Smoke and Feathers

by Cinderpaw1

Summary

Soulmarks were meant to be hidden, or so Percy had been told. Otherwise people would try and change their own destinies in order to try and get to your money. So he keeps his tucked safe against his side, never showing it and hoping that he would someday get a glimpse of the match on someone else's side, someone who is less traditional about hiding their mark. When he meets Vex'Ahlija Vassar at Tal'Dorei University, he's smitten with her from the moment he sees her. But she already has a soulmark on her shoulder, one she doesn't mind showing off. So she can't be his. People only have one soulmate, one soulmark. Right?

Notes

TheStarkIntheSweater on tumblr requested this when I requested drabbles, and I fell so in love with the idea that I had to give it more. Now that Fate Touched is finished, I can start working on this alongside Make Me Come Alive.

I'm also going to try and make this a more Percy-centered fic. We'll see where the story goes though!
I hope you enjoy it! <3
His Soulmark

A young boy with brown hair giggled as he snuck into his older sister’s room. He had just turned five, and as all of them knew, he had gotten his soulmark that morning. Soulmarks were something to keep close and hidden, his mother had told him. That way, people wouldn’t be able to use them against him, or tattoo a match to try and get to his family.

Soulmarks, however, had to be shared with his older siblings. That was tradition, Julius had said.

Vesper smiled at him as he snuck in. “I’ve been so excited to see all day!” The seven year old grinned. “Where is it Percy, where is it?”

Percy gave her a big, proud smile, lifting his shirt to show off the mark that had appeared on his side. Starting at the top of his hip stretching to his chest were delicate grey plumes of smoke that turned into a bright blue feather at the very top.

Julius’ eyes grew wide. “Wow, yours is so big!”

“You’re never gonna go swimming anymore!” Vesper frowned unhappily. “Cause you can’t show it off and it’s all over your chest!”

“That’s okay Vesper, I don’t like swimming.” Percy replied. “I like blocks much better.”

“It’s very beautiful though.” Julius murmured, sounding so dignified and like Father as he leaned in to get a closer look.

“Thanks.” Percy smiled shyly.

“I wonder what part is you!” Vesper grinned. “The smoke or the feather?”

“I dunno.” Percy shrugged. “I like feathers, and smoke. They’re both pretty, and I’m glad my soulmate’ll like them too.”

“That’s good!” Vesper smiled. “My soulmate must like books and nature, look at mine!” Vesper raised her dress to show the mark that was on her leg, an open book with bright red flowers surrounding it.

“Wow!” Percy’s eyes grew wide. He’d never seen another person’s soulmark before, apart from his parents. They had shown him theirs to explain what soulmarks were, and also to emphasize that they should never be shown to just anyone. Even the help had their soulmarks covered. The cook had to wear gloves, since his was on his hand, but he complied with the rules of the household.

“Mine loves space, I think. Because I really like water.” Julius replied, pulling his sleeve up to show the mark on his shoulder. A rippling blue wave gently caressed a bright star.

Percy examined his siblings marks and compared them to his. “Yours are so small, and mine’s so big.”

“That’s okay, I heard from the maid that big soulmarks mean your love is gonna be super strong!” Vesper smiled. “Like the fairytales!”

“Like the one where the Prince and Princess have soulmarks over their whole backs?” Percy asked, and Vesper nodded with a big grin on her face.
“Yeah! Just like that!” Vesper grinned.

Percy grinned back at her, looking back down at his mark.

He couldn’t wait to meet his soulmate, whoever they were, and hoped that their mark was just as large.
Infatuation

Chapter Summary

The living room was large as he entered the room, but didn’t get much farther before he was bowled over by a giant mastiff, panting and slobbering in his face.

“Trinket!” A girl scolded, going over to pull the massive beast off of Percy’s chest. “I’m so sorry, he’s very excited to meet new people.”

Growing up, it was easy for Percy to keep his soulmark to himself. All he had to do was wear a shirt. Thanks to the private school he went to, he always had to wear a uniform and never had to worry about taking his shirt off around others. Regardless, keeping soulmarks hidden was expected at a school like this. Most of the children attending were the children of heirs and heiresses, business owners and CEOs. Ransom Insurance wasn’t uncommon, and all of them kept their marks private. The only time Percy ever heard about it was when one of his classmates had slipped, and her shirt torn open, revealing a heron on her back.

This, though. This was a totally different beast.

People everywhere were wearing short sleeves and shorts, and a plethora of soulmarks could be seen. Percy saw suns and moons and stars, animals of all different kinds, but no plumes of smoke with blue feathers on someone’s side.

“Are you certain you want to attend this school?” Johanna asked, and Percy could see the disdain on her face without even turning his head.

“I am.” Percy replied.

“You do know that you can attend any Ivy League school you want, and you choose Tal’Dorei University?” Fredrick asked as well, and Percy just rolled his eyes a little.

“I do. But Tal’Dorei has the best Chemistry department in the entire country.” Percy replied, lugging a heavy suitcase towards the student apartments on the other side of campus from the parking lot. It had been a long and hard fight with his parents, but he’d finally compromised to let him live in the apartments rather than get him a private one off campus.

“That might be true, but I’m sure there are other, more respectable schools you could be attending.” Johanna replied.

“There could be, but I want to be here.” Percy replied.

“Mother, just let Percival be.” Julius replied, helping to carry some of Percy’s bags. “If he regrets his choice, he can always transfer to a better college next year.”

“You’re not helping, Julius.” Percy replied.

“That’s true though dear.” Johanna told him. “We won’t be disappointed in you if you decide to move to a better school.”

Percy sighed, hoping that his family would leave soon and let him be.
The living room was large as he entered the room, but didn’t get much farther before he was bowled over by a giant mastiff, panting and slobbering in his face.

“Trinket!” A girl scolded, going over to pull the massive beast off of Percy’s chest. “I’m so sorry, he’s very excited to meet new people.”

Percy sat up, inhaling deeply and ignoring Julius’ quiet laugh from behind him. “That’s quite all right.” He murmured, looking up at the person who would be one of his roommates.

She had lightly tanned skin and deep brown eyes. Her long dark hair was pulled into a braid, and she…

She was wearing blue feathers in her hair.

Percy stared up at her for a moment, feeling his heart hammer in his chest. She was beautiful, and she was wearing the feathers he had on his side.

She reached out a hand to help him up, and Percy let her pull him up.

“I’m Vex, by the way.” Vex smiled at him. “And that slobbery beast is Trinket. Don’t worry, my brother and I will be taking care of him.”

“Percival Fredrickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Third.” Percy introduced himself automatically, and Vex raised an eyebrow at him.

“Impressive name.”

“You can just call him Percy.” Julius chuckled, shaking Vex’s hand. “Julius Fredrickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Second.”

“Pleasure.” Vex nodded, returning the handshake.

“Isn’t there a twenty pound weight limit on dogs?” Percy asked, scratching behind the massive mastiff’s ear. Trinket panted happily, wagging his tail.

“There is, we may have fudged his weight a bit and snuck him in.” Vex smiled. “Like I said, don’t worry, he’ll be fine. This is a huge apartment anyways. I mean, five people are living here, but yeah.”

“Has anyone else arrived?” Percy asked, wondering which room he would get.

“Just me and my brother. He ran out to get some food to stick in the fridge.” Vex replied. “I have the bedroom closest to the balcony and he has the one next to the kitchen. Other than that, you get next call.”

Percy nodded, starting to look into the other rooms. They were fairly small, with just a twin bed and a desk each. There wasn’t much of a difference between them, but Percy found he liked the bedroom tucked into the far corner of the living room, on the opposite side of Vex’s.

Julius set down his suitcase next to the bed, giving Percy a knowing smirk. “You saw the feathers too, didn’t you?”

“Of course I did.” Percy replied softly. “It would be too easy, wouldn’t it?”

“Hey, all you have to do is ask her to lift her shirt.” Julius chuckled, causing Percy to blush.
“Julius!”

“I’m just teasing you.” Julius chuckled. “You get settled in, and make sure to say goodbye to Mother and Father before they have conniptions.”

“I will.” Percy replied, following his brother out to the living room. He went over to his parents, nodding at them. “Thank you for your help, I’ll make sure to call every Sunday.” He promised.

“You better.” Johanna replied, pulling him into a gentle hug. Percy returned it with a kiss to her cheek, and nodded at his father.

“You stay safe, if you need anything at all, give us a call.” Fredrick told him.

Percy nodded. “Yes Sir.” He replied, closing the door behind his family as he left.

Vex chuckled. “You sound like you come from a proper area. Let me guess, private school?” she gave him a knowing smirk.


Vex let out a low whistle. “I don’t envy you. I went to Singorn for a few years, then flunked out and went to public school afterwards. I didn’t have the patience for the etiquette classes.”

Percy laughed. “Neither did I.” he agreed. “Though Whitestone wasn’t so bad.”

“Singorn was the worst. I got in on my Dad’s money, though my mom raised my brother and I, and all the other students were pompous assholes. I was glad to leave.” She made a face.

“Most rich kids are pompous assholes, you’re not wrong there.” Percy agreed, watching her. She had such confidence to the way she moved as she made herself comfortable on the large couch, Trinket climbing up to sit in her lap.

She was beautiful, and wearing the blue feathers in her hair.

Vex chuckled. “Hope you aren’t the same.” She gave him a wink, before taking off the hoodie she had been wearing over her tank top.

As she did so, Percy saw the outline of crescent moon, with glimmering gold filling in the rest of the moon on her shoulder.

Her soulmark.

Percy felt his face fall before he could do too much about it. The blue feathers she wore perfectly matched the shade of blue on his ribs, and he thought…

She wasn’t his. She wasn’t meant for him.

“Hey, everything all right?” Vex asked, and Percy snapped to attention.

“I’m sorry?”

“I asked if you were going to be a pompous asshole too, and you were completely zoned out.” Vex replied.

“Clearly, the answer to your question is yes.” Percy replied, and Vex let out a loud laugh that made Percy’s heart flutter slightly.
No, he couldn’t entertain this anymore. They were going to be roommates, and he belonged to someone else. She belonged to someone else.

She was attractive, yes, but this needed to stop.

Percy sat next to her on the couch, trying to shove the emotions down deep, like he had always practiced at home. This was just another face to maintain until his infatuation with her faded.

It wouldn’t be fair to either of them to pursue more.
“Which rooms are available?” Pike asked, looking at the doors. “The ones without names on them.” Vex smiled. “I figured putting our names on the doors as we claimed them would help others as they came in.”

Percy was busy unpacking his bags, arranging his clothing and belongings in his room, when he heard a loud pounding sound before the door smacked open. He jumped before poking his head out the door, warily seeing who had come in, and who else would be his roommates.

A very, very large and muscular man with tattoos adorning his shaved head was responsible for the door being slammed open, and he was carrying a fair amount of baggage. Behind him stood a small woman with pale, pale blond hair tucked into a bun.

“All right Pike, where am I putting this stuff?” The man asked.

“I’m not sure…” the woman replied, looking around before seeing Percy. “Oh, hello! I’m Pike Trickfoot, I’m one of your roommates. This is Grog, he’s a good friend and helping me move in.”

“Pleasure. Percival Fredrickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Third.” Percy nodded, introducing himself.

“You can just call him Percy, dear.” Vex smiled from the kitchen, snacking on something with another man that Percy hadn’t seen enter. He looked uncannily alike to the woman next to him. Both had the same angular jaw and deep brown eyes, as well as matching long, dark hair. Unlike Vex, this man wore his freely, with a single braid next to his temple.

“That’s definitely a mouthful.” The man commented, taking a bite of an apple. “I’m Vax’Ildan, Vex’s twin.”

“Pleasure to meet you as well.” Percy nodded, having assumed as much from their resemblance.

“All right Pike, where am I putting this stuff?” The man asked.

“A very, very large and muscular man with tattoos adorning his shaved head was responsible for the door being slammed open, and he was carrying a fair amount of baggage. Behind him stood a small woman with pale, pale blond hair tucked into a bun.

“Which rooms are available?” Pike asked, looking at the doors.

“The ones without names on them.” Vex smiled. “I figured putting our names on the doors as we claimed them would help others as they came in.”

Percy looked at his door, and sure enough, there was a sheet of paper taped to it. In delicate handwriting, read “Percy Von Noble The Longest Name I’ve Ever Heard Of the Seventeenth.”

He snorted, and he could hear Vex laughing. “I thought you would enjoy that, darling.” She winked at him.

“It’s amusing.” Percy replied with a smile, leaving the paper up as he went into the living room as well.

Pike made her home in one of the rooms next to Percy, Grog helping her unpack.
While they did that, Vex moved over to Percy. “So, what kind of dye do you use?” she asked, nodding at Percy’s striking white hair. “It’s really good, can’t even see any roots.”

“Oh, it grows naturally like this.” Percy replied, and Vex’s eyes grew wide.

“Really?” she asked, standing on her toes to start combing through his hair, looking for evidence of roots. Percy repressed a shiver as a pleasant sensation coursed through him as her fingers ran through his hair.

“Really.” Percy replied. “I had brown hair until I was a teenager, then it started turning white. The doctors said stress. Regardless, I don’t mind it.”

“It’s really cool.” Vex smiled, moving away now that she was satisfied with her search. “I take it the carpet doesn’t match the drapes, then?”

“I’m sorry?” Percy asked, confused, while the twins erupted into laughter together.

They had just caught their breath again, not explaining anything, when the door opened once more. A red haired woman poked her head in. “Hey, is this VM-102?” she asked.

“Yes it is, welcome to our lovely little home for the next year!” Vex chuckled, watching as Trinket went to go and sniff at the new arrival.

“I hope you guys don’t mind if I plant an herb garden on the balcony?” She asked as she came in. “I’m Keyleth, by the way.”

“Nice to meet you.” They all greeted, giving their own names as well.

Grog left after Pike was unpacked, the giant of a man giving little Pike a bonebreaking hug. “See you later, buddy.” He murmured.

“Bye Grog! I’ll call every day, don’t worry.” Pike smiled.

It wasn’t much longer after that that their final roommate arrived. He was definitely the shortest guy of them all, though he was slightly taller than Pike. He had a guitar case on his back as he carried his bags in.

“Hello all, nice to meet you.” He smiled. He was wearing outrageously purple and orange clothing, long brown hair pulled into a ponytail. “Scanlan Shorthalt.”

“Your room’s the one next to the bathroom.” Keyleth told him, her and Percy having been in the kitchen. They had all started unpacking and organizing the apartment, Percy making sure his French press replaced the shitty coffeemaker the apartment had come with. He could tolerate a lot of things, but he needed his coffee, and it needed to be coffee, not just water with a bit of bean juice in it.

“Seems I’m the last to arrive, I see. Hope you guys don’t mind musicians, cause I’m a music major and I need to practice!” Scanlan said, moving to go set his things into the room.

Percy hummed softly as he scooted by Keyleth to get back to his own room.

Well, if nothing else, this seemed like a fun group of people to be around.

Hopefully they would all get along once they had lived together for a reasonable amount of time.
Late Night Conversations

Chapter Summary

“Can’t sleep?” Vex asked softly.
“No.” Percy murmured back. “It’s fairly normal. It should stop soon. You don’t have to stay up with me.”

It only took a few days for everyone to organize and settle into a routine in the apartment. Keyleth had laid claim to the majority of the balcony with an herb garden that she said everyone was welcome to use for cooking, Scanlan had hooked up a massive flat screen television in the living room, and Trinket was a welcome guest in pretty much everyone’s room. Percy only kept him out if he was working on a project.

Scheduling was working well too. Scanlan wouldn’t practice until later in the evenings, that way everyone was awake. Occasionally though, he would blare a trumpet to annoy everyone in the mornings.

Percy was usually up late at night and awake in the afternoon, if sleep decided to come to him at all. He loved the new apartment, loved the bustling of people around him, but he also liked the quiet the night brought. He could work in peace, though quietly, so not to disturb any of his roommates.

Sleep wasn’t coming to him that night, and Percy found himself in the kitchen at three in the morning, swallowing some medication. He could feel it creeping up on him, the glances of smoke he saw in the corners of the room evident that his delusions were about to start.

Hopefully the medication would keep the voice at bay, at least.

Once the medication was swallowed, Percy went and laid out on the large couch they had all pooled together for, large enough to fit seven people and Trinket. Grog, Pike’s childhood friend and adopted brother, would come over on an almost daily basis, and Vax’s friend Gilmore would come over not infrequently either.

He wanted to sit on the balcony, but knew better than to do so when he was in this state.

He heard the opening of a door and then footsteps, but he didn’t look, just continued to stare up at the ceiling, hoping the smoke would go away shortly.

He felt the couch give a little near his head as one of his roommates sat next to him, and he looked up to see Vex. Her hair was loose around her shoulders, and she was wearing pajama pants and a tank top. He could see the glimmering gold of her soulmark, and he looked away again.

“Can’t sleep?” Vex asked softly.

“No,” Percy murmured back. “It’s fairly normal. It should stop soon. You don’t have to stay up with me.”

Vex shrugged. “I couldn’t sleep either, to be honest. Something’s just digging at my gut, I can’t explain it. Thought I’d come out to get some water, and saw that you were up too. Thought I’d join you.”
Percy hummed non-committedly, just back to watching the ceiling.

Vex relaxed into the couch, and Percy saw the glow from her phone as she used it. They sat together in the quiet, comfortable silence for a while.

Eventually, the smoke had faded and Percy started feeling tired, but antsy at the same time. He really wanted some fresh air, but was still hesitant going out alone like this, just in case.

He looked back up at Vex, watching her scroll through her phone for a moment. “Vex? Will you come to the balcony with me?” he asked.

Vex glanced over with a small smile. “Sure.” She replied, uncrossing her legs and getting up.

Percy went over to the sliding door and opened it, stepping out into the cool air. He took a deep breath and let it out before going over to the railing, leaning against it as he stared out over the twinkling lights surrounding them, headlights and streetlights and other apartments with other awake tenants.

He could feel Vex lean against the balcony next to him, and caught a whiff of cigarette smoke as she lit one, taking an experienced drag from it and blowing it out into the air. He watched the smoke curl and dissipate, and that only made his heart ache more.

She wore the blue feathers. She clearly smoked, her lips pursed around the grey plumes that swirled in front of them, so much like the mark on his side.

Life wasn’t fair, but then again, when had life been fair to him?

“May I have one?” Percy found himself asking, and Vex lifted a questioning eyebrow towards him.

“Didn’t think you’d be one to smoke.” She told him, and Percy shrugged.

“I don’t.” he admitted. “But I’d like to try.”

“It’s a damned awful habit to pick up.” Vex warned. “Expensive and horrible for your health.”

“Why do you do it, then?” Percy asked, taking the offered stick she handed him.

Vex shrugged. “Habit, at this point.” She replied, blowing a smoke ring now. “Stress and peer pressure before.” She handed him the lighter now. “Light it, and inhale. Hold it a bit in your mouth, don’t just swallow it, then blow it out.” She told him.

Percy flicked the lighter on and held it to the end of the cigarette. Once it had lit, he put it to his lips and carefully sucked in.

He immediately started coughing, eyes watering, and Vex chuckled softly. “Thought so.” She murmured. “Don’t force yourself if you don’t like it.”

Percy shook his head once his lungs had cleared, trying again. It took a few puffs and a few more coughing fits, but eventually he was able to handle the cigarette, blowing out the smoke without feeling like he was suffocating.

Vex had finished hers at this point, and she gently made sure it was extinguished. “Just be careful.” She warned him. “I don’t want you to get hooked. It’s not fun.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t.” Percy replied, blowing out another small cloud. “I just wanted to give it a try.”
“So do a lot of people that get addicted.” Vex replied, taking her lighter back from him and leaning against the balcony.

The comfortable silence continued for a little as Percy finished the cigarette, feeling much more mellow than he had before. Whether that was the effect of the medication or the nicotine, he wasn’t sure. Either way, he felt comfortable enough to start talking again. “…do you ever think that destiny fucks with us?” he asked.

Vex let out a playful gasp. “Percival, did you just say the fuck word around me?” she put a dramatic hand to her chest. “I’m appalled!”

Percy laughed softly, feeling much more comfortable now. “I do know how to curse, though I don’t do it frequently.”

“I can see that, my word.” Vex chuckled, before looking back over the balcony. “I think it does. Sometimes I wonder if it decides to fuck with certain people more than others, just for entertainment.”

Percy nodded. “I agree.” He murmured. “But who knows. Maybe the shit we go through now means we get a happy ending, in the end.”

Vex laughed again. “You get mouthy once you’ve had a cigarette.” She teased, gently bumping their shoulders together.

Percy just gave her a slight smile. “Maybe so.” He murmured.

Vex smiled back at him, and Percy felt his heart throb slightly in his chest. “I’m going to head back to bed, that unpleasant feeling I had is gone now and I’m feeling tired.” She murmured.

Percy nodded in agreement, feeling much better after everything. “I think I am as well. Thank you for the company, Vex.”

“Thank you as well. Good night, Percy.” She gave him a soft smile, that he returned.

“Good night, Vex.” He murmured, and they went back inside, parting to go to their separate rooms.

When Percy fell asleep a little while later, his dreams were peaceful.
Drinking Games

Chapter Summary

“Cast your vote for the movie we’re going to drink to to celebrate first day of classes tonight. Choices thus far are Lord of the Rings, The Last Airbender (gross I know but Vax insisted that it’s much better when you’re wasted and making fun of it), and Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

The first day of classes went well, Percy thought. He had skipped a fair amount of the pre-requisites thanks to the private school he had attended, so he was already diving headlong into his core classes for his Chemistry major. Today was just introductions and overview, but he was already excited to get started.

