right over the boundary line, and from where Percy was, he could see as it struggled, as if fighting against a strong wind, before breaking it and continuing through. The second bull slowly turned back around towards Percy, glaring at him with vicious, ruby red eyes.

Percy knew he couldn't take out both of them at once. His arms were already tiring, his head heavy. He was exhausted from the incident at the GYm, from fighting those giants, from a lot of things today, everything today. It had been a long time since he had wielded this sword, and it almost felt heavy in his hand. He didn't have much of a choice, despite it all.

Percy lunged at the second bull that was running towards him, trying to dodge out of its charge and get its side. He only managed the dodging part when a gust of flames billowed out of its mouth, turning the air to pure heat, driving the oxygen out of it and out of his lungs. His foot caught on a tree root when he tried to dive forward again, but the force of his lunge with the root wrapped around his ankle caused pain to shoot up his leg, making him cry out. Despite that, he managed to lap off part of the monster's snout with his sword, but as he tried to stand, his left leg merely crumbled, and his vision flashed white as he fell underneath the weight of the pain it caused him.

While the bull he had gotten just charged away wildly, the first one was heading right for him. He was sprawled out in the ground in pain, and knew he wouldn't be able to crawl away from this one. Despite that, he tried to move, tried to pull himself up, but the wave of hurt that washed over him
was practically sickening, and his vision spun as he cried out pathetically. Very softly did the ground rumble at his distress, and by luck, that threw the bull off, buying them time as it stumbled, but Percy was stuck being just as disoriented as the metal beast.

Somewhere, he heard Annabeth call out, somewhere in the corners of his blurred vision. "Tyson, help him!" Percy couldn't even make sense of the words at first. Even giving them the smallest earthquake in existence had drained energy he didn't have, and he hadn't meant for the bizarre spike of power to come out. He was only kept up by adrenalin at this point, but already was Percy starting to lose the ability to hold himself up by now.

Slowly, however, did he recognize they were talking about him. "Can't get through!" Tyson wailed the words somwhere from the crest of the hill, the words sounding struggled, as if he was trying to fight against the same weak force the bull had been able to break through moments ago.

Annabeth's response was quick. "I, Annabeth Chase, give you permission to enter this camp!" Her voice was unhesitant, and Percy managed to raise his head and look to where they were just as Tyson came barrelling in.

The bull was coming in just as quickly. Thunder rumbled overhead, and this time, it wasn't from him as Tyson was accepted into the camp grounds. Percy watched in dazed confusion as his friend kept running, his own breaths becoming labored, his vision slowly becoming dark. Very faintly, did he hear the words, as if Tyson shouted them from underwater; "Percy needs help!"

His confusion turned to horror as he screamed out, just as Tyson dove into the way of the bull and a large breath of skin-eating flames, but his own wail went deaf to his ears as he finally blacked out.

Chapter End Notes

I genuinely am sorry for the hiatus, however, but I'm happy to say that I have a lot of free time now, so you can expect regular updates again. Thank you for everyone who has stuck with this story, even what with the sudden disappearance. You guys are amazing! <3
Where He's Left It

Chapter Summary

Wherein Percy just kind of stands around doing nothing for this one, and Tyson proves to be the MVC of the group. (Finishes 'Tyson Plays With Fire')

Chapter Notes

Shorter chapter, sorry! Next one will be longer, expect it soon :3

Percy could have only been passed out for a mere couple of minutes, because when he opened his eyes again, he was still right where he had been when the world had gone dark.

Then again, as he looked around, he figured it could have been a little longer than a minute or two. The bull that had been about to attack Percy, that had killed Tyson, was a heap of metal on the ground, looking bashed in from weird fist imprints with tendrils of smoke drifting up off the mess of gold. The second bull had been taken by Clarisse, from what he could tell, its body jammed in with the rest of Clarisse's spear shaft, motionless on the grass down the hill. He could barely make it out, with his blurry vision, eyes clogged with tears, and he himself didn't know whether they were tears of pain from the terrible jolts shooting up his leg from his ankle, or if they were from sadness, from watching his friend burn alive in front of him.