His phone buzzed while he was sitting in the cafeteria, eating lunch. He picked it up, seeing a text from Vex.

“Cast your vote for the movie we’re going to drink to to celebrate first day of classes tonight. Choices thus far are Lord of the Rings, The Last Airbender (gross I know but Vax insisted that it’s much better when you’re wasted and making fun of it), and Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

“First of all, how are we getting alcohol? We’re all underage. Secondly, The Last Airbender sounds like a great drinking game movie, I’d rather spoil that one than the other two.”

“Grog is 22, so he’s getting the booze. And you and my brother are so gross, both of you. I was hoping you’d save us.”

Percy couldn’t help but laugh affectionately as he read the message.

“Sorry to disappoint. Who suggested it in the first place?”

“Vax, but Scanlan and Grog voted for it as well. You were the tiebreaker between it and Lord of the Rings. Even if you voted Ferris Bueller, we would have been saved : (“

“I look forwards to drinking every time a name is mispronounced.”

“You wound me, good sir.”

“That movie wounds everyone, to be fair.”

“I’ll give you that.”

Percy chuckled and put his phone away so he could finish his lunch and head to his next class. He really was quite happy with his living situation. He got along reasonably well with everyone, and he found himself getting closer and closer to Vex.

It probably wasn’t the best plan, in all honesty. He still felt a large attraction to her, and the fact that it was growing stronger and not weaker wasn’t a good thing.

He knew that people did it, dated around with people that weren’t their soulmates just for fun. There were those that lived in defiance of their marks, saying that destiny had no right to choose for them
before they even knew enough about love to make their own choices.

Percy had been raised in a society where regardless of soulmark, marriages were for money and property. For businesses and status, not for love. It wasn’t unusual for the upper class to wed their business partner and have their soulmates on the side. The fact that his parents had both been upper class and had matching soulmarks had been a rare, rare occurrence indeed.

But Percy didn’t want that. He didn’t want to deprive his soulmate of his entire heart, and he didn’t want to prevent Vex from doing the same. It wouldn’t be fair to either of them, in the long run.

So he would keep his feelings closely guarded, and hope that everything would turn out all right.

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“Finally!” Keyleth greeted as Percy walked in the door, her voice already a little slurred. “We’ve been waiting forever!”

“I thought we were waiting to drink until the movie.” Percy chuckled, going to toss his bag into his room before joining everyone else on the couch.

“I only had one glass!” Keyleth replied, shifting as Percy sat in between her and Vex.

“Her tolerance is shit.” Grog stage whispered from his end of the couch, cuddled up next to Pike.

“I heard that!” Keyleth replied, everyone laughing at the remarks. Grog filled a red solo cup with a drink and passed it down the line for Percy.

Percy took a sip and coughed slightly. He had a taste for wine, sure, but the strong mix of rum and coke wasn’t something he was used to.

Vex chuckled. “Grog mixed them a little strong, let me know if you need more coke.” She told him kindly.

“I’ll be fine.” Percy replied, voice a little higher pitched and breathier than he would have liked. Scanlan and Grog just started laughing.

Vex chuckled as well before grabbing the remote. “All right all right, since you all voted for this godforsaken sorry excuse for a film, this is all your fault.”

“Drinking game is as follows.” Vax grabbed a sheet of paper sitting on the table in front of them. “Drink when: a name is mispronounced from the original show, someone does a bad interpretive dance move, Sokka delivers a flat joke, and down your entire drink when it takes six Earthbenders to move a little rock.”

Everyone nodded in agreement, and Percy glanced over at Keyleth. “Are you going to last that long?” he asked her.

Keyleth laughed. “I’ll be fineee!” she chirped.

Percy shrugged a little. “All right,” he replied, leaning slightly against her as the movie started.

It didn’t take long for all of them to be reasonably tipsy, hurling insults at the screen and laughing at the random remarks from Scanlan or Pike. Percy felt warm and fuzzy as he worked on his drink, now half in Keyleth’s lap with his legs over Vex’s. She was gently massaging his knee with her free hand, and it felt really, really nice.
He really shouldn’t be doing this, he was starting to have some very uncouth thoughts as his attention started drifting from the movie to looking at Vex.

He admired the shape of her face, the angular jaw she shared with her twin accentuating her high cheekbones, making her look regal in a way that would make his mother proud. He admired the curve of her hair as it dangled down in her usual braid, the blue feathers she always wore tucked behind her ear. He noted how her ear, though round like any other ear, had a small fold in the top, a point to it that most people didn’t have.

His eyes trailed down from her face and admired the curve of her breasts underneath her tank top, and there his mind started to buzz little warnings. This was too much, if he wasn’t careful this was going to end poorly.

He was too drunk to care right then.

He took his drinks when she did, trying to make it look like he was paying attention to the movie when really he was just watching Vex.

When the movie ended and everyone was thoroughly trashed, Keyleth turned a little green and bolted for the nearest bathroom, heaving into it. Percy groaned, his pillow having disappeared and the world was spinning a little. He had never been so drunk in his life.

Grog seemed perfectly fine, and he laughed at them. “Spoilsports.” He teased, stretching.

Pike, surprisingly, seemed perfectly fine as well. “All right, I’m getting water for everyone and you’re all going to drink it, no buts.” She told them firmly, reminding Percy vividly of his mother.

Vex groaned. “Do we have to?” she whined, her hand now on Percy’s upper thigh, and oh God, he needed to think of anything but that or he was going to have a problem shortly.

“Yes, you do.” Pike replied, getting up and going to the kitchen to get more cups and the water pitcher that Keyleth kept in the fridge. She poured large glasses for everyone before going to check on Keyleth.

Percy drank his glass and laid his head back down, not wanting to go anywhere. He didn’t think he could, in all honesty. His entire head was spinning and everything seemed like it was blurry, even though he was wearing his glasses. Well, shit, now that he thought about it, he didn’t think he was supposed to drink with his medication.

Too late now, he guessed.

“V-Vex.” He slurred, looking in her general direction. “If I start having a seizure call 9-1-1, okay?”

“Why the fuck would you start having a seizure?” she slurred back. “That’s like, bad shit right there.”

“Just do it please?” Percy replied, closing his eyes and deciding that he most definitely was not making it the twenty feet to his room.

“Fine, fine.” Vex replied, and that was the last thing Percy remembered before passing out.

***

The smoke crawled up the base of the door, and Percy backed up quickly. No, not again, not this again… He glanced around, and sure enough, it was the same room. The same bright green door,
the same beige and green floral wallpaper…

*He heard a dark chuckle as the smoke started to take a form, two long, claw-like arms reaching towards Percy.*

“Come now, my child, don’t be afraid…” it purred, and Percy braced himself for the ripping pain.

Instead, thought, the creature moved past him, and Percy was confused. Then his eyes widened in horror as he saw the creature pull Vex into his sights.

Vex, who was bleeding from deep wounds all over her body, eyes staring lifeless at Percy. She was unclothed, and Percy could see a matching soulmark on her stomach and up her ribs. The same smoke and feather that he wore.

“No!” Percy screamed, trying to move, trying to get to her side as the creature laughed, deep and terrible.

*He could hear her calling his name.*

“Percy!”

“Percy!”

“Percy!” he felt a stinging slap across his face and he gasped, the room shifting again. He could see Vex, alive and well, staring at him with a look of concern on his face.

He wasn’t in that damned room anymore, but the smoke still lingered, he could still hear the chuckle of the demon in his ear.

He scrambled backwards, falling off of the couch with a loud thud, and he felt two hands grab his own and pin him down.

“Percy, what the fuck is happening?” Vex asked, and it sounded like she was talking from far away, through water, almost.

Percy glanced around, seeing others there. Grog was frowning as well, still half on the couch. Trinket was trying to get past Vax whining pathetically. Vax was holding the dog back with an identical look of concern on his face. Still, the smoke swirled and the voice laughed in his ear.

His hands shook and he shook his head. “Let me go, Vex, please…” he begged her.

“You’re going to hurt yourself, Percy, no. Take a deep breath, tell us what’s wrong!”

Percy just shook as the laughter turned into words.

“She doesn’t care… she’s just pretending, like all the others.”

Percy shook his head from side to side. “I need to get to my room.” He replied, trying to force himself to calm enough that she would let him go, let him be alone and take his medication and make these damn delusions go away. “I’m not feeling well, I think the medication I take reacted poorly to the alcohol. Please, I’m all right.”

He had never felt so not all right in his life.

***
Percy awoke for real with a pained gasp, still slumped onto the couch. He waited patiently, trying to get his bearings, not sure if this was another false awakening or not.

He could hear Grog snoring from the other end of the couch, and he lifted his head a little, carefully looking around. He could see the gentle wisps of smoke in the corners of the room, but everyone else was either in their rooms or passed out on the couch.

Vex was still asleep, head cradled against his hip from where she had slumped over during the night. Percy took careful, even breaths.

Good.

They didn’t know.

He didn’t know what he would do if they found out.

He was just starting to get comfortable with everyone, he wasn’t ready to reveal that he wasn’t quite the whole, goody-two shoes person they thought he was. He enjoyed everyone’s company, but he didn’t quite trust them that much yet.

And Vex.

What would she think if she found out how broken he was?

Regardless, he would have to watch his alcohol intake from now on. That was a round of nightmares that he didn’t want to repeat.

He very carefully extracted himself from Vex, grabbing a pillow from the floor to cushion her head since his hip was no longer there to support it. He went to his room and grabbed his pills, taking a full dose. He went and chugged some more water, trying to push the delusions and nightmares aside.
A Maybe Thought

Chapter Summary

The dread in her stomach continued even once the cigarette was gone, and she frowned. She really didn’t understand why this was happening, why she felt so uncomfortable and just generally upset. This wasn’t exactly her first time drinking, and her period wasn’t due for another couple of weeks, so she had no idea what was going on.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vex woke with a blinding headache and a sense of panic and dread in her chest. She sat up, confused. The hangover had been expected, but the panic wasn’t something she had been expecting.

She took a few deep breaths, holding her head between her knees. Maybe she just needed a cigarette, she hadn’t had one in almost a day. But even when she skipped a few days, the lack of nicotine didn’t lead to this much dread in her stomach.

She went out to the balcony to light a cigarette, taking a long, slow draw before blowing it out, watching a few people walking with a dog nearby. Trinket would have to go out soon, she would take care of that once she was done with her cigarette.

The dread in her stomach continued even once the cigarette was gone, and she frowned. She really didn’t understand why this was happening, why she felt so uncomfortable and just generally upset. This wasn’t exactly her first time drinking, and her period wasn’t due for another couple of weeks, so she had no idea what was going on.

Fuck it, another cigarette it was.

She had just lit the second when she heard the sliding glass of the balcony door behind her, and she heard the gentle footsteps of another person.

She wasn’t surprised when she saw Percy lean against the balcony by her side, face pinched in a way that made her think that maybe he was just as uncomfortable as she was.

“Hey.” Vex greeted softly.

“Hello.” Percy replied, voice just as soft. “…may I join you?” he asked.

“I thought I warned you about getting hooked.” Vex replied, even as she handed him a cigarette and her lighter. He looked like he was about to pass out with stress, the circles under his eyes deep and dark, and well, he was an adult. If he wanted to join her in the habit that was slowly killing her, then that was on him.

Percy shrugged, taking the cigarette and lighting it before bringing it to his lips. “It seemed like it was making you calmer.” He replied.

Vex shrugged. “Sometimes it does.” She agreed. “It’s why I got into it in the first place.”
Percy just nodded, blowing out the smoke with a slight cough. He still wasn’t used to it yet, but he was doing better than he had the first time.

Vex went back to nursing her own cigarette, blowing a gentle stream of smoke into the air. “You look like shit.” She told him honestly.

Percy shrugged noncommittally, blowing out his own smoke and watching as their two clouds mingled in the air. “Feel like it too. I shouldn’t drink that much, it…affected me quite negatively.”

“Yeah?” Vex replied. “Probably should take it easy then. Was that your first time getting hammered?”

Percy nodded. “It was. I shouldn’t repeat the experience.” He murmured.

“Well, next time we all drink, we know who the designated driver’s going to be.” She chuckled, feeling a little more relaxed now. The knot in her stomach started to unwind a little bit, and she watched Percy blow another small cloud of smoke.

Maybe he could be, she thought to herself. Maybe he would be her match, the soulmark that snaked over her hips and up her ribs and stomach. The swirl of smoke, topped with a single blue raven feather. She had been a little shocked, waking up the morning of her and Vax’s fifth birthday. She had two soulmarks, rather than one, and she didn’t know what it had meant.

“Mom! Mom what’s going on?” Vex had cried out, looking in the mirror at herself. She knew that her soulmark would appear, but two? She’d never thought that could happen! She had a swirl of grey smoke with a blue feather on her side, and that didn’t surprise her. Mom always put blue feathers in her hair, and she loved wearing them. She didn’t know what the smoke was about, though.

But on her right shoulder was a golden moon, with a crescent shape empty from it.

Her mother came into her room, Vax at her side. He was also sniffing in confusion, and not wearing a shirt.

“Don’t worry darlings, don’t you see?” she smiled, gently taking each twin’s right arm, showing them the matching marks. “You both have two soulmarks because you two love each other so much. You’re meant to be together. It makes sense, doesn’t it? You are twins after all.”

Vex sniffled and nodded, looking at Vax. “That means we’re gonna stay together forever, right?” she asked him.

Vax had nodded. “Yeah!” he gave her a grin, tears still clinging to his chubby cheeks. “Even when we find our other soulmate, we’re always gonna be together!”

Vex nodded, giving her brother a big hug.

Vex sighed softly at the memory, a small smile tugging at the corner of her lips. It had been a long time since she had really thought about her second soulmark, the one she didn’t know the match to. But now, watching the grey smoke spiral from Percy’s lips, she thought that maybe she could have found her match.

He sighed softly, looking over towards her. “Thank you.” He murmured, and she cocked a questioning eyebrow at him.
“Um, you’re welcome, I guess.” She replied. “Although if you keep stealing my cigarettes I’m going to ask you to buy me another pack.” She chuckled.

“I’ll replace what I use, don’t worry.” Percy replied, taking another long drag and letting it out.

Vex shrugged. “I did warn you about the addictiveness.” She replied.

Percy shrugged a little. “It’s helping. And besides, I enjoy our little talks.” He gave her a soft smile, and Vex felt her heart melt a little.

Oh, if he wasn’t her match, she was so fucked.

Vex returned the smile with one of her own. “I enjoy them as well.” She replied, giving him a slightly flirtatious wink for good measure. She chuckled as his cheeks turned a little pink, and looked back out into the complex, taking the last drag from her cigarette before extinguishing it. She loosed the cloud, watching as Percy did the same.

She watched the smoke mingle once more, swirling and dancing around each other, and she felt at ease for the first time since she awoke.

Percy finished his cigarette as well. “Thank you, Vex.” He murmured, gently touching her shoulder before heading inside.

“You’re welcome.” Vex murmured before the door slid shut, and she just closed her eyes, remembering the feeling of his hand against her shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

Just like in Make Me Come Alive, Vex is going to pop in with a chapter every now and then even though the fic is mainly focused around Percy :)
Despite their differences, he found that he greatly enjoyed Keyleth’s company, and that her presence kept him calm and together, for the most part.

As the weeks passed, Percy found himself growing more and more fond of his roommates, and considered them more friends than anything at this point. The entire apartment tried to do at least one hangout night a week, despite everyone’s busy class schedules.

Percy found that when he wasn’t studying, he’d spend most of his time with either Vex or Keyleth. Despite their differences, he found that he greatly enjoyed Keyleth’s company, and that her presence kept him calm and together, for the most part. He loved spending time with Vex as well, but with his affection for her just growing, sometimes he needed to pull away.

Keyleth was working on tending her herb garden, wearing a tank top that showed the soulmark on her back. Percy was watching it idly, working on sketching out a project he was working on. She had a pair of dark wings with vines woven throughout the feathers covering her shoulderblades.

“Do you ever wonder if you’ve missed your soulmate?” he asked her suddenly.

Keyleth looked over at him. “What do you mean?” she asked.

“I mean, most of the time your soulmark is hidden away underneath a shirt or a jacket.” Percy replied. “And since your soulmate probably hides theirs with a shirt or a jacket as well, how do you know that you’ve met them and just missed each other?”

Keyleth shrugged. “I think it’s a little more than that.” She replied, continuing to water the oregano. “I mean, I guess it’s possible, but I’m sure that fate has a little bit more in store.”

Percy sighed. “Sometimes I just wonder if fate just loves to screw with us.” He murmured. “If we’re truly meant for just one person, why do we find ourselves falling for others?”

Keyleth shrugged. “In my family, we didn’t put much store in our soulmarks.” She replied. “It was great if we found our soulmate, but no one frowned upon having relationships with others who didn’t have matching marks. Fate has a funny way of working out, I think.”

Percy hummed slightly, watching the clouds for a little while. “…sometimes I wonder if it’s possible to turn your back on fate.” He murmured. “To change your destiny yourself, past the whims of the thing that puts our soulmarks on us.”

Keyleth shrugged. “There may be. Maybe we just haven’t figured it out yet.” She replied.

“Yeah.” Percy murmured, just thinking. “…what if I told you that I’m falling for someone in a way I never had before, but they already had a soulmate? A soulmark that doesn’t match mine?”

“Well, I would say to talk to them.” Keyleth replied. “Maybe you won’t be together forever, but what’s stopping you from finding a little bit of happiness where you can?”
“My family didn’t think that way.” Percy sighed. “Marriages were more business arrangements than anything, and soulmates were relationships on the side. I don’t want that. I want to be able to give my soulmate my heart, even though I don’t know if I can anymore.”

Keyleth moved to sit next to Percy, looking at him with kind eyes. “How do you know for sure?” she asked. “Maybe you won’t meet your soulmate for many, many years. That doesn’t mean you can’t love others any less, or that it makes it any less real.” She put a gentle hand on Percy’s shoulder. “…this is about Vex, isn’t it?” she asked.

Percy looked a little panicked, and Keyleth chuckled softly. “You two aren’t that subtle.” She replied. “We all see the way you two look at each other, and none of us would dare step onto this balcony when you two are out here sharing cigarettes. Which is really unhealthy for you by the way, you two should really stop doing that—“

“Keyleth,” Percy reminded her gently, and she chuckled a little awkwardly.

“Sorry, sorry. Regardless, I think you should talk with her and stop denying yourself even just a little bit of happiness.”

Percy was quiet for a long time, just watching the clouds and not saying anything. Finally, he spoke.

“What if I don’t feel like I’m a whole enough person to be worthy of that happiness?” he asked quietly.

“What do you mean?” Keyleth asked.

Percy sighed. “…I’m not exactly the healthiest person to be around. I try to keep it away from you all, I try not to be the spoilsport, but I’m not… I’m not mentally sound.” He admitted to her. “I take medication to keep it in check, but it isn’t always.”

Keyleth chuckled softly. “I’ll tell you a secret, Percy. I’m not mentally sound either. Social anxiety and depression, it’s a bitch. And medication helps, but it’s not a cure.” She gently rubbed his back. “We’re all a little broken. It’s part of being human.”

Percy hummed softly in return, just continuing to watch the clouds. “Thank you.” He murmured finally.

“Anytime, Percy. If you need to talk, I’m here.” Keyleth replied, and they sat together in comfortable silence, just watching the clouds move through the sky.
So Close, Yet So Far

Chapter Summary

Vex nodded. “I’m sorry I missed the moment.” She murmured back, blowing out a thin stream of smoke. “…sometimes I wonder what my soulmate is doing.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was only a couple of days later that Percy felt his entire world flip onto its head.

The day started out wonderfully. Keyleth had been wearing one of her tank tops when Vax walked in, and the poor man had nearly broken his laptop from dropping it when he saw the wings on her back.

Keyleth had turned, face worried. “Vax! Are you okay?” she asked, concerned.

Vax had just stared at her for a solid minute, Keyleth growing increasingly more concerned, before he pulled off his shirt just enough to show her the matching pair of wings on his back.

Keyleth had turned a bright shade of red and stammered apologies as Percy sat down to work on the computer, making sure that everything was still working after it had had an unfortunate meeting with the ground.

Vax had just given her a soft smile. “It’s all right, I was just…shocked.” He murmured, taking her hand in his and squeezing it gently. “Nothing has to change between us for now, we can take it slow.” He had promised her.

Percy had just smiled softly to himself as he listened to them talk quietly, working on the computer.

Everyone was thrilled to find out that Vax and Keyleth had found each other, and Vex proposed they have a celebratory night for the couple.

“I have someone who can get us some good stuff, if Grog gets us some beer.” She smiled sweetly at the massive man who was currently taking up most of the couch, laying down. Grog replied with a thumbs up, and that was how Percy found himself sitting with the others later that night, smoking from a joint that was being passed around.

Keyleth was still the only one who had any clue about the delusions that still haunted him, and reassured him that the weed wouldn’t have any adverse effects. “It’s a calming agent, it’ll make you much more relaxed.” She murmured, handing it to him after taking a drag.

Percy figured it wouldn’t be that much different from the cigarettes he smoked with Vex, so he allowed himself a drag before passing it to her.

Vex took a deep inhale before blowing out a perfect smoke ring. “Congrats to the happy couple.” She smiled, and it was a little loose and happy. It made Percy’s heart ache as he watched her.

Keyleth wasn’t wrong, the weed made Percy feel loose and relaxed. As was customary, they all
ended up on the couch in a cuddle puddle with each other, but this time Percy found his head in Vex’s lap with her fingers in his hair, gently running through them.

He swore that if he could, he would be purring. The sensation felt almost magnified, sending shivers of pleasure down his spine. He was lax and happy as she continued to play with his hair while they watched some show that Percy had no memory of.

“Hey, wanna go on the balcony?” Vex asked him, and Percy nodded. “Yeah.” He replied, giving her a loopy smile.

It took a few tries to extract themselves from the rest of the group. Percy smiled at the sight of Vax and Keyleth curled up together, fond smiles on both of their faces, before following Vex out onto the balcony.

She pulled out her pack of cigarettes and handed Percy one, Percy idly thinking he would buy her a pack soon to make up for the many cigarettes he had smoked from her packs, and they both leaned against the balcony. Percy noted that Vex was close to him, their shoulders brushing as they started on their cigarettes.

“It’s pretty awesome.” Vex murmured. “I’m so happy for Vax. He’s spent a long time believing that he wouldn’t find his partner.”

Percy nodded. “He looked so happy when he saw Keyleth’s mark.” He murmured.

Vex nodded. “I’m sorry I missed the moment.” She murmured back, blowing out a thin stream of smoke. “…sometimes I wonder what my soulmate is doing.”

“Me too.” Percy murmured, feeling much more loose-lipped thanks to the influence of the marijuana. “I’ve been thinking about them often lately.”

“Yeah, me too.” Vex murmured softly. “…sometimes, I wonder if I’ve already met them.”

Percy looked at her, heart pounding softly in his chest. “…yeah, me too.” He murmured. She was so close, it would only take a single movement.

Vex looked up at him, and fuck, they were sharing breath now. Percy felt like he could hear his heart pounding in his head.

Vex licked her lips a little, and fuck, Percy was in trouble. He was in so much trouble.

He was about two seconds away from closing the gap between them when his phone rang.

Percy pulled away then, the moment broken. He fumbled for his phone, picking it up when he saw that it was Cassandra calling. His siblings rarely ever called, especially if it wasn’t a Sunday night.

“Cass?” Percy asked, picking up, and he could just hear his sister sobbing on the other end. “Cassandra, what’s wrong? What’s going on?”

“…I…Percy, they’re dead. They’re all dead.” Cassandra sobbed.

“Cassandra, take a deep breath. Who’s dead?” Percy asked, his entire chest feeling like it was filled with ice.

“Mother, Father, everyone… the house is gone, a fire, they think it was intentional. They found seven bodies. I was at a friend’s house….They’re all gone…” Cassandra sobbed, and Percy felt like
the world had just ended.

He just stared at Vex, eyes wide as he listened to his sister, his only sister now, sobbing through the speaker. He was numb in a way he never thought he could be before, and Vex’s face mirrored his before he could say a word.

He couldn’t think much of that before he choked out. “I’m coming Cass, I’ll come get you, you can stay here while we figure everything out.”

Once he got her calmed down enough that he could hang up, Vex was staring at him with just as much numbness and shock as he felt. “Percy, what happened?” she asked, voice cracking.

“….someone murdered my family.” Percy replied, words feeling hollow. “My youngest sister is the only one left. I’m going to get her.”

Percy felt a spike of grief through his chest as Vex’s face went into a deep frown. “Percy, I… I don’t have any words to express how sorry I am…”

Percy didn’t think she needed to. “I’ll be back with her.” He replied, getting to his feet and grateful that he hadn’t been drinking that night.

“Do you need us too?” Vex asked softly, and Percy hesitated.

“…just you.” He replied, and Vex nodded, following without a moment of hesitation as Percy went to grab the keys to Vax’s shitty little black junker, the only car they had available between them.

As he walked, he heard the gentle whisper of an all too familiar voice in his ear.

“And so you break even more…

Chapter End Notes

Don't hurt me *ducks*
Raw Emotion

Chapter Summary

Percy’s vision blurred and then cleared, and he realized he was gasping for breath, fingers white on the steering wheel and tears damp on his cheeks.

How long had he been like this?

Chapter Notes

WARNING

Percy spends the entirety of this chapter in the throes of a panic attack/intense hallucination. Be careful with this chapter if you're triggered by this kind of content.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Percy barely heard Vex tell the others they were leaving, his mind was too focused on getting to the car to go and get Cassandra before something happened to her too. He could see the smoke swirling at the edge of his vision and hear the dark chuckle of the voice again, but he needed to push them away. He had to.

He had to get to Cassandra.

He got into the car and started it, able to wait until Vex was inside and buckled before he threw the car into reverse and got out of the lot as fast as was physically possible.

It was an hour drive to their home, and Percy wasn’t sure he was going to make it that far.

He tried to concentrate on the road, on the other cars and the headlights and taillights.

He should have grabbed his medication. The red lights blinked in and out of his vision, smoke obscuring them. He could faintly hear Vex trying to talk to him, but her voice was drowned out by the incessant cackling and dark whispers of the goddamned voice.

"This is your fault. You left them all to die."

Just like the first time. Just like the first time I took someone you loved away.

It won’t end. I promise you that.

The smoke kept swirling into his vision more and more, and without realizing, the wheel was wrenched from his grip and Percy’s forehead smacked into the wheel as Vex pulled the emergency brake and guided them onto the shoulder of the highway.

Percy’s vision blurred and then cleared, and he realized he was gasping for breath, fingers white on the steering wheel and tears damp on his cheeks.
How long had he been like this?

“Percy!” Vex’s voice sounded scared, and oh God, how could he do this to her? “Percy, what the fuck is happening?”

Percy just let his forehead rest against the wheel again, starting to hyperventilate. He should have grabbed his medication, he should have… he couldn’t stop it, couldn’t stop that horrible voice that continued to echo in his ears.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and he flinched, moving to swat it away. Her hand shifted and morphed into a claw, and Percy just flinched away, not sure what was real anymore.

Was anything real anymore?

Of course it’s real. All of this is real. The voice hissed, and Percy saw a glimpse of green eyes behind Vex’s hair.

He could hear Vex talking now. Her voice barely leaked into the living hell he was experiencing, amplified he was sure by the marijuana he had smoked.

“Percy, please, you’re scaring me, what’s happening?”

Her voice was choked with tears, and he felt his fear amplify even more. He started scrambling for the door, trying to get out of the car. He felt two hands grab his, pinning him down, and he couldn’t help the scream that wrenched from his lips.

She’ll never love you now that she’s seen this.

“Percy, listen to me, you have to stay calm and here with me.” Vex was pleading, and he could feel the warmth of her hands clasping his wrists. “What’s going on Percy, you’re screaming about shadows and something called Orthax…”

Percy gasped for air. She deserved to know, she was only trying to help.

…”I have hallucinations. Delusions. I can’t tell what’s real and what’s not.” He gasped out, trying to focus on her face, on her wide brown eyes. On the blue feathers in her hair. The shade of blue on his side. “I take medication. I didn’t grab it. I need to get to Cassandra. Please…” he begged.

Vex kept a steady grip on his wrists. “I’m calling Pike.” She told her. “Where do you keep your medication? She’ll bring it and we’ll go together to get your sister. But you can’t drive like this Percy, you’ll kill us both.”

Percy just grasped at her wrists in return, head spinning as he tried to keep his focus on her, on Vex’s voice. It felt like everything was spiraling out of control, that damned demon that haunted him continuing to laugh and whisper horrible things. “I’m sorry.” He gasped out. “I’m sorry…”

“It’s not your fault.” Vex whispered. “Whatever happened to your family is not your fault, and these hallucinations are not your fault. We’re going to get you your medication and get Pike here so she can drive us to get your sister. I’m not leaving you, I promise. I’m not leaving.”

“I’m so broken.” Percy gasped out, and Vex shook her head.

“No more broken than I am.” Vex replied. “Just stay with me, listen to me, okay? I’m real, I promise you I’m real.”
She’s lying, she’d never stay. You’re too broken for that.

Percy felt like everything was unraveling around him, and he felt raw in a way he hadn’t in years. Not since Anna. Not since he started seeing smoke around every corner and heard a whisper in his head that wasn’t really there.

It was a wonder he had made it as long as he had without a complete breakdown, and he knew that the grief of losing his family in one blow had a lot to do with it.

“I can’t tell…” Percy whispered. This was Vex, maybe. If it wasn’t, she’d never know, and if it was, she hadn’t left.

He felt Vex pull at his hand and press it against her chest, and he could feel the steady beating of a heartbeat. His fingers clenched at her shirt and her hand, trying to focus on it.

“I’m here, I’m right here.” Vex whispered. “I promise you. Just listen to me, focus on me.”

Percy shook as he gasped for air, but he let the steady beating of Vex’s heart keep him somewhat focused.

Once Percy had calmed enough that he was only shaking and keeping his eyes closed to keep the smoke at bay, he could hear Vex speaking to Pike. God, Vex’ahlia was an absolute saint.

She’s not yours. She’ll never be yours.

Percy took another deep breath, hand still pressed against Vex’s chest and feeling her heartbeat.

Right then, it didn’t matter.

She was there when no one else was.

***

When Pike showed up, Percy swore the young woman was glowing with an angelic light. She pulled over next to Vax’s car, handing Vex the bottle of pills.

“Pike.” He whispered softly. “Bless you…”

Vex read the label before handing over the two pills and a bottle of water. “Here, take it.” She urged, and Percy took the pills, swallowing the water as quickly as possible.

He kept his hand against Vex’s heart as the medication started to take effect, his mind clearing slightly as the smoke was pushed away. He slumped forwards against her, bruised forehead against her shoulder as he took deep breaths.

He felt her arm around his shoulders, holding him close. Her hand gently squeezed the one pressed against her chest. “Just breathe, Percy. I’ve got you.” She whispered.

“You should really have called an ambulance.” Pike murmured, having paid the taxi driver she had used to get there and sliding into the backseat.

“I don’t think that would have ended well.” Vex replied softly, and Percy didn’t have the energy to reply.

It took a while, Pike and Vex having a hushed conversation that Percy wasn’t listening to, before Percy felt ready enough that he could let go of Vex and trade places with Pike. Vex didn’t hesitate
before getting out of the passenger’s seat, moving to get into the back with Percy.

His heart throbbed again in his chest.

He was in love with her.

He was in love with someone who was destined to love someone else.

Fate just had to tear another hole into him that night, didn’t it?

But right now, Percy was too raw to argue. He let Vex pull him close, let his head rest against hers and let her fingers wind into his hair, gently petting and soothing as Pike got back onto the freeway. Percy had managed to get his old address out, and Pike was following her GPS to get them there.

“…thank you.” He whispered softly to Vex, wincing a little at how raw his voice sounded. “You didn’t have to do what you did.”

“Of course I did. I care.” Vex whispered back, and Percy swore he could feel her lips press against the top of his hair.

Chapter End Notes

I know I’m just pouring these chapters out but I’m just on a roll today with this story. I hope you guys don’t mind, sorry for spamming your inboxes.
Cassandra

Chapter Summary

The officers reluctantly allowed the women to follow, and Percy was taken over to where a shaken Cassandra was waiting. She had a blanket wrapped around her and a mug of some hot liquid that she wasn’t drinking from.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

They arrived a little after midnight, stopped by the line of police officers. Percy untangled himself from Vex before getting out of the car, forcing himself to take a deep breath and slide on the mask he always wore for the public. He had to be strong, for Cassandra’s sake.

“State your business.” One of the officers told him, voice firm. Percy just kept his head high.

“I’m Percival Fredrickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Third, and I’m here for my sister.” He replied coolly. “Our family was the one that was killed in that fire.”

A couple of officers murmured to each other, and one looked over at him. “Can we see your ID please?” he asked.

Shit. Percy hadn’t grabbed his wallet.

“Right here.” He heard a voice behind him, and saw that Pike was holding out his wallet towards him. He took it from her with a thankful smile before handing over the drivers license.

The officer examined it for a moment before handing it back. “Right this way, Sir.” He replied, moving to lead Percy to one of the cars. He heard Vex and Pike following behind, and when the officers tried to stop them, told them “They’re here with me, please let them come along. They’re as good as family to me.”

The officers reluctantly allowed the women to follow, and Percy was taken over to where a shaken Cassandra was waiting. She had a blanket wrapped around her and a mug of some hot liquid that she wasn’t drinking from.

She looked up at their approach before moving to stand and hug Percy close. Percy hugged her back, wrapping his arms around her and putting a hand into her hair, cradling her close. God, she was only fifteen. She shouldn’t have to have been the one to witness this.

Cassandra buried her face into his chest, and the siblings just stood there for a long time. Pike and Vex kept a respectful distance, and Percy was grateful to both of them for that.

“It’s a little too late to drive home at this point.” Percy murmured softly. “Let’s get a hotel room, and then I’ll take you home, okay?” he murmured to Cassandra, gently petting her hair.

Cassandra nodded slightly against his chest. “Okay.” She whispered back, and they let go of each other.
Percy looked over at the other two. “Cass, this is Vex and Pike. They’re my friends and roommates, and they helped me get here.” He murmured.

Cassandra gave each of them a slight nod. “Thank you.” She murmured, voice shaking a little.

“It was the least we could do.” Pike replied, Vex nodding in agreement.

Percy looked at his friends. “Would you mind terribly if we all shared a hotel room tonight? I think… I think Cass and I need some time to decompress and not drive.” The unsaid words, that Percy wasn’t in shape to take the hour long drive again, was easily heard by the two, and Vex nodded.

“Of course. We’ll help with the cost.” She replied.

“That won’t be necessary.” Percy replied softly. “…as of tonight, I just became the heir to an international marble mine.”

Oh God, he had no idea what he was going to do. He had never expected to inherit. Julius was the businessman, he had been the one groomed and raised to take over the family business. Not Percy. Percy just wanted to go to college and make a career of his own.

He couldn’t think of that right now. Right now, he had his little sister to care for and his friends to deeply thank for everything.

Percy had barely had time to register the looks of shock on both Vex and Pike’s faces before an officer approached, wanting to interview the siblings.

Percy so did not want to deal with this right now, but he let himself be taken to the side to answer the questions the officer had. No, he didn’t know who had done such a horrendous thing. He himself had been in his apartment in Emon, celebrating with his friends when the fire had happened. He gave them Vax’s number so the rest of their roommates could confirm his alibi.

He did his best to keep his hands from shaking near the end, just wanting to get out of the area and get someplace he felt a little safer. Once the officer was satisfied, the four of them piled into Vax’s shitty junker and found a hotel nearby to rent a room at.

They got one room with two king sized beds, Percy and Cassandra sharing one and Pike and Vex sharing the other. Once they were in the room, Pike ducked out with the intention on buying overnight necessities for all of them.

Cassandra sat on the edge of the bed, blanket still wrapped around her, and Percy sat next to her. He put a gentle arm around her shoulders, and she leaned into her brother.

“…is this how you felt when Anna…?” Cassandra asked quietly, and Percy hesitated before nodding.

“Yes.” He replied softly, and Cassandra let out a soft sob, pressing her face against his shoulder.

“I’m going to grab a shower.” Vex murmured, and as she went towards the bathroom, starting to pull her shirt up on the way, Percy swore he got a glimpse of a swirl of smoke on her side.

He looked away. In the chaos of the night, that was the most painful hallucination he had experienced yet.

He just heard a low chuckle in the back of his mind, and that confirmed it for him.
His mind was just torturing him even more.

He pushed it down and just held Cassandra close. He didn’t know what he could say to make it better, there was really nothing he could say to make it better.

All he could do was hold his sister as she cried, and try and push his own demons away.

Chapter End Notes

One of the downsides of having delusions; you don't believe what your see right in front of you, even if it is true :)

I also want to thank you all for your amazing comments the past few chapters. Your amazing feedback really does keep me writing, and I love and appreciate you all sincerely, from the bottom of my heart <3
Crucibles

Chapter Summary

Vex looked over at him then. “It was the least I could do.” She murmured. “I wish there was more I could offer you than just a hug and a pack of cigarettes.”

Percy felt the corner of his lips curl up slightly in a halfhearted smile. It didn’t quite reach his eyes, the same way the slight twinge of amusement didn’t quite reach his chest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sleep didn’t find either of the de Rolo siblings that night. They didn’t even bother pretending. Percy sat on the balcony, working one by one through the pack of cigarettes that Vex had brought with them while Cassandra sat at the desk, doing things on her phone.

Somehow, smoking wasn’t the same when Vex wasn’t at his side, sharing soft words. It was something they did together, and the moments they shared were moments Percy held close to his heart.

He snuffed the cigarette out with a bit of anger in it. His entire life had just been swooped out from under him. He had gotten less than a semester before his entire life changed. So much responsibility had just been dropped onto his shoulders, and he wasn’t capable of dealing with it all. He could barely handle himself, let alone a company that he had no clue how to run and a younger sister that he was going to fight for custody of. Cassandra was fifteen, he wasn’t about to leave her to the foster system or to the whims of any of their extended family, especially since they didn’t know who had started the fire, who had been responsible for the death of their family.

He could barely keep a hold on his own sanity, for fucks sake. How would it look when it came out, that the new head of Whitestone’s Marble heard a voice that wasn’t actually there and saw smoke wherever he went. Yeah, that would go over well.

Percy looked back through the glass wall to the bed where Vex and Pike were currently sleeping, the morning sun having barely crept up at this point. He could see Vex’s face, relaxed in her sleep, brown hair out of its usual braid and tousled around her shoulders.

She looked so beautiful that Percy just wanted to cry.

As much as he wished this hadn’t happened, that he hadn’t ever met the woman who had turned everything around for him, he was so glad he had her in his life. She had stayed by his side even when he was at his lowest, when he was scared shitless because he didn’t know what reality was anymore. She stayed with him.

He went back to smoking the second to last cigarette, letting the smoke swirl around in the gentle breeze.

He had just finished it when the door slid open, and a familiar pair of footsteps joined him.
“Got any left?” Vex asked softly, and Percy handed the last one over without hesitation.

“I’ll buy you a new pack,” he murmured softly.

“Don’t worry about it.” Vex replied softly. “You needed it more than I do.” She lit her own cigarette and took a puff.

Percy just nodded, and the silence fell between them for a while as Vex smoked.

“…thank you. For everything.” Percy murmured softly.

Vex looked over at him then. “It was the least I could do.” She murmured. “I wish there was more I could offer you than just a hug and a pack of cigarettes.”

Percy felt the corner of his lips curl up slightly in a halfhearted smile. It didn’t quite reach his eyes, the same way the slight twinge of amusement didn’t quite reach his chest.

“That was all you needed to offer.” He murmured. “…I want to apologize for last night.”

“What for?” Vex asked, looking confused.

“I never wanted you, any of you all, to witness what had happened.” Percy sighed softly. “I’m a very, very broken person, Vex, and I just wanted to keep it from you all.”

Vex shrugged. “We’re all pretty broken, I think.” She replied, letting a slow stream of smoke out through her lips. “Vax and I used to steal things.” She told him. “We were a fantastic team. I would flirt with the salespeople, keep their attention away, and Vax would slip what we needed or wanted into his jacket. It evolved into us breaking into houses, and being damn good at it too. We stopped because our partner was killed, and we didn’t want the same to happen to us.” She took another drag, eyes focused on the pool below them.

Percy frowned slightly. “You don’t have to tell me this.” He murmured. “You don’t…owe me information about yourself because you witnessed…what you witnessed.”

Vex chuckled softly, fingers expertly flicking the ash from the end of the cigarette. “I don’t.” she agreed. “But I trust you. I still have nightmares from that, you know. PTSD, I was told. I just wanted you to know. You’re not the only broken one here.”

Percy watched her, his heart aching softly. He wanted to tell her, wanted to confess everything that had happened with Anna, what had started all of this. But this wasn’t the time or the place.

Instead, he got out of the uncomfortable patio chair and went to her side, letting a hand rest on her waist as he drew her into a gentle hug.

Vex didn’t say a word, but she leaned into the touch.

“Thank you.” Percy whispered softly. “For trusting me.”

“I’d trust you with a lot more.” Vex replied, and they stood there together, Vex’s warmth against Percy’s side, and Percy thought that maybe falling in love with someone like her would be worth all the pain it would bring.

***

When Pike woke up, they all piled back into the car after Vex checked them out and went back to the de Rolo estate to see if anything more could be salvaged. Percy ignored the representative from
the company asking him to come in for a company meeting, brushing right past him to head to the smoking rubble that had been his childhood home.

The bodies had been removed and the estate carefully photographed, whatever evidence they had that this was done on purpose already taken away. A couple of firemen escorted Percy and Cassandra to the house, making sure that things were safe before the siblings dove in.

It was hours of time spent in the sun, but Percy didn’t care. He had made sure to take his medication before they came, but even then, he still couldn’t tell if the ash clouds were real or fake.

He wished Vex was with him. Her and Pike had gone into the town for lunch, since they weren’t allowed to join the siblings.

In the end, they had managed to recover a few things. Some of their mother’s jewelry had escaped unscathed. A ceramic dog that Vesper had loved. Some books that had smoke and water damage, but were still legible. A music box that Percy had made for Whitney years before.

The majority of everything was damaged, but Percy held these small keepsakes close to his chest.

When Vex and Pike returned, they got into the car to head back to Emon and the apartment, where Cassandra would stay until Percy could get everything finalized and see what their situation would be like after all the dust settled.

He honestly didn’t know what he was going to do.

Chapter End Notes

There's going to be a sizable time skip after this, just as a heads up :) It's only going to be a few months.
Percy smiled back and let himself out of bed. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, but he knew his mark would be covered regardless, since Vex could only see his face and shoulders. He stepped out onto the balcony, shivering at the blast of cold air. Whitestone was much colder than Emon was, usually, and now that it was turning from fall into winter, well… he should have put a shirt on.