Percy was dazed, very, very dazed, so it took him a while to realize that while the bulls' golden corpses were strewn on the ground, Tyson's... wasn't. He blinked a few times to clear his dancing vision, scanning all over the place again, where Tyson should have been, as if just wanting to make sure. And then, when he finally saw Tyson, standing a mere feet away, in a place Percy shouldn't have missed but did anyway, he grew even more dumbfounded, numbing over from shock.

Annabeth ran over to check up on him, as Percy wasn't in good enough shape to be getting up on his own anytime soon. He tried to speak, tried to string some semblance of sense together as words and spit them out of his mouth, but all he managed were weak stammers. Annabeth didn't wait for him, holding a catana of nectar to his lips, and he drank, relieved as his strength slowly came back to him and his sprained ankle started to piece itself together again.

He let his vision slowly clear up, and was about to speak as his tongue untied, but a familiar and angry sounding voice broke him off. "You ruin everything!" Clarisse shouted the words, looking a little worse for wear with her battered armor and sweat coated face, a strand of her stringly brown hair smoldering going unnoticed. "I had it under control!"

Percy was too stunned to answer, his gaze still right on Tyson. Annabeth answered for him. "Good to see you, too, Clarisse."

She seemed to grow even angrier at that. "Argh!" She yelled. "Don't ever, EVER try saving me again!" She looked like she was about to say more, but Annabeth cut in again.
"Clarisse," she reminded, "you've got wounded campers." He could visibly tell that sobered her up. Clarisse cared about the soldiers under her command.

"I'll be back," she growled, heading off to take care of the damage after that, but somehow, Percy doubted it.

His mind didn't linger on Clarisse for long. Percy's gaze snapped back over to Tyson, his face pale, his eyes still wide from the shock of that all. He stared at Tyson for so long without saying a word that the other boy finally smiled and waved as if to remind Percy he was still there, and Percy finally managed to speak. "You're alive."

It wasn't much, but it was a start. Tyson, however, looked down, as if he was a guilty dog being scolded. "I am sorry. Came to help. Disobeyed you."

"My fault," Annabeth spoke up, stepping in, but Percy didn't tear his eyes away from his friend that should have been dead. "I had no choice. I had to let him cross the boundary line to save you. Otherwise, you would've died."

Percy didn't know where to begin. "Let him cross the boundary line? But-"

"Percy," Annabeth said, interrupting. "Have you ever looked at Tyson closely? I mean, in the face. Ignore the Mist, and really look at him."

Percy was about to say that was ridiculous, that of course he looked at Tyson, that Tyson was his close friend- all his protests faltered as she mentioned the Mist, and he stiffened, but he redirected his gaze to the smiling Tyson once again. Percy tried to glance up, but suddenly found it difficult, and at first, all he could focus on was Tyson's smile. Now that he really, truly thought about it, he had never been able to look all the way up to Tyson, but had never noticed that, had never seen anything strange about it. Now that he realized it, the thought was truly numbing, and he forced himself to steady on Tyson's big, lumpy nose, and then higher.

His mouth gaped open. Tyson's eye was a soft calf-brown color, layered with thick eyelashes, but not joined with another, resting right on the middle of his forehead. It was impossibly daunting, surprising when Percy had thought he had gotten over all of the surprises by now. Large, fat tears were trickling down Tyson's cheeks from either side of his one eye, and yet, Percy couldn't find the ability to say a word, beyond flabbergasted.

"T-tyson..." He stammered on the name, swallowing down dry air, very shakily attempting to stand. "You're... Y-you're, you're a- a-

"Cyclops," Annabeth offered, finally. "A baby, by the looks of him. Probably why he couldn't get past the boundary line as easily as the bulls. Tyson's one of the homeless orphans." By her tone, and by everything else that had happened, it was obvious that she had known this time, while Percy had been blind to this fact. He was... "surprised" would be putting it mildly, by now.

"One of the what?"

"They're in almost all of the big cities," Annabeth said, as if that would explain everything. Her voice held distaste. "They're mistakes, Percy. Children of nature spirits and gods- well, one god in particular, usually, and they don't usually come out right. No one wants them. They get tossed aside. They grow up wild on the streets. I don't know how this one found you, but he obviously likes you. We should take him to Chiron, let him decide what to do."

The words she spoke were startlingly mean, but he couldn't be sure. Maybe it was because of the
hate able to be softly heard in the undertone of each sentence she spoke. Maybe it was because of the
dismissiveness she spoke in, the disregard for Tyson as she spoke right about him, right in front of
him. Percy didn't adress it. His mind was split in too many places everywhere to address all that she
said. "But, the fire-

"He's a Cyclops," she repeated, as if he had forgotten, and she paused, with a shiver, as if
remembering something unpleasant. Percy couldn't be sure. "They work in the forges of the gods.
They have to be immune to fire. That's what I was trying to tell you."
Percy was in complete, utter shock, barely managing to support himself up on his feet. He was
healed, but exhausted, his mind everywhere but together and his emotions just the same yet numb,
too. Slowly, though, he realized he didn't have the time to dwell over this. Campers laid strewn
about, badly wounded. Two large scrap piles of gold were smoking on the ground, waiting to be
disposed of. Half of the field was smoldering, and with all that had happened, it was safe to say they
were very much in danger of even more attacks.

Clarisse finally came back over, but she seemed too distracted to be angry at him anymore. Percy
appreciated it somewhat. "Jackson, if you can move, get going. We need to carry the wounded back
to the Big House, let Tantalus know what's happened." Her voice was gruff, but calm, and Percy
was a little taken aback at what she said, only because of the unrecognizable name thrown in there
that he didn't know what much to do with. Everything seemed to have changed so much in this camp
from when he had left it.

"Tantalus?" He finally got out the question, after a too-long pause, and he could tell Clarisse was
already growing impatient with him. With all that had to be done, he couldn't say he blamed her.

"The activities director," Clarisse explained, her voice short. Percy frowned, hard, shaking his head.

"Chiron is the activities director," Percy protested. "And where's Argus? He's head of security, he
should be here."

Clarisse made a face, while Percy's heart was quickly sinking and making a beeline for his gut.
Everything was changing, and changing too fast, much too fast for his liking. He could hardly keep
up with it all. "Argus was fired. You two have been gone too long." And, by the sound of that,
changing for the worst.
Percy felt even more numb. "But, Chiron..." He trailed off, before quickly picking himself back up,
not wanting Clarisse to grow tired of waiting. "He's trained kids to fight monsters for over three
hundred years. He can't just be gone. What happened?"

"That happened," Clarisse snapped, pointing at the tree, almost jabbing her finger in its direction. For
once, Percy looked over, and he looked closely, and slowly he realized.

Noticed the yellow needs on each branch, poisoned. Noticed the leaves fallen on the ground
surrounding the base of the tree. Noticed the large, gaping chunk in its bark, as if a puncture mark,
seeping with sickly, green sap. And Percy finally understood what was happening, understood why
they were in danger, if the one thing that was keeping all the monsters out of Camp Half-Blood for
all this time was dying.
Damn, did I forget how everyone is the biggest jerk to Tyson.

Chapter Notes

Starting to do that thing that I do where I skim and skip over sections of the story that won't change whatsoever so that we get to the important parts faster and so you're not basically reading the same story all over again in that sweet third person perspective. I hope you all remember the plot of the books well enough to not feel too confused at the parts I leave out, but if that does happen, shoot me a comment and I'll clear anything I missed right up. Thanks for reading, enjoy the chapter! c:

Percy kept his head in his arms, listening as the rest of Camp Half-Blood swarmed around his table. He could hear each line of campers from each cabin take their seats, sort out the individual voices that were familiar to him and the few that weren’t, hear the conversations that they spoke, whether they were carefree or about the subject that was on everyone’s minds.

He didn’t know what to feel about Chiron getting fired. He didn’t know what to feel about Tyson being here with him. He didn’t know what to feel about Annabeth swearing on the River Styx for his safety, or the possibility that Luke was the one who had poisoned Thalia’s tree, all under Kronos’s command. All Percy knew that whoever this new camp director was, taking Chiron’s place, he already didn’t like him.