A few weeks passed, and Percy felt like he was in way over his head. He was lying in a hotel bed in Whitestone, his sister and the rest of his friends still in Emon. They had to finish the rest of their finals and Cassandra was still trying to recover from everything, but Percy didn’t have that luxury.

Rather than studying for finals, he was trying to figure out what the hell he was doing with the company. He had been dragged into meeting after meeting, press release after press release, with everyone asking what he was planning to do and how he was planning to show that his family’s murder wouldn’t affect the company’s policies. It didn’t help that Percy was paranoid of every single member of the board. All of them would have the potential to gain so much if the entire de Rolo family passed.

His phone rang, and he sighed heavily. If this was another damn work call, he was going to chuck the phone across the room and pretend he was already asleep. He picked it up and glanced at it, only to see that it was a Facetime call from Vex.

He answered it immediately

Vex’s face filled the screen of his phone and Percy’s heart ached a little at her wide smile. “Hey Percy!” she greeted, and Percy couldn’t stop the affectionate, though tired, smile that spread over his lips.

“Hi Vex.” He murmured, cringing a little at how exhausted he both sounded and looked in the camera.

“You sound like shit.” Vex replied, and Percy chuckled a little.

“I feel like shit too. This is…overwhelming, and nothing I wanted anything to do with.” He murmured.

“Do you have a balcony in your hotel room?” Vex asked, and Percy nodded. “I do, why?”

“Do you have cigarettes?” Percy nodded again. Smoking was a stress reliever for him, and the taste of the smoke on his tongue always made him think of Vex.

“Cmon, let’s smoke on the balcony together.” She smiled, and got up from the couch, heading outside.

Percy smiled back and let himself out of bed. He wasn’t wearing a shirt, but he knew his mark would
be covered regardless, since Vex could only see his face and shoulders. He stepped out onto the balcony, shivering at the blast of cold air. Whitestone was much colder than Emon was, usually, and now that it was turning from fall into winter, well… he should have put a shirt on.

He saw Vex leaning against the railing, propping the phone up against one of Keyleth’s herb containers, he was sure. He didn’t have anything to do the same, so he just set his phone down as he lit the cigarette before holding it in his other hand.

“Tell me what’s been going on.” Vex murmured.

Percy sighed, letting the smoke filter out of his mouth as he did so. “It’s just been board meeting after board meeting, all of the members trying to pander to me to try and get their salaries raised. It’s ridiculous, and I don’t trust any of them at all. All of them had the potential to take the head if I wasn’t still alive, and I wouldn’t put it past any of them to have funded the person responsible for the fire.” Percy sighed, leaning against the balcony and taking a long drag.

Vex frowned slightly. “I’m sorry to hear that.” She murmured, and he could see her blowing her own stream of smoke. This wasn’t the same as leaning next to her, but Percy still felt happy that she was willing to continue their little habit, even though he wasn’t there anymore.

“How’s Cassandra doing?” Percy asked. Cassandra was living in his room currently while he was busy in Whitestone, and he made sure he wired some spending money to her every week to make sure she could keep together.

“All right. She spends a lot of time alone in your room, but she’s started opening up to Keyleth a little.” Vex replied. “Speaking of, Keyleth’s getting cold feet around Vax, and I’m kind of pissed at her for it.” She sighed. “I mean, they’re soulmates, and I get that Keyleth’s nervous but it kind of feels like she’s leading Vax on.”

Percy frowned a little. “That doesn’t sound like Keyleth.”

“I know, right? She seemed so happy at first, but I guess once it had time to sink in, it made her scared? I dunno.” Vex replied, blowing out a smoke ring. “I don’t get it myself.”

“Well, Keyleth’s allowed to feel how she wants to feel.” Percy murmured. “Just because we have soulmates doesn’t make us less human. Soulmates don’t magically change every single part of who we are, fundamentally.”

Vex nodded. “That’s true.” She murmured.

They smoked together in silence for a moment, before Vex spoke up. “Percy? You never show your soulmark. Everyone else in the apartment at least gets glimpses of each other’s, but we’ve never seen yours.”

Percy shrugged a little. “Habit, I guess.” He murmured. “In the circles I was raised in, soulmarks were carefully guarded secrets. If you didn’t show your soulmark, someone couldn’t get it tattooed to match to try and get into your family and get fortunes.” He replied. “…showing my soulmark to someone I shouldn’t have nearly cost me my life before.”

Vex frowned at that. “Someone tried to match your soulmark?” she asked.

Percy nodded. “Yes. And the betrayal I felt when I found out it was all a lie broke me fundamentally.” He admitted, taking another long drag from the almost finished cigarette. “It’s the reason I see smoke around every corner and hear a voice that isn’t there.”
Vex’s frown deepened. “…I’m so sorry, Percy.” She murmured.

Percy shrugged. “No changing the past now.” He replied softly. “I made a mistake and there were consequences.”

“Most people wouldn’t sound so casual about something like that.” Vex replied.

“If I think about it too hard, it ends poorly. That’s why.” Percy shrugged.

Vex sighed softly. “…I’m sorry.” She murmured.

Percy shrugged. “No big deal.” He replied softly.

He heard the rustle of the door from the other end, and Vex turned. “Hey Vax.” She smiled softly.

“Hey. Talking to Whitey?” Percy could hear Vax’s voice, and he leaned into frame. Percy offered a small smile, before his heart stopped in his chest.

Vax was wearing a tank top.

Vax was wearing a tank top, and on his right shoulder was a glimmering, golden circle with a crescent shape cut out of it.

It perfectly matched the mark on Vex’s shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry again for the haste in which I posted yesterday's chapter, here's the real one!

Percy's mind just broke, poor boy!
Percy took a deep breath. It was now or never. If he didn’t do this now he didn’t think he’d ever have the courage to do it again.

He angled the phone down at his torso, keeping his eyes on Vex’s face as he did so.

Percy just stared, his heart pounding hard in his chest.

He was so fucking stupid.

“Don’t stay out super long, don’t forget that we’re going to see a movie together tonight.” Vax told Vex, and she nodded.

“Yeah, I know, don’t worry.” She smiled. “Just a little bonding over some smokes.”

He knew how close the twins were, and he had done his research on soulmarks after the incident with Anna. He knew that, though rare, platonic soulmarks existed.

And twins had a much higher chance than any other pair to have platonic soulmarks.

“I think something broke de Rolo.” He heard Vax comment, and Percy shook his head a little, trying to get his thoughts together.

If she had a platonic soulmark… did that mean that the smoke on her side he had seen a few weeks before hadn’t just been a hallucination?

The blue feathers she always wore. The smoke that would creep into his vision. Not only did his soulmark have both parts of them, but they had bonded together over sharing cigarettes, over sharing smoke clouds.

Percy could barely hear through the sound of the blood pounding in his head. It felt like all the pieces were falling into place, now that he knew the match to Vex’s golden moon.

“Percy, are you all right?” He heard Vex ask, voice concerned, and he looked back at her. Vax was looking at him with a concerned look as well.

“…Vex, can I speak with you in private?” he forced the words out, trying to keep his voice from shaking.

“Course.” Vex murmured, looking at her twin. “I’ll be in soon, promise.”

“All right.” Vax nodded, glancing at Percy before he left. Once the door had closed behind him, Vex looked back at Percy. “What’s wrong? Are you starting to hear him again?” she asked.

Percy swallowed and shook his head, fighting for the words. He had so many emotions bouncing around right now, it was making his hands shake. Elation, nervousness, curiosity, anxiety, fear… he didn’t quite know what to feel.
Vex’s brow furrowed, a frown on her face. “Percy, what’s happening?” she asked, voice growing slightly panicked, and Percy swallowed hard.

“…you have a platonic soulmark.” He whispered.

Vex somehow looked even more confused. “Well, yeah.” She replied. “Haven’t you seen Vax’s? I was sure you’ve seen him shirtless at least once in all these months.”

“…no, I never have.” Percy whispered softly, heart pounding in his chest.

“…Percy, are you sure you’re okay?” Vex asked. “You look really pale.”


“I trust you too.” Vex replied. “What’s going on Percy, you’re starting to scare me.”

Percy took a deep breath. It was now or never. If he didn’t do this now he didn’t think he’d ever have the courage to do it again.

He angled the phone down at his torso, keeping his eyes on Vex’s face as he did so. And he turned so that his soulmark, with the single blue feather and curls of smoke, was fully visible.

He watched as Vex’s eyes widened in shock and she dropped her cigarette.

His hands were shaking and his heart was pounding heavily in his chest.

Vex reached over to grab the phone from where it had been resting, angling it down at her own torso as she pulled her tank top up.

Percy felt like his heart was going to explode out of his chest as he saw a single blue feather and matching swirls of smoke on her side.

It hadn’t been a hallucination.

It had been real.

Percy swallowed hard, doing his best to keep a grip on the phone. “I’m so stupid. I’m so bloody stupid.” He whispered, voice shaking.

“…it’s not stupid. Not if what you told me was true.” Vex replied, her voice shaking as well.

“It is because I’ve been in love with you for weeks, thinking that I never had a chance.” Percy replied softly.

Vex’s eyes widened, and she angled her phone back up so she could look at him. Percy did the same, though he wasn’t able to look at her, flustered.

“Percy. I’ve been trying to get the courage for weeks to ask you about your soulmark, hoping that we matched.” Vex replied softly.

Percy chuckled a little. “If I hadn’t had thought that your soulmark didn’t match, I would have said something a while ago.” He murmured.

“I guess I’m kind of to blame for that too.” Vex murmured. “…come home soon, okay?”

Percy nodded, giving her a soft smile. “I’ll do my best.” He couldn’t promise more than that, but his
heart was light in a way that he had never thought.

“I have to go, I did promise my brother a movie, but Percy? I'm so glad it’s you.”

Percy smiled softly. “I’m glad it’s you.” He replied. “Good night, Vex.”

“Good night, Percy.” Vex smiled, blowing him a soft kiss before they hung up.

Percy couldn’t sleep for the rest of that night, the happiness just bubbling through his chest, but as he got dressed for yet another damned meeting, he couldn’t care less about how tired he felt.

After all that time yearning for her, Vex was his.

She had always been his.

And he was hers.
Exhausted

Chapter Summary

He pulled out his keycard to get into his room before he noticed a few scratches on the lock that hadn’t been there before. He froze, immediately suspicious, and started very quietly backing away from the door.

Percy stepped into the meeting, giving a cool nod to the rest of the board. “Good morning.” He greeted, taking his seat at the head of the table.

“Good morning, Percival.” One of the men greeted, bowing his head. “I have to say, you look rather excited this morning. Good news?”

“Of a quite personal matter, yes.” Percy replied. “Thank you for your concern, Sylas.”

Sylas Briarwood nodded his head. “Of course. Any positive news is a good sign at this point, though. Have the police found any more evidence pointing to who was responsible for Fredrick’s untimely death?”

“They are in the process of examining the evidence, and they are continuing to search the ruins of the estate.” Percy replied. “Hopefully they find more evidence to point to a suspect.”

“We hope so as well.” Delilah Briarwood, Sylas’ wife and business partner, nodded. “Have you decided on a date for the funeral?”

“I have.” Percy nodded. “Everyone will be interred at the family mausoleum next Saturday.”

“So soon?” Kerrion Stonefell asked. “Shouldn’t we have more time to prepare an event?”

“No.” Percy replied firmly. “I’m not going to turn this into any more of a media spectacle than it already is. This is going to be a much more private event. You are all invited, of course, and close friends and family members will be invited as well, but I refuse to host an event. This is a time to grieve, not celebrate.”

Delilah pursed her lips slightly. “Very well Percival. They were your family, we’ll respect your wishes.”

“Thank you Delilah.” Percy nodded. “Now, shall we proceed?”

***

Percy felt exhausted as he got into the company car that would take him back to his hotel. He had had a night of no sleep and a long day organizing the company with the rest of the board, and he just wanted to get back to his room, talk with Vex for a bit, and then collapse into his bed.

He pulled out his keycard to get into his room before he noticed a few scratches on the lock that hadn’t been there before. He froze, immediately suspicious, and started very quietly backing away from the door.
“Don’t worry Percy, it’s just me.” A very familiar voice spoke from the other side of the door, and Percy’s heart leapt from his chest into his throat.

“Vex? How did you-?” he asked, moving to try and get the door open quickly.

“Vax and I were thieves, remember?” Vex chuckled. “I know how to pick a lock.”

Percy opened the door, and his mind immediately short circuited as he was greeted by a very present, very naked Vex.

Vex laughed softly, leaning against the wall with a cheeky smile on her face. “Surprise.” She smiled at him. Percy couldn’t help but look, his eyes trailing over her breasts down her torso, over the soulmark that was so familiar, and then back up to her face.

“I…Vex, as pleasant as this is to see, I’m utterly exhausted. Not that I don’t want to see you, and not that I don’t absolutely want you like this, um, tonight might not be the night for that.” Percy tried so hard to get his exhausted, shocked mind to cooperate with his mouth.

Vex chuckled softly. “I’ll get some clothes on then.”

“That would be nice.” Percy replied. “…but first.” He stopped her, and pulled her in to press his lips against hers.

Vex eagerly kissed back, and Percy melted against her. Her lips were soft against his, and she tasted of peppermint. He felt warm and content, and his mind just got even fuzzier.

Vex pulled away after a few moments, a satisfied smile on her face. “That was worth the entire drive here.”

Percy smiled back at her. “Let me get out of this damned suit and then I’m going to crash. You’re welcome to join me.”

Vex smiled. “Let me get some clothes on, and I’ll happily do so.”

Percy smiled and went to get undressed, pulling on a shirt and boxers before crawling under the covers with Vex. She had put on a tank top and some shorts, and Percy happily pulled her into his arms. It took a moment of shifting and rearranging limbs, but eventually they settled into a position that was comfortable for both of them.

Percy had his face pressed into Vex’s hair for a moment before he relaxed against the pillows, sleep claiming him quickly with the comfort of his soulmate in his arms.
Chapter Summary

He could hear the gentle murmurs of water from the bathroom, and he figured that Vex was taking a bath. He went to get changed, deciding to wait until she got out to do anything, give her privacy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Percy woke the next morning feeling relaxed, for once, and he was one hundred percent positive that the reason was still laying in his arms, snoring softly against the pillow.

Percy remained still, just watching Vex sleep. Her face was relaxed as she breathed, body warm against his chest.

His hand slowly lowered down to her waist, putting his hand over the soulmark there. He could see her golden moon as well, and was so grateful that it turned out so differently.

He lay there, appreciating her, until she shifted and groaned into the pillow.

“Mmmph.”

“Good morning.” Percy murmured, pressing his lips to her temple.

“Mornings can fuck right off.” Vex grumbled, and Percy laughed softly, pressing kisses down her cheek. He really should be getting out of bed and dressed, but right now, he didn’t care. The damn board could wait for now.

Vex’s lips curled into a lazy smile at the attention.

“How long can you stay?” Percy asked softly.

“I have to leave tomorrow, damn finals.” Vex murmured. “But I can come back in a few days.”

“Good.” Percy murmured softly. “…the funeral is going to be next Saturday. I want you to come, if that’s all right…”

“Yeah, of course.” Vex murmured softly. “I’ll be there.”

“Thank you.” Percy murmured. “If you could drive Cassandra here when you come up for it, I would greatly appreciate it.”

“Of course.” Vex murmured, gently pulling Percy’s face over to press their lips together. Percy closed his eyes, relaxing into the kiss. It felt so right, and it was everything he had imagined it would be. He remembered being a small child, wondering if he would know his soulmate at first sight. He hadn’t known, but he had felt a strong connection to Vex from the beginning.

And now, he knew.
He smiled as the kiss broke. “I have to get ready and go deal with some more meetings and legal bullshit. I’ll give you my keycard so you can come and go as you please in the room, all right?”

“All right.” Vex murmured, giving him another soft kiss. “I’ll be here when you get back.”

Percy smiled softly, and leaned in to whisper in her ear. “…and maybe tonight, if you greet me like you did last night, I might do something about that.” He murmured, smiling as Vex shivered.

“I’m holding you to that.” Vex replied, and Percy laughed before he got out of bed and went to put on one of his suits.

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Percy noticed that the door had been left propped open when he returned, since he had left his keycard for Vex’s use. He gently opened it and let himself in before closing it behind him.

He could hear the gentle murmurs of water from the bathroom, and he figured that Vex was taking a bath. He went to get changed, deciding to wait until she got out to do anything, give her privacy.

It took maybe two minutes from him walking in the door for Vex to call out. “I’m waiting for you, darling. This bath is big enough for both of us.”

Percy’s cheeks turned a bright pink, but he made his way into the bathroom anyways, only wearing his underwear.

Vex was lounging in the bath, bubbles covering the surface of the water. Her hair was loose around her shoulders, and she gave him a soft smile, eyes looking up and down Percy’s body. He should feel self conscious. He wasn’t overweight by any means, but he wasn’t exactly in shape either. But the way Vex looked at him made him feel like he was perfect. At least, for her.

“The water’s gonna get cold if you sit there waiting.” Vex chuckled, and Percy blushed a little. He moved to quickly remove his boxers and get into the water, slipping down on the opposite side of Vex. Their legs pressed together, and Percy felt himself twitch a little bit.

Vex shifted, sitting up, and Percy let himself look as her breasts emerged from the water. She was so beautiful, and he was glad he was able to appreciate her a little bit more than the previous night.

“Come here.” She murmured, and they rearranged themselves so that Percy had his back against Vex’s chest, feeling the gentle push of her breasts against his back as she started to massage his shoulders.

And there went Percy’s brain once more as her gentle fingers started kneading his sore, tense muscles, his head tipping forwards in relief as she worked.

He felt her lips press a kiss against the back of his neck. “Just relax. I’ve got you.” She murmured, and Percy was never quite so thankful for another person in his life.

Vex continued to massage his shoulders and down his back, thumbs gently kneading out the knots there. Percy couldn’t help the long, soft moans that escaped his lips when she got rid of some truly deep, tense ones.

Once she finished, he was pliant in her arms, letting his head rest on her shoulder as he took deep breaths. Vex held him close for a few minutes, the two of them just relaxing, before her hand started gently moving down his chest and stomach.

Percy just let her explore, feeling the blood starting to rush south the lower her hand got. As she
wrapped her fingers gently around his cock, he let out a low, soft moan.

He could feel Vex’s smile against his forehead as she started to gently stroke, thumb gently swiping over the sensitive head. Percy’s eyes fluttered closed and he gasped softly. This was ten times better than his own hand ever felt.

Vex pressed her lips to his forehead. “Just relax. Let me take care of you.” She whispered, her grip growing tighter and pace increasing.

Percy’s head was spinning, and with everything going on, he couldn’t bring himself to keep up any semblance of a façade. His walls were down completely, but of all the people in the world, he trusted Vex.

Moans and gasps dripped freely from his lips, and he rocked his hips in time with her strokes. One of his hands came up to gently grasp a handful of her hair, not pulling, but keeping himself grounded, as the other hand found her thigh and squeezed.

Vex’s fingers found and started to gently play with one of his nipples as she stroked him. “Holy shit, Percy…” she whispered, voice husky, and Percy felt himself throb eagerly at the tone in her voice.

“…as lovely as this is, I’d like to continue in the bed.” Percy managed to force out, head spinning in a familiar, but not unpleasant way.

Vex smiled. “I was hoping you’d say that.” She murmured, kissing him fully on the lips before letting him go. They both got out of the tub, drying off quickly with some of the very fluffy towels before Vex took Percy’s hand in hers, leading him to the bed.

Percy followed, feeling both eager and nervous. He had never done anything like this before. As Vex gently guided him onto the bed, he put his hands on her waist, looking up at her. “Vex, I’ve never…”

Vex gave him a reassuring smile, gently stroking his cheek with one of her hands. “It’s all right.” She murmured. “We don’t have to do more than what you want.”

Percy took her hand in one of his, kissing her palm sweetly. “Thank you.” He murmured.

Vex smiled softly. “Trust me, the last thing I want is to scare you off of sex.” She murmured back.

Percy chuckled softly, and let his hand gently squeeze hers. “…show me.” He murmured. “Show me how to pleasure you.”

Vex gave him a wide smile. “If you insist.” She murmured, taking his hand and guiding it to her breast.

Percy cupped it gently, giving it a soft squeeze. It was warm in his hand, and he was reminded of how she had pressed his hand against her chest to calm him. He moved his hand to her heart, spreading his fingers and feeling the soft rhythm of her heartbeat against his palm.

Vex smiled softly. “It’s yours.” She murmured, before leaning down to kiss him.

Percy kissed back, lips nipping and sucking gently on hers as he held her close. As they kissed, Vex started to roll her hips. He could feel her damp warmth against his erection, and it just caused him to moan and shudder slightly, feeling himself throb against her.

“I…I don’t have any condoms here.” Percy murmured in warning. As much as he would love to
have children with Vex, have a family, this was not the time for that.

“I’m on birth control, don’t worry.” Vex murmured back. “You can come inside of me, if you want.”

Just the thought of that made Percy moan, and Vex laughed softly. “Sounds like that’s the plan, then.” She smiled.

“I want to please you first.” Percy murmured. “I know enough about this for that.”

“You’ve done your research, haven’t you?” Vex smiled softly. “Do you know what I mean if I ask to ride your tongue, then?”

“I think I’ve got that figured out.” Percy replied, and Vex laughed before she started scooting her way up the bed. Percy moved his hands to her hips once more, resting his head against the pillow as Vex moved to get into position above him.

She had trimmed a little heart into her pubic hair, and Percy couldn’t help but chuckle. “You were expecting this, weren’t you?”

“Well, you did say you were going to follow through on my invitation.” Vex smiled back. “Ready?”