“Who invited that?” Percy’s head jerked up at the words, and he stared, the question having come from one of the kids at the Apollo table. Tyson stood by Percy’s eyes, knowing not to sit, twiddling his large thumbs with a happy expression on his face. He was oblivious to the disgusted stares, to the murmurs, to everything, and Percy was thankful for that.

Once everyone was finally sat and quiet, Percy knew it to be his cue. He stood up, gently nudging Tyson to gain his attention, and he started to walk, his strides cutting through the tense air like butter as he stopped in the middle of the pavilion, Tyson trailing behind him. He felt each pair of eyes in the eating area staring right at them both, and his hands clenched together, but he didn’t give, staring at the head table.

A voice all too familiar to Percy drawled a lazy sort of greeting. “Well, well, if it isn’t Peter Johnson.
My millennium is complete."

Percy’s hands clenched tighter, his jaw stiff. He tried to keep his voice free of irritation as he answered. “It’s Percy Jackson… sir.” He added that last part to save him any trouble of dealing even more with Dionysus, who only scoffed and took a drink of his Diet Coke.

“Yes, well,” he dragged out, not bothering to put down his can. “As young people say these days; whatever.” Percy let out a long sigh through his nose to keep himself calm, lax in his usual vacation wear, and Percy allowed himself to glance away from the god, looking over to the person beside him.

He hadn’t seen this man before, and wished he never had, what with how sickly pale he was. His bones were so thin and showed through his skin, as if he had never eaten a day in his life, and he somehow made the skinny orange jumpsuit he was wearing look large. The letters 0001 were imprinted on said jumpsuit, and Percy’s eyes fell to them before he looked away completely. That man sat in Chiron’s chair, and it was all Percy needed to see to already dislike him.

“This boy,” Dionysus started, “you need to watch. Poseidon’s child, you know.” Even though Percy’s eyes had left the man, the man’s hadn’t left him. He couldn’t tell their color from where he was- something dark- but he could see the emotions hung inside them, as clear as the sky on a cloudless day. Anger, sadness, hunger, all at once, all in one fractured gaze belonging to a broken looking man.

“Ahh!” The prisoner smiled, and still, he didn’t look away from Percy. It was making the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, was making small indents of goosebumps bloom along his skin. Such was his gaze that it caused this strong of a reaction. “That one.” He could tell, at least, by that answer, that they had undoubtedly been talking about him in great detail before.

When Percy raised his eyes again to meet this man, he was rewarded with a grin, one as sickening as the battling emotions trapped within his heavy stare. Percy held his breath, and he wanted to look away, but he fund it impossible. “I am Tantalus,” the prisoner continued. “On special assignment here, until, well, until my Lord Dionysus says otherwise. And you, Perseus Jackson, I do expect you to refrain from causing anymore trouble.”

Irritation flickered through his mind. Percy shifted his weight off to his other foot, crossing his arms. “Trouble?”

They exchanged looks to one another, the grin widening on Tantalus’s lips. With a wave of Dionysus’s hand, a newspaper appeared in front of him on the table. The Greek god gestured for him to come closer, to pick it up, and Percy shifted nervously once more, but he knew it wouldn’t be wise to decline Dionysus’s direct order, and he stepped forward, snatching a glimpse back at Tyson
before looking back as he made it to the table. He moved to pick the paper up, but it flew into his hands instead, and he took it and held it in shaking fingers.

It was from the *New York Post*, with Percy’s yearbook photo stamped right in front of the article. His lips pursed, reading the headline, where of course, the destruction of the gymnasium had been blamed on himself. He opened his mouth to speak, wanting to contradict the article, wanting to stand up for himself and avoid being the scapegoat of something unavoidable that had fallen into his hands, but then they were already speaking again, and Percy lost the chance to argue about something that he knew he wouldn’t be heard out from either way.