“Yes.” Percy murmured, and as Vex lowered her hips, he raised his head, tongue darting out to take his first taste of her.

Percy groaned softly. She tasted wonderful, and he continued to gently run his tongue over her, lapping up her wetness. Vex moaned and gently rocked her hips. “Stay at my clit, that’s the best…” she panted.

Percy concentrated his efforts there, licking and sucking at the little ball of nerves. The way Vex moaned and shook as he lavished attention on her made him smile against her, his erection twitching in interest. He redoubled his efforts, trying to coax her into an orgasm.

Vex’s hips started picking up the pace, rocking against him, but Percy continued and rocked his head in time with her, keeping his lips firmly attached to her clit. Vex moaned loudly, and Percy was quite grateful that they were in a hotel room instead of the apartment they shared with their friends.

It didn’t take long for Vex to come with a low moan, her entire body shaking as she held onto the headboard. Percy just continued sucking gently on her clit, helping her ride out the entirety of her orgasm.

Vex pulled away after a little bit, giving Percy a breathless smile. “Never done that before, huh?” she whispered teasingly.

Percy chuckled softly. “No, but I have done some research.” He replied, gently running his hands over her hips and thighs as she sat against his chest. He gently started tracing the swirls of smoke in her soulmark. They were familiar patterns; he had traced his own many times before.

Vex smiled softly. “Well, I liked that research.” She murmured. After a few moments, she started scooting herself lower again until she was sitting against his pelvis. Percy shuddered as he felt her warmth once more, and Vex chuckled.

“Shall we?” she asked softly, raising her hips and reaching down to get Percy ready for her.

Percy kept his hands on her, and took a deep breath before nodding.
Vex pressed him against her opening and started lowering herself down, and Percy let out a choked moan. It was warm and wet and felt so delicious as he entered her. Percy almost felt like he was seeing stars, and he glanced around the room, looking for the telltale smoke that would mean this was a delusion.

But it wasn’t. Vex was on top of him, moaning softly as she took him in completely. And Percy’s heart filled with love.

He took Vex’s hand and pressed it against his own. “It’s yours as well.” He murmured, and Vex gave him a beautiful smile as she felt his heartbeat.

After a few moments, Vex started to move, and Percy gasped, his back arching underneath her. He wasn’t going to last long at all, not when she kept rolling her hips and squeezing around him.

Percy gasped and moaned, and Vex gave him a wild smile as she moved. Percy wanted to close his eyes and ride out the sensations, but he also didn’t want to lose out on Vex’s face as she gasped and moaned above him.

In the end, his eyes closed as he moaned and pushed up roughly into Vex, the pleasure overwhelming him as he came. Vex continued to ride him until he was finished, slumping forwards and panting with a soft smile on her face.

Percy looked at her through half opened eyes, a lazy smile on his own face. “That was incredible.” He murmured.

“T’m glad you enjoyed.” Vex smiled, carefully pulling off of him before curling up at his side. Percy put an arm around her and cuddled her close.

Vex gently traced the soulmark on Percy’s side with gentle fingers. “Feel any better?” she asked softly.

“Incredibly so. I am… such a lucky man.” Percy murmured, and Vex chuckled.

“Yeah, you are.” She replied cheekily, and Percy just laughed, enjoying the afterglow of the sex with her.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the delay, it’s been a couple of very long days! If you’re wondering where the chapters are, I usually post reasons on my tumblr (cinderpaw1).

Also this chapter was entirely derailed by a certain scene in Ep 81. You know which one.
The Funeral

Chapter Summary

Even with Percy’s stipulation that only close friends be invited, the funeral was still a large event. Seven people lost was a lot of people, and all had friends that were in attendance. Percy put on his public face as he greeted the guests and made sure everyone was finding their way to the church, where the service would be held. He had never been more grateful for Vex standing at his side, a quiet reminder that not everything was lost.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Too soon, Vex had to head back to Emon, and Percy was alone once more. Despite everything, he felt light. He had found his soulmate, and it had been the woman he had hoped it would be.

They made sure to facetime every single night once Percy got out of the meetings, either with the board or with the lawyers he was working with to make sure everything would go well with his adoption of Cassandra and the workings of their inheritance.

Before he wanted it to be, it was Saturday and it was the day of the mass funeral. The bodies of his family had been cremated, and the urns had arrived that Friday. It hurt Percy to look at them too long, especially the urns of his younger siblings.

He was getting ready, dressing in the nicest suit he owned and trying to tame his hair in the bathroom when he heard a knock. He went to glance through the peephole before opening the door.

Cassandra was there, along with Vex. Behind them stood the rest of his friends, all of them in their best attire, all in black. Even Scanlan, who loved his bright colors, was in a black suit.

Percy’s eyes widened. “You…you didn’t all have to come.” He whispered.

“Of course we did.” Pike replied, moving to give Percy a hug. “You’re our family, we wanted to be there to support you.”

Percy hugged her back, looking up at Vex. She gave him a soft smile. “It was Grog’s idea, honestly.” She replied.

Grog nodded. “Yeah. You’re family, and family looks out for family.”

Percy swallowed hard, and looked at all of them. “…thank you.” He murmured, moving to embrace every single one of them.

As they went to get into the van they had rented for the trip, Vex moved to take Percy’s hand in hers, squeezing gently. Percy squeezed back, giving her a thankful smile.

Even with Percy’s stipulation that only close friends be invited, the funeral was still a large event. Seven people lost was a lot of people, and all had friends that were in attendance. Percy put on his public face as he greeted the guests and made sure everyone was finding their way to the church,
where the service would be held. He had never been more grateful for Vex standing at his side, a quiet reminder that not everything was lost.

Cassandra stood at his other side, giving demure smiles to those who shook her hand and expressed their sorrow for the loss of their family. Percy knew this wasn’t fair to her, but he swore she was holding herself together much better than he was.

The service was long, and Percy could barely think through it. He could see the gentle swirls of smoke out of the corners of his vision despite the medication he had taken, and he knew it hadn’t been enough. Not while he was feeling so much pain. The voice, at least, was quiet for the moment.

Percy held Vex’s hand, letting her presence at his side ground him. She leaned into his side, putting her head against his shoulder, and he let himself rest his cheek against her head. He felt a gentle pat on his shoulder, and turned to see Keyleth giving him a supportive smile.

Percy felt like if he wasn’t so numb, he would start to cry. But now wasn’t the time for that.

Once the ceremony ended and the urns placed into their spots in the mausoleum, everyone started making their way to the banquet hall the board had rented out for the reception. Percy just wanted to go home. He wanted to go home to their apartment and spend time with Vex, smoking on the balcony. Tending the herbs with Keyleth, playing video games with Scanlan and board games with Vax. He just wanted to go home.

But he knew he couldn’t. As the head of the company and one of the few surviving members of the de Rolo family, he couldn’t.

As everyone settled down to murmur between themselves, food set out for people to help themselves to, Sylas came over to Percy’s side, holding a glass of wine. He offered it to the younger man. “Here, you should make a toast.”

Percy took the glass and took a deep breath, nodding. “Of course.” He murmured. He found a fork before clinking it against the side of the glass, getting everyone’s attention.

“Hello. I want to thank everybody for attending this evening.” Percy murmured, once the room had fallen quiet. “I know this is a hard and sudden loss for all of us. We lost parents, sisters, brothers, friends. Nothing will take away from the pain. But I thank each and every one of you for coming to support Cassandra and myself, and grieve the loss of some truly loved people. To Fredrick, Johanna, Julius, Vesper, Oliver, Whitney, and Ludwig Von Musel Klissowski de Rolo.” He raised the glass of wine, and as it was echoed, he drank it.

He knew he really shouldn’t have alcohol, but a little bit was fine. He indulged in wine fairly regularly, and usually a glass wouldn’t do him any harm. Besides, Vex was there, and Vex could keep him calm and grounded if the delusions got bad.

He continued to mingle, not feeling up to eating food, when he heard a dark chuckle.

Percy froze, feeling uneasy. He hadn’t had that much to drink, he really hadn’t.

You don’t need alcohol to know. Foolish, trusting boy… the voice cackled, and Percy whipped his head around towards it, seeing billowing smoke starting to appear.

He could barely hear Vex’s concerned “Percy?” before the smoke whipped towards him, entangling his arms and legs. One of the tendrils wound around his throat, and he couldn’t breathe. He couldn’t breathe.
Percy let out a choked gasp, hands suddenly able to move to his throat as he stumbled to his knees.

The breath wouldn’t come, the tendril squeezed tighter and tighter. He heard concerned cries, and a loud scream.

Through the smoke that was filling more and more of his vision, he could see the twins. He saw Vex and Vax, their faces so identical, kneeling in front of him. Vex was trying to say something and Vax was shouting at someone else, but Percy couldn’t hear. All he heard was the dark cackle of the voice in his head.

*Such a pity. You just found her, too…*

He saw, but didn’t hear, as Vex screamed while he collapsed onto his side, the smoke covering his vision before darkness enveloped him.

He still couldn’t breathe.

He couldn’t breathe.

He couldn’t-

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**Chapter End Notes**

You guys should know me by now, I just brought you smut. Of course things go to shit immediately afterwards <3

ALSO HOLY SHIT LOOK AT THIS ART [It's by Ellie-bean on tumblr](https://ellie-bean.tumblr.com) and it's the first piece of fanart ever drawn for me that wasn't done by the coauthor of the fic. So, so much love <3
Chapter Summary

“You have so much more to do.” Another voice spoke into Percy’s ear, and he shuddered as he turned. This time, he met the face of a woman with long black hair, and a white porcelain mask, expressionless. Percy jumped and tried to push away, but he couldn’t.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Darkness. He knew this waited for him. What else would be? Darkness had followed him for much of his life, so it would follow in death.

He felt like he was drifting along in a cloud of nothingness. He felt weightless, yet the darkness pressed in on him from every corner.

At least it was quiet here.

The voice wasn’t tormenting him anymore.

He floated, and everything was quiet.

Numbness.

He liked this.

He continued to drift.

There was something shimmering in the corner of his vision. He shrunk away, reminded of the smoke that curled, that haunted him.

He saw her.

Anna.

He had loved her, or so he thought.

She had just been using him.

And when he saw through everything, she had broken him.

The scars still haunted him.

Percy flinched away from the sight of her face, lips curled into a cunning smile.

“You think you won, Percival.”

“I’ll take her from you.”
“You were supposed to be mine.”

Percy covered his ears, but it did no good. No matter how far he tried to float, he could still hear her.

“It’s your fault.”

“You fault.”

Percy curled into himself, and he saw another glimmer.

This one was light, though. Light in the darkness.

A flash of red hair. A single blue feather.

A glowing angel.

She looked...like Pike, but not. Her hair was curled into a tight bun, pure white, like his. She was wearing a beautiful set of armor, silver, and covered in beautiful rubies. She had a scar across her left eye, and her smile was kind as she held out a hand to him. Her lips didn’t move, but he heard a voice.

“Go back to them.” The angel spoke, and it had to be an angel. “This is not your time.”

“You have so much more to do.” Another voice spoke into Percy’s ear, and he shuddered as he turned. This time, he met the face of a woman with long black hair, and a white porcelain mask, expressionless. Percy jumped and tried to push away, but he couldn’t.

“Who are you?” he asked, voice raw, like he hadn’t spoken in years.

The woman chuckled softly, her large hands cupping Percy into them. “You’ve made your mistakes, Percival.” She spoke, though like the first, her lips didn’t move. “And you walk a thin line. You could become great, or you could become the thing you fear you’ll become. The choice is yours. But this is not your time.” A finger brushed up the side of Percy’s torso, and he felt a burning pain. He opened his mouth to scream, and he heard an echoing scream from far away. This one jolted him, and he looked away from the woman.

That was Vex’s voice.

The woman gently cupped Percy’s side, and the pain lessened. Percy looked down, and the blue feather had changed. It was black now.

A raven’s feather.

“Fret not.” The woman murmured. “Dear Vex’Ahlia is still yours. But destiny can change, if you make certain choices. Choose wisely, Percival. Your legacy is yet to be decided.”

The angel who looked like Pike, but wasn’t, came to his side, gently grasping his shoulders and pulling him away from the porcelain woman.

As she did, he could hear beeping.

The beeping grew louder and louder.

Without warning, Percy’s eyes opened and he drew in a breath of cold air through a tube that had been shoved down his throat.
The light was absolutely blinding and his body felt weak, but he noticed the blur of activity in the room as he shut his eyes again.

He felt gentle hands pushing him back down to the bed. “Watch it, de Rolo, you’ve been out for a while.” Vax murmured softly.

“Vex…” Percy tried to ask, but he couldn’t around the tube.

“She’ll be back, she went to the bathroom.” Vax murmured, and Percy was so grateful he understood. “Just lay down, the nurse is on her way, you have to stay calm, got it Whitey?”

“How long?” Percy tried to ask, only to be shushed once more by another voice. Keyleth’s.

“Don’t try to talk yet, though it’s good that you are.” She murmured, and he felt her gentle hand running through his hair. “I know it’s scary, but you have to listen.”

Percy tried to keep him calm, the fact that he was breathing normally feeling so amazing. His body felt so sore, though, and it felt like he had had a weight on his chest that had left a massive bruise.

Nurses came in, and Percy just wanted to close his eyes and slip back into darkness. He gently had the tube removed, and it left his throat raw. They kept asking questions that Percy didn’t want to answer, but he did anyways since he knew he needed to.

The moment Vex walked into the room, Percy reached a hand out to her, ignoring the shaking. Vex rushed to his side, and Percy finally got a good look at her.

She looked like absolute shit, like she hadn’t slept in days. She had deep bags under her eyes and her hair was limp and greasy, clearly haven’t had taken a shower.

“…your soulmark.” Percy croaked. He needed to see it, to see if it had changed like it had in his vision.

Vex didn’t hesitate before pulling her shirt up, and Percy felt relief course through him at the familiar sight of the blue feather. “Is mine…?”

“It’s the same as always, I promise.” Vex murmured, squeezing his hand. “It’s all right. You’re going to be all right.”

The nurses talked quietly to each other, and it wasn’t much later that Percy felt himself getting drowsy.

Vex gently pet his hair. “I’ll be right here. I promise.”

Percy drifted back to sleep, and luckily, he didn’t dream of the strange women.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't miss writing for two whole days no of course not. Let me throw the fourth chapter of the day at you all instead of questioning how addicted I am to these characters.
Aftermath

Chapter Summary

As the flurry of the shift change came through, Percy shifted his shirt off enough to take a look at his soulmark.

Percy spent the majority of the next day or so drifting in and out of sleep. Whenever he woke up, he had someone next to him. Vex was almost always there, and the rest of them rotated out. Vax and Keyleth, Grog and Pike, Scanlan and Cassandra, all of them taking turns to sit by his bedside.

When he was able to stay awake for longer than a few minutes at a time, he started to ask questions.

“What happened?” he asked Vex, watching their intertwined hands as she gently rubbed her thumb over the back of his hand.

“…the doctors said it was cardiac arrest.” Vex murmured. “But Vax knows poisons. He’s obsessed with them. He recognized the symptoms, though I don’t remember the name of the poison.”

“Succinylcholine.” Vax replied from his seat in the corner. “It paralyzes the respiratory muscles. They actually use it here, to give breathing tubes to patients. In large quantities, though, it can cause the victim to suffocate and their heart to stop. Because you stopped breathing before you started grabbing for your chest, that was what I assumed. I told the detectives as such, they made sure to get the glass you had drunk from.”

Percy nodded. “…Sylas Briarwood gave me the glass.” He murmured. “And him and his wife stand to gain the most if Cassandra and I were killed. I wouldn’t doubt if they were behind the murder of my family either.”

Vex frowned deeply. “We need to let the police know right away.” She murmured.

Percy nodded in agreement. “Yes… we should.” He murmured. “But I don’t want it right now. I need to know more. How long was I out?”

Vex glanced up at her twin before replying. “Five days.” She replied softly. “They induced you into a coma because when you came to after recovering from the poison, you were screaming. You wouldn’t stop screaming, and you were causing damage. So they put you under until they thought you were stable enough to bring you back.”


Vex and Vax shared another look.

“…you technically did.” Vex whispered, and Percy’s heart broke at the pain in her voice. “For two minutes, you were dead. All of us were here, and Pike prayed and Keyleth and I…said some things, and suddenly your heart was beating again.” She swallowed hard. “Never, never do that again. Please.”

Percy brought her hand to his lips, kissing her fingers gently. “I promise.” He whispered softly.
As the flurry of the shift change came through, Percy shifted his shirt off enough to take a look at his soulmark.

It was different, and he felt his heart ache slightly.

The blue feather was still there, but tendrils of black had started to leech the color from it.

He didn’t know what this meant, but it terrified him.

***

He was released from the hospital a day later, after he was questioned by the police. Luckily, since it was Winter Break, all of his little found family was free and available to be there.

The rest of the board, Percy had learned, had tried to visit, but Grog had kept them away from his room. The large man was quite intimidating, and had insisted that Percy be allowed the time to rest and recover. Percy was grateful for that, but as they left, he saw that Kerrion Stonefell was waiting outside.

Percy sighed heavily, looking at the man. “Yes?”

“Percival, it’s so good to see you’ve recovered.” Stonefell nodded, gesturing towards the open car door next to him. “The rest of the board is waiting—“

“No.” Percy replied firmly. “No, I’ve just gotten out of the hospital. I am taking time to recover at home, with my family.” He replied sharply. “The board can wait. Enjoy your holidays, we will resume business as normal after the New Year.”

Stonefell’s eyes darted about at the group of people surrounding Percy, eyes narrowing as he looked at Grog. “…very well then.”

“Thank you.” Percy replied, venom in his voice as he followed the twins to the van.

Vex settled next to him as they all piled into the van, Cassandra on his other side. “We’re all willing to stay and keep an eye, if you want us to.” Vex told him.

“I want to go home.” Percy replied. “Let’s go to the hotel so I can get my things and check out. After that, I want to go back to Emon. Back home.”

Vex gave him a gentle smile and squeezed his hand. “Let’s go home.”
Spiral

Chapter Summary

It was hard, now that he had an inkling who was responsible for his family’s murder. He shut himself away, trying to pore into documents and find out what he could on the Briarwoods, and the other members of the board. He didn’t trust them, not any of them.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Percy had never been so thankful to walk into the apartment. It felt like home. The scent of fresh herbs from the balcony, and the cluttered but tidy decor in the living room. He smiled happily as he went in.

“You can stay in my room with me, since yours is occupied.” Vex murmured, and Percy nodded. “Thank you.” He replied softly, going with Vex into her room.

He had never really been in it before. She had cleaned it thoroughly, and it was mostly decorated with dark wooden furniture and blue and gold walls. She had framed pictures hanging next to her desk. A few of her and Vax as kids, and then as teens. One of them showed the twins with a little girl who looked at lot like them between, all three of them grinning widely with Mickey Mouse hats on. There was also a very old photo of a woman standing on a porch, hand underneath a very swollen belly. She wore her hair in a braid, and Percy could tell that this woman was Vex’s mother.

He went to lay down in Vex’s bed, groaning softly at the memory foam mattress he sunk into. “This is amazing…” he mumbled.

Vex smiled and sat next to him, gently running her fingers through his hair. “Get some rest.” She murmured softly.

Percy hummed softly, closing his eyes and letting himself rest.

***

As the days passed, Percy recovered more and more from the poisoning. Despite that, however, he called his lawyers every single day, skyping into meetings when he could. He couldn’t keep postponing those meetings even despite everything, especially now. Especially since he was in the process of hiring someone to investigate the Briarwoods.

It was hard, now that he had an inkling who was responsible for his family’s murder. He shut himself away, trying to pore into documents and find out what he could on the Briarwoods, and the other members of the board. He didn’t trust them, not any of them.

He barely emerged to spend time with the others, and even then, it felt like he was putting on a charade, a forced smile. The smoke never went away anymore, always lurking on the corners of his vision. The damned voice, too, talked more often than it should. But he didn’t push it away as much anymore. It pointed out things that had escaped his notice, had been helpful in his search.

So he set his medication away for the moment. No one else had to know. Vex would help if things
got too bad.

Vex.

Percy felt distraught. Every day he checked his mark, and every day it grew a little darker, a little less blue. It hurt to see. He had taken so much solace in that familiar shade, and now it was fading, leaving him on an even more unsteady perch than he had been on before.

Was he truly only meant for Vex for a short while, then? Was there another person who matched this darker soulmark?

What had that vision meant?

He refused to be shirtless around Vex, making up as many excuses as he could. He couldn’t let her see what was happening.

Percy poured himself into the research the day the feather turned completely black, the voice whispering in his ear that maybe it meant it was time to move on, to seek vengeance himself rather than wait for the legal system to do it’s job.

He opened his phone and typed in

“Soulmark changing colors”

The search results were varied, but Percy dug through them anyways. Most of them were bullshit; Buzzfeed articles and how to destroy soulmarks for those who found themselves destined for someone who was unhealthy or evil for them.

It took a while before he stumbled upon a webpage known as “Followers of the Raven Queen,” and their description of their deity matched the description of the woman in his vision. Percy read on, needing to know what had happened.

“Sometimes, when the Raven Queen thinks that someone is less tied to destiny than others, she’ll approach them in a vision. Their soulmarks will start to change color, though their soulmate’s will not. Beings touched by the Raven Queen are considered highly praised by her, for she allows them choice.”

Percy re-read the paragraph more times than he could count before leaning back with a long sigh, rubbing at his face.

He didn’t want this. He had been perfectly content being normal, having his soulmate destined to him, now that he knew who it was. He didn’t want any other choice. He just wanted everything to go back to normal.

“You can make a new normal. You can make them pay for your family, and keep Vex by your side.”

Percy nodded to himself.

The voice was right.

His choice could be to not make a choice at all.

He closed the tab as a gentle knock came onto the door, looking up as Vex poked her head in.

“I’m craving a smoke, come join me?” she asked, giving him a small smile.
Percy nodded, setting his phone to the side.

As much as everything was swirling around in his head, and as much as the smoke never left his vision anymore, he couldn’t deny that he craved the balcony time he shared with Vex more than anything.

Even if his soulmark was changing, he still cared deeply for her, and didn’t want to let her go.

Chapter End Notes

DON'T BE A PERCY. If you take medication for mental illness, PLEASE never stop taking it cold like Percy's doing. It could end disastrously.
Percy was slightly surprised when Grog piled presents into his lap, and it mirrored the size of everyone else’s. He had, of course, gotten presents for everyone, but he didn’t think that they would have gotten him presents. He had barely been home, and even when he had gotten back, he had shut himself away.

Percy woke up on Christmas morning to Vex kissing the back of his neck. He let out a soft hum, putting his hands over hers and squeezing softly. He kept his eyes closed; as much as he had been embracing the smoke and the voice in his head, today was one of the few days he didn’t want to deal with it. Today was Christmas. He just wanted to spend it with his family.

“Good morning sleepyhead.” Vex murmured against his shoulder, and Percy smiled.

“Merry Christmas.” He murmured back, curled against her. “…can you get my meds for me today? Everything is particularly bad, and I’m not sure why.” He lied. He knew exactly why, and it was because he hadn’t been taking his meds. But he wanted the calm today.

“Of course.” Vex murmured, pressing one last kiss to the back of his neck before getting up. Percy lay there, ignoring the voice.

“What are you doing?”

Percy just kept his eyes closed and swallowed the pills when Vex brought them over. “Thank you.” He murmured, leaning up for a gentle kiss.

“You’re very welcome.” Vex smiled affectionately at him, and it made Percy’s heart ache. He reached up to pull her down into another kiss, holding her close with a hand in her hair.

He had to tell her. He had to tell her just in case they were ripped apart again.

“Vex…” he whispered against her lips. “I love you, darling.”

Vex pressed against him even harder, and she moved to sit in his lap. Percy wrapped an arm around her waist, holding her close as they kissed.

When they broke for air, Vex pressed her forehead against his. “I love you too, darling.” She whispered, and Percy smiled, rubbing their noses together affectionately.

They enjoyed a quiet moment together, Percy’s heart both filled with affection and aching with the knowledge that he might have to leave her, before they went out to join everyone else around the Christmas tree set up in the corner.

Underneath were wrapped presents for everyone, and Grog was wearing a massive white beard. Everyone laughed as he pulled it on, Vex and Vax both grabbing pictures on their phones.
Percy was slightly surprised when Grog piled presents into his lap, and it mirrored the size of everyone else’s. He had, of course, gotten presents for everyone, but he didn’t think that they would have gotten him presents. He had barely been home, and even when he had gotten back, he had shut himself away.

Cassandra smiled at him, her own pile of presents from everyone next to her. “Open Vex’s first.” She urged him, and Percy dug through until he found a long, thin package with Vex’s name signed onto it. He opened it, curious as to what she had gotten him.

He gasped as he lifted out the replica gun. It looked like an old fashioned sniper rifle, beautifully made, and had “Bad News” carved into the side of the barrel. “Vex…”

“Shh, I saw you eyeing it in the gift shop when we went to the museum.” Vex replied, a wide smile on her face as she leaned over and pressed a kiss to his cheek. Percy gave her an affectionate smile, examining the finish. It was beautiful.

Everyone else started digging into their own presents, and Percy was pleasantly surprised at his gifts. He received a raven skull necklace from Keyleth, a new, amazing lighter from Vax that looked like a human skull, a leather wallet from Grog, a beautiful tie from Pike, a gift card to Home Depot from Cassandra, to encourage his tinkering, and a long purple scarf from Scanlan that Percy happily slung around his shoulders.

Trinket was loving the wrapping paper, rolling around in it. Vex laughed, scratching him behind the ears before she went to open her next present, this one from Percy.

Percy bit his lip as she unwrapped it, hoping she would like it.

Vex gasped as she pulled out a necklace. It was a dark blue sapphire hanging from a silver chain, and the note inside read “You deserve a necklace that makes you feel like nobility. Love, Percy.”

Vex moved to wrap her arms tightly around Percy, and he hugged her back, a soft smile on his face.

“Percy, you really didn’t have to.” She whispered, and Percy just pressed a light kiss to her temple.

“I love you, and you deserve everything.” He whispered, and smiled as she gave him the necklace and turned. He gently put it on her, fixing the clasp and smiling at the blue jewel shimmering at her throat. “Beautiful.” He murmured, kissing the top of her head.

Pike smiled. “All right, let’s make breakfast!” she smiled, wearing a top hat that Grog had gotten her. She got up and went to the kitchen, and the rest of them followed, ready to help with breakfast.

***

Percy couldn’t remember the last time he had enjoyed a Christmas like this. It was bittersweet; it was so soon after his family’s death, and he missed them tremendously, but this Christmas was so much more familial than anything the de Rolos did. He was used to formal dress and large parties, not pajamas and laughter and eggnog as everyone contributed to the meals.

It helped that the medication was working, and for the first time in a while, Percy’s head was clear.

He stayed close to Vex for the majority of the day, taking happiness and comfort from her presence. They were all on their massive couch in their usual cuddle puddle, Percy’s head in Vex’s lap as she played with his hair, watching Christmas movies when a sharp knock came from the door.

Everyone gave each other looks. No one was expecting anyone else for their little celebration.
Keyleth and Vax both shifted a little to cover any view of Percy and Cassandra from the door, just in case, while Grog went to answer the door.

“Yes?” He asked, standing tall and imposing.

Percy’s heart went cold as he recognized the voice.

“Hello, I’m a representative from the Whitestone Marble board. I’m here to speak with Percival de Rolo.”

Vex kept her eyes trained on the door, not looking towards Percy, but she did squeeze his hand in reassurance as he felt the cold pit in his stomach grow.

He never wanted to hear that voice again in his life.

“Who?” Grog asked, and Percy just slunk lower as his friends casually shielded him from sight at his response to the voice.

“Don’t act stupid, Gregory Strongjaw.” The woman replied coolly. “I know the names of everyone in this apartment, and I am well aware that both Percival and Cassandra de Rolo live here. Now, allow me to speak with him, in private please.”

Percy just trembled slightly, and despite the medication, he heard the low cackle in the back of his mind.

He had never wanted to face Anna Ripley again, but here she was.
Anna’s eyes grew cold. “Well, apparently you’re doing fine, then. We expect you back by the second of January. Enjoy your Christmas,”

Percy took a deep breath, mouthing at Cassandra to stay down before he stood, ignoring the looks his friends gave him. “I’m right here, Anna. Don’t you have a family to spend Christmas with? Oh, wait…” he trailed off, voice laced with venom as he stared at the woman in front of him.

She sneered at him. “Hilarious, Percival. Now if you could stop being such a child, Sylas and Delilah sent me to check up on you.”

“I’m fine, and would be much better if my abusive ex wasn’t standing at my door.” Percy replied coolly, staying behind the couch. Grog was keeping her at the door, and Percy swore the air from everyone else was tense enough that he could taste it in the air. He knew he shouldn’t be egging her on like this, but he was tired. He was so tired, and he had finally taken a day to let himself relax, only to have it thrown in his face.

Anna just lifted her chin. “Considering I’ve just been hired on as a member of the board, you might do well to bite your tongue and let the past stay in the past.” She replied.

“You’re not a member, I have to have the final say on that matter.” Percy shot back.

“You would, if Sylas, Delilah, Kerrion, and Tylieri hadn’t unanimously voted to temporarily relieve you of duty due to your… medical conditions.” She nodded. “A heart attack so young. Such a pity.”

Percy felt a surge of anger, trying to keep himself together. “Like you would care. Have that tattoo covered, yet?” he spat.

Anna’s eyes grew cold. “Well, apparently you’re doing fine, then. We expect you back by the second of January. Enjoy your Christmas,” She spun on her heel and walked away, Grog following her to make sure she left.

Percy was trembling, still standing in the center of his friends. His fists were clenched tightly, and he didn’t miss the shock on everyone’s faces, except Cassandra’s.

“…Percy. What can we do for you?” Keyleth asked softly.

“…I need a cigarette.” He replied, glancing at Vex in invitation before heading to the balcony.

He heard the door slide closed behind him and felt Vex at his side as he shakily pulled out a cigarette from his jacket pocket, lighting it with the new lighter Vax had just given him. He took a deep inhale before letting it out, handing the pack over to Vex.

Vex pulled out one of the cigarettes before handing the pack back to Percy. “…wanna talk?” she asked him softly.

Percy sighed. “I am exactly two cigarettes short of being in any kind of mood to talk.” He admitted.
Vex nodded. “All right.” She murmured, and Percy’s heart ached again. She never pushed him to talk when he didn’t want to, and that was exactly why he could talk to her.

He was so in love with her for it.

They smoked in silence for a while, Percy letting his trembling hands calm a little before he sighed. “…Anna Ripley. That’s her name.” he started, and felt Vex lean slightly into him. He let their shoulders press together, taking comfort from Vex at his side. “She’s the reason I hear that damned voice…”

Vex frowned, but stayed quiet, just letting Percy talk at his own pace.

Percy sighed softly, lighting another cigarette. He knew it was so, so unhealthy, but he couldn’t care less right now. “…I was sixteen, and met her at a dinner party. We bonded over our mutual love of building things, and I won’t lie, I was attracted to her. As the months passed, we grew closer and closer, and I didn’t realize then what was happening, but she was manipulating me. Making me feel bad for talking to anyone that wasn’t her, alienating the very few friends I had growing up. She threw a wrench into my relationship with Oliver for a long time.” He sighed.

“About six months after we met, we were talking on the phone one night like always, when she asked me what my soulmark looked like. I texted her a picture, hoping that she was my match, and she sent one back with her torso, and the soulmark on it.”

He saw Vex’s nose wrinkle in disgust, and her hand move to settle on his waist, fingers spreading over the soulmark on his side. Percy did his best to hide his flinch; he didn’t want to make Vex suspicious of the fact that he hadn’t shown her the changed soulmark in the fear that she would leave.

“She had photoshopped it, of course.” Percy murmured. “And I wasn’t going to be able to see her in person for a while, so I believed it. I was over the moon, I had found my soulmate, or so I had thought. When we did see each other, she showed me her side, and our mark was on her side. Tattooed now, I know, but then I didn’t.”

He sighed heavily. “I was so stupid. Later, Cassandra overheard her talking to someone when she was spending the night at the estate. She told them that the plans to wed into the family were moving accordingly, and that I hadn’t a clue that the soulmark was fake. Cassandra told me immediately, and when I confronted her…” Percy let his head drop to his hands with a deep sigh.

“…needless to say, I’m not proud of what happened.” He murmured. “…I let her beat the shit out of me. I couldn’t bring myself to fight back, she had me so wrapped up in her lies.” Percy was doing his best to keep his voice from trembling. “She taunted me as she did it, telling me that I was nothing, so gullible, so desperate for love that I would believe anyone that told me they cared, no matter what. And she wasn’t wrong. I had been told for years never to show my soulmark to someone before I saw theirs. And I paid the price.” Percy whispered.

“She ended it by burning me with a poker. That’s what the scar on my hip is. It’s why I see smoke when I hallucinate, because I had to see the smoke rising from my own body as she told me I was worth nothing. Her voice, the words she told me, echo in my brain. That night changed me fundamentally as a person, broke me.” Percy felt so full of rage, hands starting to shake again. “…it’s part of the reason that I never showed you my soulmark until I was absolutely sure that I could trust you with it, and I was almost positive that you were my match. Because of her.”

Vex’s frown was deep, and she moved to pull him into her arms. Percy had to lean down to fit, but he let himself press his head into her shoulder, hunching down into her.
“…I just want it to stop.” He admitted softly. “I just want to come home and be with you all, and not have to worry about all of this. I want to wipe the board clean and start with new faces, because I don’t trust any of these people. They want Cassandra and I just as dead as the rest of the family, they put my abusive ex who was just trying to marry me for the fortune on the board, and I just want it to end…”

He felt Vex gently rubbing his back, holding him close. “There’s not that much we can do when it comes to your family’s business.” She murmured. “But know that all of us have your back. We’ll be at your side through all of this, and I’ll be at your side for as long as you’ll have me.” She whispered.

“…what if I never want you to leave?” Percy asked softly.

He could feel Vex’s smile against his temple. “Then I’ll stay right here.” She murmured. “And be by your side through it all.”

Percy wrapped his arms around her and just held her tightly.

*I’ve made my choice, Raven Queen. I’m going to keep her, regardless of what you have planned. he thought to himself.*
Crossroads

Chapter Summary

The hotel room felt empty, and Percy felt empty. His entire being felt numb as he set his suitcase down onto the plush bed.

He needed a cigarette.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m coming with you.” Vex told Percy firmly as he packed. “I’m not letting you go back to that damned board alone. They’ve already tried to kill you once, in front of everyone. What’s to say they won’t succeed when they have you alone?”

“And what’s to say they won’t try to use you to get to me?” Percy replied back, voice short. This had been a sore subject between them. “I wouldn’t put it past Anna to try and get to me through you, and you know what? It would work. It would work because I love you, and I don’t want you getting hurt.”

“I don’t want you getting hurt either!” Vex fired back. “You died last time! You think that didn’t hurt me? You think I was okay with that?”

“Vex, you have class and I have to keep you safe, keep all of you safe!” Percy yelled back. His anger was growing, the dark voice laughing from the back of his mind and encouraging it. “Honestly, I don’t give a shit what happens to me, so long as you’re all safe.”

“That’s bullshit, Percival.” Vex shouted back, and Percy could hear the soft, concerned murmurs of their friends from the living room. He couldn’t care less right now.

“What’s not bullshit is the fact that these are very dangerous people, and the more they find out about you all, the more in danger you are! They killed my family, you think they would hesitate to kill you all to get to me? I don’t!” Percy hated this, he hated that he was getting so angry at Vex, but he couldn’t let her anywhere near Anna.

“And they won’t hesitate to kill you either!” Vex was just as heated, he knew, and this was exactly why he had been dancing around the subject for the past week.

He knew what he had to do, and it tore at his heart. He knew that his happiness wouldn’t be allowed to continue. But he had to do it. He had to hurt her to make her stay. He had to break her heart.

It would break him too, but so long as she was alive and safe, it didn’t matter.

Percy swallowed, before turning with shaking hands and lifting his shirt, showing her the soulmark. The soulmark that had changed, without hers matching.

Vex’s eyes grew wide and scared, and Percy’s heart just continued to break. He just forced through it, forcing his voice to remain steady despite how much this was killing him.
“We’re not meant for each other, okay?” he lied. “It was close, but not enough, apparently. You’re better off finding your actual soulmate.”

“…how long?” Vex asked, voice low and hurt. Percy loathed this, loathed hurting her like this, but it had to be done.

“Weeks.” Percy replied. “Apparently, fate decided we’re taking different paths.”

Vex was silent for a long moment, just staring at the black feather, before she swallowed hard and looked at Percy.

Percy lowered his shirt and turned to finish packing. “It’s best we end this. Before we hurt ourselves too much.” He told her lowly.

She didn’t reply, but the sound of the door slamming closed behind him just made his heart shatter.

Percy grabbed tightly to the shirt he had been folding, letting a single tear stream down his cheek.

***

The hotel room felt empty, and Percy felt empty. His entire being felt numb as he set his suitcase down onto the plush bed.

He needed a cigarette.

He stepped out on the balcony, but the first taste of nicotine brought bile to the back of his throat. This was too intimate, he had started and shared this with Vex, and without her, it felt wrong. His body craved it, but his mind was pushing it away.

He extinguished the cigarette before tossing it away.

What was a little bit more suffering for an already broken man?

Percy’s phone went off with a text, and he checked it. It was a message from Delilah.

“We’re having a formal dinner this evening to celebrate your return. Seven p.m. at the Yamihada Steakhouse.”

Percy sighed heavily. He really didn’t want to do this, he didn’t want to be fully on guard when he was so raw and numb already, but he knew he had to attend.

“I’ll be there.” He replied, sighing deeply.

When six rolled around, Percy got dressed in his suit, making sure he had his own flasks on him. He wouldn’t drink or eat anything that he took his eyes away from, just in case.

When he arrived at the steakhouse, he was one of the last. They were just waiting on Anna to arrive.

Percy took his seat as far away from the Briarwoods as he could. Delilah gave him a smile, but it felt cold and cunning. “We’re so happy to have you back, Percival.” She murmured. She was dressed in a deep red dress, a necklace of rubies glittering around her throat.

Percy gave her a curt nod. “Thank you.” He murmured, glancing over as he saw Anna coming over. She was dressed in a deep blue dress that was open on the sides, and Percy felt his blood run cold.

The swirls of smoke were still there against her side, the feather at the top.
She had gotten the feather filled in.

Instead of the bright blue it had been, the feather on her side was black.

Chapter End Notes

I promise you guys, this will have a happy ending and there are reasons for this!

*meanwhile, sips from mug of reader's tears*
Brokering A Deal

Chapter Summary

“I just want to talk.” Anna replied, holding her hands up in a gesture of surrender.

“Give me one good reason for me to listen to anything you have to say.” Percy spat back.

Dinner was spent with Percy tense and on guard, staying silent mostly as he listened to the rest of the board chat amongst themselves. He kept a careful eye on his food and drink, making sure that nothing was slipped into it. He doubted, now that they knew he suspected, that they would try to poison him like this again, but better safe than sorry.

Especially now that he didn’t have the twins by his side to help him.

As they went to leave, Percy stood first, trying to get out of the restaurant. As he waited out front for his car, he saw Anna approach him. He frowned heavily. “What do you want?” he asked coolly.

“I just want to talk.” Anna replied, holding her hands up in a gesture of surrender.

“Give me one good reason for me to listen to anything you have to say.” Percy spat back. He was done, he had had a long, stressful day, and the smoke was everywhere. It didn’t help that the reason behind it all was right there in front of him.

“Because I can help you. I know what the Briarwoods did and I have no care for their…particular tastes in ambition.” Anna told him, walking closer. Percy kept his eyes firmly on her face and off of her fake soulmark.

Or was it fake anymore, he wondered?

Was he really so twisted and broken that he had actually been taken away from the light, and given to the creature who had broken him in the first place?

Percy just watched her carefully. “You have no taste in their ambition, but your own included tattooing a fake soulmark to try and marry into my family for money, then torturing me after I found out the truth.” He replied flatly.

“I was younger and stupider, Percival.” Anna replied. “I’ve learned many lessons since then, as have you. I’ve also hated myself for hurting you so badly. Even despite everything, I did care for you.”

Percy barked out a humorless laugh. “Cared for me? I call bullshit.”

“Regardless what you believe of my intentions, that’s in the past now.” Anna replied, leaning against the wall next to Percy. “Let me help you. You can’t do this by yourself, they’ll all rip your head off before you can blink twice. They trust me, and I can keep you alive, at least until you can prove their guilt in your family’s murder.”

“And you’re just doing this out of the kindness of your heart?” Percy arched an eyebrow at her.
Anna laughed. “I thought you knew me better than that.”

“I do. What is it you want, Anna?” he asked.

“I just want a handsome reward for my help, that’s all.” She replied. “And let’s face it, is money really worth more than your life? Than the life of your sister, of your friends? Of that lovely little woman who stayed by your side while you were in the hospital? Because you know if I don’t help you, they’ll all be killed.”

Percy was quiet for a long moment. “We’ll negotiate a contract. You will not be allowed the entirety of the fortune or any future part of the business after this is done.” He told her firmly.

“I expected nothing less. You do have a sister to care for, after all. Cassandra’s grown so much since I saw her last.” Anna murmured, and Percy just glared at her.

Anna’s lips lifted into a slight smile. “What, am I not allowed to be a human? Regardless of what happened, I did care for your family, you know. I was going to be a part of it, I made the effort to know your siblings.”

“A decent human being doesn’t fake a soulmark and then beat the shit out of someone for finding out the truth.” Percy replied flatly. “I already agreed to negotiate a contract for your help. Aren’t you satisfied with that?”

“Oh, I truly am.” Anna replied. “Enjoy your night, Percival. I’ll be in touch. Say hello to Vex’Ahlia when you speak with her tonight.” She winked at him, and as she walked by, her hand brushed his side, over his soulmark. Percy jumped like he had been electrified from her touch, and she chuckled before walking away.

Percy stared after her for a moment before getting into the company car that had been waiting for him to finish his conversation.

He knew he was treading dangerous ground here, knew that Anna knew how to manipulate him.

He wouldn’t let it happen again, he promised himself. He knew better this time.

When he got back to the room, he picked up his phone out of habit as he went to the balcony, finger hovering over Vex’s contact to call before he let it fall away.

The damage had been done. He couldn’t take it back.

He stared at her name for a long time before sliding the phone back into his pocket and heading back inside, the unlit cigarette back in the carton.

Hopefully one day, he would be able to explain himself to her.

Hopefully one day, his feather would turn blue once more rather than the black it had become.

As he slid into bed, feeling too big for just one person, he thought long and hard about the strange woman who had done this.

Maybe if he could see her again, he could get her to change this.

***

Percy woke the next morning, his sleep having been wrought with nightmares, but no glimpse of the porcelain masked woman.
He sat up, rubbing his forehead in his hands and just *missing* Vex.