A soft sigh escaped his lips as he backed away from the table, listening to both of the men talk. Tantalus tried to drink something from his glass between the conversation, and Percy got to watch a great show of the drink flying out of his cup to escape him. When he went to take a bite out of his barbecue. The food simply leaped right into the flames of the campfire, and Percy heard Tyson unsuccessfully stifle his laughter behind him.

As Dionysus patted his friend’s back and gave him words bathed in false sympathy, it finally clicked for Percy. “You’re that spirit that stands in the Fields of Punishment,” he murmured. “The one who stands in the lake with the fruit tree hanging over you, but can’t eat or drink.”

He inwardly winced at the sneer her recieved, Tantalus’s tortured eyes burning holes into his head. “A real scholar, aren’t you, boy?”

Percy, however, wasn’t dismayed, didn’t allow himself to be. “You must’ve done something really horrible when you were alive.” His sea-green eyes gleamed, and he could catch the satyrs behind the table shaking their heads furiously at him. Percy wasn’t afraid. “What was it?” His grin was larger than Tantalus’s, and didn’t look like an abomination on his face unlike the prisoner before him.

His eyes narrowed. “I’ll be watching you. Don’t think I haven’t heard what they say. Don’t think I plan to lower my guard around you.”

He crossed his arms over his chest, looking as if it were ought to be a more intimidating pose, but truly, it was to give himself a secret hug for comfort that he needed to keep going. “What they say?” He repeated the words Tantalus had spoken, and a frown tried to tug down on the corners of his mouth, but he kept it away. “What do they say?” He wanted to be a smartass, and was tempted to continue on with that train of thought, but his curiosity to hear what the answer to his question made him hold his tongue.

Another sneer. “Talking of a boy who has powers he shouldn’t. The power to call lightning from the
skies, to make the Earth tremble below you. Storms and earthquakes are well within your father’s sphere of power just as much as the sea. It shouldn’t raise as much suspicion as it does, but when the gods themselves feel something is stirring, when someone as undeveloped and unsynced with his powers as you demonstrates abilities far out of what should be your limits…” He trailed off, clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth to create a sharp sound as he chuckled. “And then, when the Fates have taken special interest in you as well… mystery surrounds you, and I can only imagine the trouble you’ll stir in my camp. Ain’t that right, Lord Dionysus?”

Dionysus gave an empty shrug, swirling the Diet Coke around in his can and watching as little bubbling sounds of carbonation came from the opening of the drink at his actions. It showed how boring this was to him all, if a simple mortal drink could attract his attention better than anything Tantalus had to say, but he took it in stride. It wasn’t the same for the rest of the campers, Percy knew. He could feel their stares burning holes in his back.

“Your camp already has problems, sir.” Percy’s voice was short. Even so, the rest of what he would have said was heavily implied in his scornful gaze. And I’m looking at one of them.

Tantalus scoffed, and Dionysus finally looked up from his coke can to give his input. “Oh, go sit down, Johnson. I believe your table is the empty one over there. The one where no one else wants to sit.”

At that, his face burned. He had to bite his tongue down to keep it from spewing any kind of snarky reply, as much as he wished he didn’t have to hold himself back. Smart mouthing a god wasn’t the thing he wanted to die for, after all. Percy stiffly nodded. “Come on, Tyson.”

Tantalus interrupted him before he could go. “Oh, no. The monster stays here. We must decide what to do with it.”

Both fear and anger shot a hot spike right through his heart, and Percy’s teeth clenched. “Him,” Percy snapped. “His name is Tyson.”

All he got in response was a raised eyebrow, so he continued hotly. “Tyson saved the camp. He pounded those bronze bulls. Otherwise they would have burned down this whole place.”

“Yes, and what a pity that would have been.” Tantalus said the words forlornly with a dramatic sigh, earning a snicker from the god beside him. “Leave us while we decide this creature’s fate.”
As much as Percy tried to protest, each objection he could have made was cut down, and finally, with a regretful look towards Tyson, he trudged back to his plate full of food. He paid no mind as the entirety of the camp watched him, and instead of scraping a small amount of his plate as an offering to the gods, he dump the entirety of his dinner into the flames, watching as they swallowed it up hungrily and released a great puff of smoke into the air.