He went to the bathroom, staring at his shirtless form in the mirror, staring at the mark on his side.

Still black. Not a trace of blue.

Percy sighed heavily, checking his phone as he brushed his teeth. He saw a text from Keyleth.

“Hey Percy, I don’t know what happened between you and Vex, but know that we still love and miss you. Let us know if you need us and we’ll all be there.”

Percy’s heart ached softly, and he texted back a reply.

“I had to keep her safe. I hope you understand that. I’ll be back when I can.”

He pressed send, and then turned the phone on silent, not wanting to see the reply just now. He had to keep his head about him. Today would be almost more dangerous than the day before.

He would just have to see if Anna could keep her word.
Chapter Summary

Percy nodded. “Thank you.” He murmured, and before he could say more, he felt the ghost of Anna’s lips against his as she kissed him.

As the days passed, Percy grew more and more stressed. He felt so cornered and alone, and the constant whisper of that damned voice didn’t help anything. Especially when he was spending a lot of time with Anna.

He kept reminding himself that she had no good intentions, but even then, it was scarily easy to smile with her, like he used to. It didn’t help that the feather was still black, matching hers, and Percy couldn’t help but wonder if he should embrace it. He had broken things off with Vex, hadn’t spoken with her since that day, and if he were in her shoes, he would never speak to him again. What he had done was unforgivable in his eyes.

He still loved her though. Every morning and night, he checked his soulmark, hoping for a change. Hoping that maybe things would be different. They weren’t. The more he dealt with this, the more stress he was caused, the feathers remained black.

Anna came to his room one night to sit and plan. They discussed different ways to prove the Briarwoods guilty; documentation of their payment of the person who had burned the house down, autopsy reports from the bodies showing that they were killed before they had been burned, and how they would arrange this with one of Percy’s lawyers. How they would confront the rest of the board at a party that weekend.

At the end of the session, Anna smiled softly. “We’ve made good progress, Percival.” She nodded. “I’ll see you at the meeting tomorrow.”

Percy nodded. “Thank you.” He murmured, and before he could say more, he felt the ghost of Anna’s lips against his as she kissed him.

He stumbled back, wide-eyed, and Anna smiled. “I had missed that. Good night.” She murmured before letting herself out.

Percy just stared after her, heart boiling in his chest.

He was so fucked. He didn’t want this. He didn’t want this at all.

He was shaking, feeling violated, and went to call Keyleth.

He needed to talk to someone, and though he wished it would be Vex, he knew better than to try and call her.

Keyleth picked up after the first ring. “Percy.” She sounded so relieved that Percy immediately felt even more horrendous for not keeping in better contact with his friends. With his family.

“Hello.” He murmured.
“Are you okay? You don’t sound okay.” Keyleth’s voice immediately turned worried.

“…I’m not.” Percy admitted, before he began to tell Keyleth everything. Everything just poured out of him, desperate to get something off of the heavy burden on his shoulders. His relationship with Anna, past and present, the vision he had had and the changing soulmark, how he had broken Vex in order to keep her away from Whitestone, away from the people he knew would try to manipulate her to get to him. He poured his heart out to Keyleth in a way he hadn’t even to Vex.

Keyleth listened to him, letting him just ramble, and Percy was so grateful for her. Once he finished, she took a deep breath and let it out.

“I’m going to come. No ifs, ands, or buts. You need someone with you, and as much as I knew you want it to be Vex, she’s hurting too right now. But I’m coming, okay?”

“…okay.” Percy whispered softly, feeling too raw to argue. Keyleth was fine, she was calm and levelheaded when he wasn’t, and she wasn’t in the middle of this situation the way that Vex was.

“I’ll be there in the morning.” She murmured. “Just get yourself through the night, and I’ll be there.”

“I’ll do my be-“ Percy started to say, until he felt something hit the back of his head and darkness overwhelmed his vision.

***

Vex was laying on the couch, wrapped up in blankets while Vax ran gentle fingers through her hair, redoing her braid over and over. It was a comforting motion, one that their mother had used to do for her, back when she was alive.

Everything hurt. Everything hurt so badly, and she didn’t know what to think or what to do. It had been a couple of weeks at this point, but she was still just as numb as she had been that night.

She had thought that things had been going so well between them. She had no idea that Percy had thought so little of her, that his soulmark had been so close, but not a match.

She didn’t know what had happened to throw that wrench between them. That had caused Percy’s soulmark to change, but not hers.

Maybe he had been right. Maybe they were destined for others.

Either way, her heart was broken, and she just wanted to drink the sorrows away. She reached over for her glass, filled with wine courtesy of Grog, and took a long, deep drink.

Vax gently continued to play with her hair as Keyleth rushed in from the balcony, looking distressed.

“We have to get to Whitestone, now. Something’s happened to Percy, we were talking on the phone and he was cut out and I heard the phone collapse. I think he’s been kidnapped, we need to get there now.”

“What can we do?” Vax asked, as Vex sat up, feeling a spike of distress through her chest. As much as he had hurt her, she still loved him, and didn’t want this to have happened. “We’re just college kids all mushed into an apartment together.”

“You and Vex have skills, and when have the police in Whitestone ever helped?” Keyleth replied. “From what Percy told me before we hung up, it sounds like most of them have been paid off by the Briarwoods. We’re the only ones who know what happened to Percy, and we’re the only ones who
can help him.”

Vax looked over at Vex. “…this is your call.” He told her. “If you want to go, I’ll break out the old equipment and we’ll go.”

Vex took a deep breath.

She had to help. She couldn’t just leave Percy to this fate, regardless of what he had done, what had changed between them.

“Let’s go.” She nodded, and everyone moved into action, packing what they would need with Vex and Vax’s advice for people who wanted to remain unobtrusive and not get caught when breaking into places.

Vex felt a twinge deep within her stomach, something that she wasn’t sure belonged to her or to Percy. She wasn’t sure which of their emotions was coming through, or if both of them were feeling the same thing.

*Hang on, Percy. We’re coming.* she thought as she pulled out the skintight black outfit she had never thought she would wear again.
True Colors

Chapter Summary

“Why didn’t you tell me, Percival?” Anna crooned softly into his ear, and Percy felt a dangerous shiver course through him. “That your soulmark changed colors. Changed to match my tattoo, perchance.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Percy came to with his head throbbing, and he was honestly surprised that he came to at all. He expected that he would have been killed before he had been allowed to wake up.

He shook his head a little, regretting it immediately when his head pounded and he felt like he was going to throw up. He was concussed, no question about that, but he had no idea where he was.

Percy kept his eyes closed, trying to get a grip on himself, when he realized that he was tied to a chair and shirtless.

Then he heard a familiar clack of heeled boots.

Anna was quite fond of her boots.

“Why didn’t you tell me, Percival?” Anna crooned softly into his ear, and Percy felt a dangerous shiver course through him. “That your soulmark changed colors. Changed to match my tattoo, perchance.”

“You bugged my phone.” Percy murmured, realizing that he had unwittingly given Anna everything she needed to turn his entire world upside down for what felt like the fourth time in just as many months.

“You are quite clever.” Anna chuckled softly. “Figured it out a bit too late, though. Either way, this is hilarious, isn’t it? That your soulmark changed to match mine. Maybe we were destined for each other after all.”

“Fuck off.” Percy spat, and Anna just chuckled.

“We’ll see how you cooperate after a little time like this.” She murmured. “Besides, Sylas and Delilah will be here soon. I told them I could get you under my thumb, and here you are. Trussed up like a pig for slaughter.” She laughed. “Your poor Vex’ahlia. I guess she’ll be alone for the rest of her life, then. Because I stole you from her.”

“Never.” Percy snarled, ignoring the throbbing of his head to turn and look at her, the malice filling his entire face.

Anna laughed, taking Percy’s chin in her hand and kissing him. Percy attempted to bite at her lip, but she pulled away before he could. “I beg to differ.” She murmured, before letting him go. “I’ll see you soon, my raven.” She cooed, the old pet name when they had been together.
Percy just let out a snarl at her, and Anna laughed before leaving the room.

Percy stayed on guard, trying to figure out how to get out of his bindings, but he couldn’t. He was in no position to be able to wiggle out of them, the knots too tight. All he could do was sit there and think.

And when you had a voice in your head, that was one of the worst things you could do.

*She’s right, you know. You did leave Vex alone.*

*You were never meant for her, but she was meant for you.*

*You’re going to die here, and leave Cassandra alone.*

*You’ve lost.*

The voice continued to whisper into Percy’s ear, and Percy took deep breaths, trying to push it away. It didn’t work, every time he tried the voice just laughed and continued crooning insults and damaging remarks into his ear.

This was utter hell, and Percy thought he had been here before.

He heard the door slide open gently, and he braced himself. Anna had returned, or perhaps one of the Briarwoods had come to finish him. And once he was gone, he knew they would go after Cassandra.

As he steeled himself, he heard a familiar whisper in the back of his mind. This one…didn’t belong to the normal voice.

This was the voice of the woman in the porcelain mask.

"*Make your choice. *” she whispered.

“Vex. I choose Vex.” Percy whispered without hesitation, and Percy felt a light breeze caress his face. He took in a deep breath and let it out, looking towards the door.

He didn’t notice in that moment, a small streak of blue returned to the feather on his side.

Chapter End Notes

Short chapter I know but my brain was bugging me all day to get this out, it was even bothering me during tonight’s episode! But I hope you enjoy the slight ray of sunshine <3
Chapter Summary

They stayed completely still until they heard a crashing sound and Anna shouting “He fucking got out! Find him!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He saw a lithe figure, dressed head to toe in black. They were male, the chest broader than most, and the black fabric clung to an angular jaw, as it was covering the entirety of their face. They were wearing a head to toe catsuit, their brown eyes the only thing exposed.

Percy clenched his jaw before raising it high, keeping his eye on the figure. “Do wh-“

The figure put a finger to his lips, telling Percy to shush, and Percy just arched an eyebrow. “Why should I list-“

“Quiet, de Rolo.” A familiar voice replied, coming from the figure.

Vax.

Percy let out a breath of relief, staying quiet as Vax examined the room. He went to the two corners, taking something out of the pouches he had on his waist and doing something to the cameras. Percy couldn’t quite see what he was doing, since Anna or whoever had abducted him had removed his glasses.

Once Vax had finished scouring the room, he went to the center to start cutting away at Percy’s bonds. “We’re gonna get you out of here.” Vax murmured. “Vex is disabling the rest of the security cameras to make sure we can get you out.”

Percy’s heart ached. “Vex came?” he couldn’t help but ask softly.

Vax nodded. “It was her call to come.” He told him frankly, cutting through the last of the rope holding Percy to the chair. Percy tried to stand, but his head swam, and Vax offered him a shoulder to lean against.

“Thank you.” Percy whispered softly.

“Don’t thank me yet, we still need to get you out of this house.” Vax murmured. “Just be grateful that Vex and I both kept and still fit into our suits from our darker days.”

“Believe me, I’m just happy to see a friendly face right now.” Percy winced as they started heading to the door.

“I bet.” Vax murmured, glancing out the door and looking both ways. “All right, cmon.” He murmured, starting to help Percy down the hallway.

They got about halfway down before Percy heard the familiar clacking of Anna’s boots. “She’s
coming.” Percy hissed to Vax, and Vax pulled Percy into a nearby room, shutting the door quickly but quietly behind them.

They heard her walk by the door, both men holding their breaths while Vax looked around the room, checking for cameras.

They stayed completely still until they heard a crashing sound and Anna shouting “He fucking got out! Find him!”

“Shit.” Vax whispered, holding a hand up to his ear. “Jenga. We got down the hallway and have been pinned in a room, and the bitch just found out that de Rolo’s gone.”

He couldn’t hear any response, but Vax replied a moment later to something. “Got you.” He confirmed, before looking at Percy. “You might want to cover your ears.”

Just as Percy did so, an echoing explosion rocked the entire house, throwing Percy onto his ass. It took all of his willpower to stay awake and not to vomit everywhere as they heard that familiar pair of boots rushing back down the hall.

Once she was gone, Vax replied “Thank you, we’re taking the alternate route out of here. Get out Stubby, she’s heading your way.” Before hauling Percy back to his feet. “Cmon, we only have a few minutes at most to get the fuck out.”

Percy leaned into Vax as the two of them moved as quickly as they could through the winding halls. Vax murmured confirmations into his earpiece along the way, and Percy just followed.

As they stumbled out onto the green yard, one that Percy knew belonged to the Briarwoods, he heard a gunshot before he felt a piercing pain through the back of his calf. He stumbled, taking Vax down with him as he hit the ground, ears ringing and blood pounding in his head from the blinding pain.

“Thought you could get away so easily?” Anna’s voice replied coolly, walking up behind them. She had a small pistol in her hand, the front of it smoking slightly.

Vax turned and threw something he had grabbed from one of his pouches, the small knife slicing across Anna’s cheek as she whipped her head back to avoid it. She hissed with pain, pointing the gun towards Vax, and Percy saw red.

He couldn’t do anything as a solid blur of motion knocked Anna off of her feet, the gunshot echoing once more. Percy panicked, checking Vax and grateful to see that he hadn’t been harmed.

Another black figure stood above Anna, dressed identically to Vax. This one was female, though, and Percy knew the brown eyes peeking from the face cover.

This was Vex.

“Try to shoot my brother again you fucking bitch.” Vex hissed at her, pulling a knife from her waistband and flipping it in her hand, smacking Anna in the temple with the hilt of it. Anna’s body went limp as she fell unconscious, and Vex turned to her brother and Percy. ‘Let’s go, Grog’s waiting with the van to get the fuck out of dodge.”

Vax nodded, and both twins helped Percy to his feet. Percy’s head was spinning even more than before, having to lean heavily on the twins to walk.

They took him to a large white van and helped him into the back. Pike was waiting with a first aid kit, and once the twins were safe, Grog peeled out and started hauling ass away from the manor.
Once they were far enough away, the twins removed their headcovers, both of their hair having been braided to keep it contained underneath. Percy could barely pay attention to Pike as she tried to check up on him and take care of him, grateful for her pre-med track.

Basic first aid wasn’t quite enough, though, and despite Pike’s desperate words for him to stay awake, Percy finally let himself slip into the silent bliss of unconsciousness.

Chapter End Notes

By the way this is absolutely the catsuit that Vax (and technically Vex) is wearing.

Also sorry about the repost, damn formatting issues
Forgiveness

Chapter Summary

“Oh thank God.” He heard Pike’s relieved voice at his side. “We were so scared you wouldn’t wake up.”

The darkness again. Percy wasn’t sure if he should embrace or run from this anymore. Either way, it was currently peaceful. Quite a break from what he had been going through, so he just embraced it for now, floating along.

He continued to float for...he didn’t know how long. Time didn’t seem to exist- everything was an eternity, yet only a few seconds long. He smacked into a solid surface, but it didn’t hurt. Instead, it seemed to embrace him, almost like...fingers. Fingers curling around his body, and Percy turned his head.

She was there. The woman with the porcelain mask. The Raven Queen. Her face remained unchanging, painted lips still in their resting form, but Percy swore he could hear a smile in her voice as she spoke.

“You’re on the path you desire.” She murmured. “Just remember to forgive.”

A gentle hand passed over his side once more, and Percy’s scream echoed through the darkness at the blinding pain on his side. He looked down as the pain faded, and his heart skipped a beat in his chest at the sight.

The feather was blue once more, restored to what it had been.

“Forget to forgive and you fail yourself.” The voice whispered softly, and the mask faded from view, darkness overtaking him once more.

Percy woke, his head still throbbing from the painful blow he had taken earlier. He was in an unfamiliar room, and his heart started to pound as he sat up quickly, groaning at the pain as his head protested.

“Oh thank God.” He heard Pike’s relieved voice at his side. “We were so scared you wouldn’t wake up.”

“What am I?” Percy asked quietly, eyes closed as his head spun. Not unlike it would when the delusions got too bad, which thankfully, they were quiet for the moment. The smoke still lingered, but the voice was quiet.

“We got a hotel room, we’re in a town a few hours away from both Emon and Whitestone.” Pike replied. “We didn’t want to risk taking you to a hospital just in case, but I was coming close to it.”

“How long have I been out?” Percy asked.

“Twelve hours. I woke you up every four or so to make sure you weren’t slipping into a coma, but you passed out again within seconds.” Pike replied, and Percy’s eyes widened.
“What?”

She nodded. “Take it easy, your leg’s pretty rough. I cleaned it up and managed to give you a few stitches, the bullet only grazed the outside of it thankfully, so it’ll heal fine, but I’m more concerned about your head.”

Percy let Pike take a good look at his eyes and ask him a few questions to make sure he had his memories and was still making them. When she finished, Percy asked. “…where are the others?”

“Vex and Vax went back to get your things from the hotel room.” Pike replied. “They… I had no clue they used to be thieves.”

“Vex told me, but the skills they had…” Percy murmured softly. “Something tells me they’re very used to breaking into high security areas.”

Pike nodded in agreement. “Yeah… I wonder what happened to make them turn to that.”

Percy shrugged. “That’s their business, if I’m honest. But I’m also thankful for it. Thankful for you all.”

Pike gave him a soft smile. “You’re our brother, Percy.” She told him, giving him a gentle hug. “It’s not been the same without you around, and we weren’t about to leave you to die.”

Percy gently hugged her back, inhaling the sweet vanilla scent that always seemed to emanate from Pike. “…thank you.” He murmured.

“Anytime.” Pike replied. “Now you need to rest. Grog, Vex and Vax should be home soon. Keyleth and Scanlan stayed home to keep an eye on Cassandra, make sure that they didn’t come for her too.”

Percy felt relieved to hear that Cassandra was all right, and the news helped him lay down and continue to let his stressed body rest.

When Pike wasn’t looking, he checked his soulmark.

There was a silver of blue breaking through the black, and Percy’s heart leapt into his throat, before it sunk to the bottom of his stomach.

Yes, he had chosen Vex.

But would Vex take him back after what he had done?

***

Percy was still passed out when Vex and Vax made their way into the room, carrying Percy’s suitcase and still wearing their black catsuits, though they had both removed the head covers.

“I call dibs on the shower.” Vax told Vex, immediately heading for it as he started to peel off his suit.

“Fine.” Vex rolled her eyes, leaving her catsuit on until she could get to the shower. While it was wonderful for silent movement and kept her body heat hidden from security cameras, it collected sweat like nothing else did. If she removed it right now, it would just make everything stink of sweat.

She went over to Pike’s side as she sat next to Percy, laying out on one of the twin beds. “How is he?” she asked softly.

“Better. He woke up a little while ago and I checked him over.” Pike replied. “He’s recovering from
the concussion, he seems a lot better than when I checked him in the car.”

Vex nodded. “That’s good.” She murmured softly, watching him. She hadn’t missed, as she had packed his original hotel room with her brother, that he had kept a photo of the two of them on his desk there. It was a dumb selfie she had taken while they were out smoking cigarettes together one day. She had a wide, goofy smile on her face, and Percy’s lips had been curled into a slightly amused smirk, a soft cloud of cigarette smoke curling up by his cheek. She had posted it on Facebook when she decided to announce that she had found her match, and she was sure that’s where he had gotten it from.

She had missed him, and from the looks of it, he had missed her too.

Pike looked up at her. “Are you okay?” she asked Vex softly.

“What do you mean? I’m fine.” Vex replied. “I didn’t get hurt whatsoever in either trip.”

“That’s not what I meant.” Pike gave her a keen look. “I know he hurt you. How are you doing?”

Vex’s small smile fell a little, and she sighed heavily. “…I don’t know.” She admitted. “I talked to Keyleth a little before we left, and…I just need to think on some things first.”

Pike nodded. “Just take it slow.” She murmured. “And if you need more time, just make sure you tell Percy. I’m sure he’ll respect it.”

“Yeah. I’m sure he will too.” Vex murmured softly.
Vex let out a long sigh. “I understand your reasoning.” She replied. “But that still doesn’t make what you did right.”

“I know.” Percy murmured softly.

Vex was quiet for a long moment. “It’s hard for me to trust you right now. I hope you understand that.” She murmured.

Percy woke a little while later, stirring softly and opening his eyes. Everything was blurry, and he was once again reminded that his glasses were most likely gone. He groaned softly, rubbing at his eyes. He didn’t know how he was going to deal, he was basically blind without them or his contacts.

“Your glasses are on the nightstand.” He heard a gentle murmur, and his heart stopped as he recognized Vex’s voice.

Percy took a deep breath, reaching for the nightstand and finding the familiar frames. “…thank you.” He murmured, putting them on. Much better. Once he could see, he looked over to the side of the bed. Vex had taken up Pike’s spot in the seat next to his bed. She was freshly showered and wearing some casual clothing instead of the skintight suit he had seen her in last. Her hair was tumbling around her shoulders rather than in its usual braid, and Percy’s heart ached at the fact that she had a single blue feather tucked into her hair.

Percy took a deep breath. “…Vex, I can’t thank you enough.” He murmured. “You didn’t have to.” “I shouldn’t have had to.” Vex replied softly. “I had every right to just leave it when I heard about it. You hurt me, Percy. You hurt me a lot.” “I know.” Percy murmured. “And I can’t tell you how much I hated myself for doing it. I needed to keep you safe, away from all of this.”

“And what did that accomplish?” Vex asked. “You ended up nearly killed again. Kidnapped, and the only reason we even knew was because you happened to be talking to Keyleth when it happened. If you hadn’t been—” Vex’s voice cracked, and she paused, swallowed, unable to look Percy in the eyes. “If Vax and I hadn’t known what we known, there was no way you were getting out. That was one of the most complex security systems I’ve ever broken into, and I’ve broken into a lot of rich houses.”