The words that came afterwards were murmured, but just as well, he knew the whole camp could hear them. “Poseidon, accept my offering.”

And send me some help while you’re at it.

He walked back to his empty table with an empty plate, his heart following the theme of the arrangement, and once again, his head was laid down in his arms. The silence slowly lifted as Tantalus and Dionysus both went on, and he barely heard what they spoke of. Percy’s attention was slightly caught when the continuation of chariot races was mentioned, but only because it brought murmurs from all around the camp, and his heart sank even lower. Didn’t they have better things to be doing with their time? Bigger things to worry about? Was everyone just going to pretend Thalia’s poisoned tree wasn’t an issue? He could only imagined how terrified Tyson must feel, standing in the center of all these intimidating warriors, under the haunted gaze of their new activities director and the bored stare of a Greek god.

Percy wished he could have been there with him.

Finally, his attention was caught as Tantalus spoke again, and Percy raised his head from his arms to meet what was happening with a worried gaze. “And now, before we proceed to the campfire and sing-along, one slight housekeeping issue. Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase have seen fit, for some reason, to bring this here.” Tantalus waved a hand at Tyson, and Percy fought back an angry retort. He knew it wouldn’t be heard, he knew it wouldn’t help.

His words caused nervous murmurs to wash over the camp, and Percy ignored the sideways glances cast at himself. He wanted to murder Tantalus. He wanted Chiron back. “Now, of course,” he went on, “Cyclopes have a reputation for being bloodthirsty monsters with a very small brain capacity. Under normal circumstances, I would release this beast out into the woods and have you hunt it down with torches and pointed sticks.” Percy bristled with anger. “But who knows? Perhaps this Cyclops is not as horrible as most of its brethren. Until it proves worthy of destruction, we need a place to keep it! I’ve thought about the stables, but that will make the horses nervous. Hermes’s cabin, possibly?”

At that, Percy’s anger turned to relief. He had lived in the Hermes cabin for a short time, with- with Luke, and all the other kids there, unclaimed or belonging to the god himself. He remembered all the cramped yet cozy feel to it, the relief he had felt to belong to a cabin and not face this camp along,
memories of him and Luke, back when everything had been okay. Well, not okay, when he had thought his mother to be dead and the whole of reality had been coming down on him and crushing the normal life he had lived. But it had been better than this.

Maybe he just missed Luke.

His relief didn’t last long as the proposal was only met with silence. After a moment of thought, Percy’s shoulders slumped. He couldn’t blame them. He knew how cluttered and cramped it was. Tyson would be too huge to fit in with the crowded campers.

“Come now,” Tantalus tutted. “The monster may be able to do some menial chores. Any ideas to where such a beast should be kenneled?”

Before Percy could snap and break his personal vow of silence, everyone gasped, and when Percy glanced around to see the reason for, Percy couldn’t help but gasp with them. Above his head was a sight that Percy had been greeted by once before. A glowing green trident, bringing an awed silence with it, everyone staring on with the greatest surprise they could muster.

And then, it was broken. Last year, when the same sight had greeted Percy he had been rewarded with reverent kneels and respect. This time, Tantalus bellowed a hearty laugh right from the absence of his gut, and everyone followed suit in an instant. It made hot shame crawl down Percy’s neck in the way of second hand embarrassment for his poor friend, but Tyson was oblivious to the jeers, the cruel way of the people around him, trying to swat at the symbol of light over his head as his eye gleamed with wonder.

“Well, I think we know where to put the beast now!” He roared with laughter over the rest of the campers with only Annabeth and a few of Percy’s close friends as an exception. Percy’s stomach was sick with disgust. “By the gods, I can see the family resemblance!”

Finally, at that, Percy stood from his seat. He ignored the rest around them, ignored his own hatred for their actions, for their teasing, for the genuine hurt it caused him, even as relieved as he was that Tyson was as good as blind to it all. With a heavier heart, he took Tyson by the arm, and started to lead his new brother on an early start to his new home.

End Notes

Sorry for the wait! Ths next chapter will be much longer. Welcome to everyone who came
over from the prequel! :)

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