Percy just kept his eyes on her. “I’m sorry, Vex.” He whispered. “I’m so, so sorry.”

Vex was quiet for a long moment, and then she sighed. “Is it true? What you told Keyleth?” she asked softly.

“…yes.” Percy murmured. “Everything I told Keyleth was true. I felt… I was raw, after…” Percy sighed. Better to get this in the open now, before it ate away at him. “After Anna kissed me that night. She kissed me, and I felt violated. And I needed someone to talk to, and I wanted it to be you, but I didn’t think I could deal with the phone going unanswered right then. So I called Keyleth, and I
told her everything. Including how I hid the vision and the changing soulmark from you until I hurt you to keep you safe.”

Vex let out a long sigh. “I understand your reasoning.” She replied. “But that still doesn’t make what you did right.”

“I know.” Percy murmured softly.

Vex was quiet for a long moment. “It’s hard for me to trust you right now. I hope you understand that.” She murmured.

Percy nodded. “I understand that.” He replied softly. “I hurt you deeply, and that might never go away. I wouldn’t blame you if you never forgave me for that.”

Vex was quiet again, and Percy just lay there, letting her take her time. He knew that pushing her right now would just push her away.

“I want you to understand that if you ever lie to me like that again, I won’t be able to forgive you.” She finally said, after a long few minutes of just silence. “We’re supposed to be a pair. Regardless of the changing soulmark, you’re still my soulmate. We’re supposed to support and be there for each other. Breaking my heart and leaving me alone to deal with this… it’s not okay. And if you do this to me again, I won’t forgive you. Do you understand me, Percival?”

“Crystal clear.” Percy murmured. “Vex… I am truly sorry. I truly thought I was doing the right thing, keeping you away from the madness. It was consuming me and I wanted to protect you from it.” This was it, this was the time to lay everything bare, so Percy continued. “…I even stopped taking my medication.” He admitted. “And I didn’t want you near that, or near the people who would use you to get to me. But I was wrong. I missed you every single day, and I regretted every single word I told you that day.”

Percy took a deep breath, and moved to pull his shirt up, showing her the soulmark. “I had another vision, while I was unconscious. From her again. And when I looked, the feather started turning blue again. It only started turning back after I realized just how much I regretted pushing you and the rest of our friends away. While I was consumed with hatred and thoughts of revenge… that’s when it turned black. That’s when I learned that if I continued down that path, I was more meant for Anna than I was for you. But I didn’t want that. I wanted you, and I hope that you’ll forgive me. I won’t blame you if you don’t though, I hurt you and all I can say is that I’m sorry. I promise I’ll never do it again, and I promise that I won’t try to make your decisions for you.” Percy lowered his shirt again. “…if it makes it better, I’ll kneel in front of you and beg for forgiveness, and that still wouldn’t be enough.”

For the first time since he woke up, a small smile cracked Vex’s face. “No need for that. You need to rest for now. We’re not back to how we were before, that’s going to take time. But that’s the first step.” She leaned over, pressing a gentle kiss to Percy’s forehead. He closed his eyes, feeling his furrowed brow relax slightly under her lips.

“Just relax. I’m not going anywhere right now.” She murmured.

Percy’s chest felt so much lighter, and he offered her his open palm. She took his hand in hers, squeezing gently, and Percy curled his fingers over her more slender digits.

He laid back to go to sleep again after a meal that Pike had brought back with her for the four of them, Vex’s hand in his own as she took the seat next to his bed once more.
“Thank you.” he thought softly, before sleep took him.
Hope

Chapter Summary

He made his way to the little out of the way house that was also in Gilmore’s name that he and Cassandra were currently using as a hideout, seeing the unfamiliar blue car parked in front of it. A woman with blonde hair was currently sitting on the front porch, and Percy was happy that Cassandra hadn’t let her in.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It took a few days before Percy felt well enough that he could start tackling everything again. After a long, hard talk with the twins, they decided that even though it would strengthen his case, Percy wouldn’t tell his lawyers about the kidnapping. That would just put a spotlight onto the twins that neither of them wanted, and Percy didn’t want to be responsible for them having to serve jail time for something they didn’t do anymore.

Of course, it would make it a little more difficult to solidify his case, but he was doing his best to push it as quickly as possible. He needed the Briarwoods out of power, but he also needed to keep off the grid for now.

If he thought he had been paranoid before, that was nothing compared to what he was now. The list of people he trusted had dwindled down to a mere handful of people- his friends, who had risked everything to save him and keep him and his sister safe, and his sister. He kept a careful eye on every single person around them, not sure if they were friend or foe.

He leant towards foe, just in case.

Even now that he was taking his medication on a regular basis again, since he wanted to keep the still unsteady footing he was on with Vex, the smoke still crept into the edges of his vision and he still got snippets from the damned voice in the back of his head.

He was out getting groceries when he received a call from Cassandra. He picked up quickly, unsure if she just wanted something else from the store, or if something else was going on. His paranoia was really going to be the end of him, if the pounding of his heart was anything to go by.

“Cass?” he asked softly

“Percival, there’s a woman here who claims to be a private investigator, looking into our family’s death.” Cassandra told him, and Percy was grateful that he had gotten a new phone that wasn’t bugged anymore for this.

“Who hired her?” he asked immediately.

“Apparently a man named Uriel.” Cassandra replied. “He used to be a business partner of Father’s.”

Percy had a flashback moment to long dinner parties and a smiling, welcoming man with longer dark hair and a grey and black beard. Yes, he remembered Uriel.
“…how did she find us?” Percy asked next. He and Cassandra had tried to go off the grid as much as possible to escape detection from the Briarwoods. The only people who knew where they were at any given moment were Vex and Keyleth, simply because the less people that knew where they were, the better.

“I’m not certain, but you should get back here as quickly as you can.” Cassandra replied.

“I will.” Percy murmured, just leaving the cart right where it was as he walked quickly out of the store. “Stay on the phone with me, just in case.”

While Cassandra was still on the line, Percy shot Vex a quick text. “Apparently a private investigator tracked us down. Come meet us, just in case.”

“On my way.” Vex replied quickly, and Percy held the phone to his ear once more as he got into the car rented under Gilmore’s name. Vax’s friend hadn’t hesitated in helping with this, and Percy was eternally grateful to the man.

He made his way to the little out of the way house that was also in Gilmore’s name that he and Cassandra were currently using as a hideout, seeing the unfamiliar blue car parked in front of it. A woman with blonde hair was currently sitting on the front porch, and Percy was happy that Cassandra hadn’t let her in.

The woman looked up as Percy parked, pocketing her phone and standing. “You must be Percival.” She nodded, extending a hand towards him. “Allura Visoryn.”

Percy kept his distance. “Pardon my bluntness, but I don’t really know who you are and I don’t trust you.” He told her. “So I won’t be shaking your hand.”

Allura dropped her hand with a nod. “Understandable.” She replied. “I’ve been hired by Uriel Tal’Dorei to investigate the deaths of the de Rolo family.”

“How did you find us?” Percy asked, keeping an eye on the road, looking for Vax’s car. Vex should be here soon.

“You were difficult to track down, that’s for sure.” Allura replied. “But when a small cottage and car were suddenly rented out by a friend of one of your friends, it was easy to find. Don’t worry, I doubt the Briarwoods know Shaun Gilmore’s connection with Vax’Ildan.”

Percy just shook his head. If she could find them, then Anna could find them. And that was not an experience he wished to repeat, if he wasn’t killed outright when they came face to face once more. They would have to move, and quickly.

“What do you want?” Percy asked.

“I want to help.” Allura replied. “I’m sure you’ve dug up evidence yourself, I’ve met with your lawyers in the time since you’ve gone dark. They’ve kept quiet, sure, but there’s evidence that you’ve uncovered a few things that I haven’t.”

“There is.” Percy told her. “And that’s all you’re getting currently until we can verify you are who you say you are.”

He was grateful then for Vex’s criminal background—she knew how to dig into someone’s life too, make sure that they were who they said they were.

“Of course.” Allura nodded, handing over a business card. “Call me once you’ve satisfied yourself
that I mean no harm.”

“Unfortunately, lately the people who have been telling me that have meant harm.” Percy replied.

He heard the familiar sound of Vax’s car, and turned his head a little to see Vex pulling up. She threw the car into park and let herself out, moving to Percy’s side and keeping an eye on Allura.

Allura smiled politely and nodded. “Hello, you must be Vex’Ahlia. I’m Allura Visoryn.”

“The fact that you know my name is unnerving.” Vex replied sharply.

Allura nodded. “I’ve given Percival my card. Call me once you’ve satisfied yourself with my credentials.” She told them, getting back into her car. Percy and Vex watched her drive off before they went inside to begin packing immediately.

Cassandra came out once Percy called out that it was all right. She had been hiding in the bathroom, just in case.

“I’ll look into her, but something about this whole situation rubs me the wrong way.” Vex told Percy as she helped.

“She told me she was hired by one of my father’s business partners, Uriel Tal’Dorei.” Percy replied.

Vex raised her eyebrows. “The same Tal’Dorei as the university we attend?” she asked.

Percy nodded. “The very same. He donated a large amount of money to it, so it was named after him.” He explained. “I remember him- he was a kind man. But honestly right now, I don’t trust it. I don’t trust anyone.”

“I don’t either.” Vex agreed. “I’ll pull some strings and look into them, see if they have any connections to the Briarwoods or anyone else on the board. Meanwhile I have a place you can go.” Vex told the siblings.

“Thank you.” Percy murmured softly.

Vex moved to press a light kiss to his cheek before going to help Cassandra pack, and Percy’s heart felt a little lighter. Ever since their conversation in the hospital, things had been rocky between them and Vex hadn’t initiated much since that day. The fact that she was feeling comfortable enough around him again to kiss his cheek just made Percy that much happier.

He knew he deserved it, knew that he had broken her in a way that quite frankly, she shouldn’t have forgiven him for. But it still made his heart flutter.

He continued to pack, and even though his mind was telling him not to trust a word Allura said, he hoped that she was being sincere. Because he had no clue how he was going to tackle Anna and the Briarwoods without the help of his lawyers, who he had ceased contact with because he was sure at least one of them had been paid off by the Briarwoods.

If Allura was truthful, Percy finally had a way to try and take back his company and make life go back to normal.

Hope was such a strange sensation for someone like him, but Percy clung to it anyways.

Chapter End Notes
Once again, all my thanks and love to dancer4813 for helping me talk through a rough patch in this story, Allura showing up is all thanks to her.

This chapter was kind of hard to write, since I'm not great at doing this type of story but wanted to give it a try anyways, but I hope you enjoy it!
Once they had settled in for the most part, Vex grabbed her pack of cigarettes. Her fingers clenched slightly around them — it had been a while since she had shared one with Percy. She had sworn to herself that she wouldn’t resume that habit until she felt things were perfectly all right between them.

The three of them relocated themselves within the hour, making sure that Gilmore knew that the cottage was compromised. As they drove, Vex made a call to Vax.

“As much as I hate doing this, we need to get back in touch with Senokir.” Vex murmured into her phone. “He’s the best at forging paperwork, and I’m afraid at this point that’s how far off the grid we’re going to have to get.”

Vax groaned slightly. “He’s such a creepy fuck though.” He replied. “You know he’s going to charge an arm and a leg for this too.”

“I know, and Percy’s going to help foot that bill.” Vex replied. “But I never had his contact information, that was always your job.”

“I know, I know.” Vax replied. “…I just wanted to be done with this, you know. I never wanted to get back into these habits. We were lucky enough to never have been caught, quit while we were ahead…”

“I know.” Vex sighed softly. “I didn’t want this either, but this is so fucked up on so many levels, and these people won’t stop until Percy and Cassandra are dead. And I can’t…” she swallowed, eyes darting over to glance at Percy. “Vax, I just can’t.”

“I know.” Vax’s voice was soft. “I care for him too, and I love you. It’s why I’m willing to do this again.”

“I love you.” Vex murmured back. “Call me once you’ve heard back from shithead.”

“I will.” Vax promised, and they hung up.

The silence continued as they drove, and Percy glanced at his sleeping sister in the back. “…Vex.” He murmured. “I know we all have our secrets, so I don’t want to push if you don’t want to tell, but I have to ask… what exactly did you used to do?”

Vex bit her lip, debating on what to say. He knew enough pieces that it would be confusing without the links.

“Once we’re safe and private, I’ll tell you.” She promised. “Not that I don’t trust Cassandra, but the fewer people that know the entire story, the safer Vax and I are. I hope you understand that.”
Percy nodded. “I understand.” He murmured.

Vex nodded too. “Good.” She replied, and turned the radio up as they continued driving.

***

Kymal was such a shitty, out of the way town that Vex knew it would take a little while for anyone to track them down there. She fished out one of her old fake IDs from her wallet and checked them into a shitty little motel room that she was hesitant to take a blacklight to.

Once they had settled in for the most part, Vex grabbed her pack of cigarettes. Her fingers clenched slightly around them- it had been a while since she had shared one with Percy. She had sworn to herself that she wouldn’t resume that habit until she felt things were perfectly all right between them.

But there was no way she was telling this story without one.

She watched as Percy unpacked his things, debating. He had been nothing but good to her since his apology, and she knew that his heart had been in the right place, even though it had torn her to pieces, thinking that the man she had fallen for really didn’t care for her.

But of all the times right now, he needed her.

And she needed him.

If it had been anyone else, she thought, she wouldn’t have turned back to her old ways. She and Vax were used to cutting ties, even familial ones, like the ones they had grown to know and love with the rest of their roommates. It would have stung, but they would have left.

She could never do that to Percy.

“Let’s have a smoke.” She told him finally, heading out to the balcony. Her heart was pounding nervously in her chest as she took out a cigarette and her lighter, leaning against the railing.

It was funny, she thought. All of their precious moments together happened on a balcony.

Percy joined her, taking the offered cigarette and lighting it himself. He kept a respectful distance from her as he leaned as well, and Vex let out a long stream of smoke.

“We were fifteen.” She started. “And we had run away together. Our father was a class A prick. When our mother died, he gained custody of us, and he didn’t care. We couldn’t stand it, so we ran. We weren’t old enough to work, so we had to steal to get what we want. It took a little while, but we got better and better at it. We worked as a team. I was better at flirting and distracting, especially as we got older, and Vax was better at slipping things into his jacket. We stole whatever we needed, and a few things we didn’t to pawn at local pawnshops for a bit of money. I’m sure the owners knew we were thieves, but they didn’t care.”

Vex let out another long stream of smoke. “Then we met Artigan. Vax tried to pickpocket him while I flirted, and he caught Vax’s wrist. We thought we were done for, but he just… laughed. Laughed and told us that was the closest anyone had ever come to picking his pocket. He offered to feed and house us, in exchange for us doing some work for him. We were homeless teens with nothing to our names other than the clothes on our backs, so we agreed.”

“We worked with him for a long time. He taught us everything we needed to know about burglary- how to use the shadows to our advantage, how to break into security systems of all kinds, how to leave no trace apart from what we took. We both took to it like fish to water, and it wasn’t long before we were breaking into richer homes, taking apart more complex security systems. Artigan was
impressed, and started giving us shares of the take as well. Vax and I were comfortable—this was our life, no matter how illegal it was. We made connections, we were making money, and we were good at it. It’s no life for a pair of teenagers, but what did we know? All we knew was that Artigan kept us from starving and gave us a way to live.

“We were seventeen when it happened. An entry went wrong, and Artigan’s face blown out from a shotgun. We watched it happen from the shadows, and I still have nightmares about it. That’s when Vax and I decided to call it quits.” She sighed. “Our friend was dead, and we could have just as easily lost our lives. So we quit. We left Singorn and came here, deciding to go to college in order to make lives for ourselves that wasn’t steeped in crime. And here we are, two years later, and we’re sliding right back into it.” She let out a humorless laugh, snuffing out the embers in the butt of the cigarette.

Percy was quiet for a moment, before he sighed, hanging his head. “I’m so sorry.” He whispered softly. “I never… I didn’t want this. I didn’t want any of this, and I’m so sorry that my life and my stupid mistakes led you two back into a life you wanted to leave behind.”

Vex looked at him. “Don’t blame yourself.” She told him. “Vax and I made this choice because we both care. We both couldn’t let you die, and we refuse to let you die now that the stakes are even higher than they were before.” She lit another cigarette, taking a long drag from it.

She couldn’t look at him as she said the next words.

“I love you, Percy, and I don’t know what I’d do without you in my life anymore. So yes, this sucks. I don’t want to be back in this kind of life. But I am glad that it’s helping you now. Because without it, you would be dead a few times over. Vax learned to poison as distractions for large events, we both learned how to break in and out of houses, and without that, you would have been killed twice over. If we didn’t have the connections we do, there would be no hiding you and Cassandra from these crazy fucks. So no, I didn’t want this, but that doesn’t mean I won’t fight tooth and nail for you, and if that means bringing back a past I’d rather have left behind? Then so be it.”

Vex continued to stare out at the shitty view, brown buildings and grey concrete covered in spray paint and littered with garbage.

Percy was quiet for a few moments, and Vex risked a glance over at him. Her breath caught in her throat at the intense look on his face. He was staring at her in a way that Vex swore was only in fairytales, a love so intense and deep that you could feel it just from the weight of a gaze.

“…Vex.” Percy whispered, voice low and deep and it sent a pleasant shiver through her spine. “…may I kiss you?”

They hadn’t kissed since before Percy had broken her heart, and she swore she wouldn’t until she had forgiven him.

Vex swallowed. “…your soulmark” she whispered the request, and Percy didn’t hesitate before lifting his shirt, showing her the bright blue feather that had returned against his side

Vex’s eyes moved from the soulmark to Percy’s intense eyes once more.

“Yes.” She whispered, and Percy moved with a surety she hadn’t seen from him in a long time, wrapping her up in his arms and pressing their lips together in a long, deep kiss.

Vex tasted the smoke on his tongue, and just pressed against him, holding him close. Her heart was pounding in her chest and she felt light.
When they broke apart, Percy pressed their foreheads together, sighing softly. “I don’t deserve your forgiveness.” He murmured into the small space between them.

“Then don’t do anything to make me regret it.” Vex whispered back, gently cupping his cheek against her palm. “I love you.”

“And I love you.” Percy murmured back, pressing another long, loving kiss against her lips.

Vex closed her eyes and let herself relax once more into his hold.

Yes, she thought. This was all worth it.

Chapter End Notes

Take a shot for the Hamilton reference~
Chapter Summary

"Heirs of Whitestone Marble Inc. declared dead, Sylas Briarwood assumes head of the company."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Percy felt much better now that he and Vex were back on the same ground. She shared his bed at night again, and he didn’t feel strange about kissing her or laying gentle hands on her shoulders or waist as they relaxed together.

They also resumed their habit of smoking together on the balcony, sides touching as they did, and Percy felt a little more at ease.

When it came to everything else though, he did not.

Sure enough, he learned from Vax that the cottage that Allura had discovered them at had been visited by Anna Ripley not even two days after Allura had tracked them down. This did nothing to improve his suspicions of Allura, even though Vex had started digging into her background through her own devices.

They had relocated from the shitty little motel into a small shack-like apartment, courtesy of Vex’s connections with the local gang, who called themselves “The Clasp.” She refused to tell Percy what she had promised them in exchange for the protection, but Percy noticed that she was taking out her catsuit at least a couple of times a week and disappearing for a few hours.

Vax had sent along some fake identification for Cassandra and Percy, so they would be able to move around a little more easily. Fake IDs and credit cards to match, so their paper trail would completely disappear. Vex already had a few aliases that she worked with, and despite the fact that he knew about why she and Vax had slipped into this life, Percy couldn’t help but wonder how deep those connections ran.

To help with their disappearance, Cassandra dyed her hair platinum blonde while Percy adopted the dark brown his hair had used to be before he had gone white from the stress. It was strange to look in the mirror and see his old face looking back at him. He had grown used to the white hair, and it felt…almost wrong.

He hated this. He hated that he had to hide so deeply just to save his own life, hated that Vex had clearly taken up the life she had tried so desperately to leave behind just for his sake. So the hours he had alone while Vex was out, he poured into research, compiling evidence himself of all the wrongs the Briarwoods had done.

It didn’t make it easier that his medication was running low, and he had no way to refill it. So he took it sparingly, only when the voice got too bad, and the smoke was a constant presence in his life once more.
Cassandra came over and sat on the bed next to him as he sat, brow furrowed slightly as he stared at the computer screen. “Everything okay?” she asked softly.

Percy sighed heavily. “No” he replied honestly, turning the screen so she could read it.

“*Heirs of Whitestone Marble Inc. declared dead, Sylas Briarwood assumes head of the company.*”

“Fuck.” Cassandra stated plainly.

“Fuck indeed.” Percy replied, rubbing at his temples. “We have very little time to make this right, and a lot of evidence if we have any hope of convincing a judge that going underground was for our own safety, without incriminating Vex and Vax.”

“That’s going to be near impossible, and you know it, brother.” Cassandra murmured.

“…I know.” Percy replied, burying his face into his hands. “But I can’t ask more of them. I can’t ask them to give themselves up like that just so we can have our freedom again. Vex is already back into criminal activity, I just… I can’t.”

Cassandra placed a gentle hand on Percy’s shoulder. “You’ll have to speak with them.” She murmured. “Maybe they can plea bargain, get their own freedom in return for turning in some much more dangerous criminals.”

“I can’t, Cass.” Percy replied. “I barely know the surface of everything, and I get the feeling that if they talk, turn in anyone else, their lives will be in jeopardy.”

Cassandra sighed. “I don’t know how else we’re going to win this.” She murmured. “I really don’t.”

Percy stared at the headline for a long time, before picking up the burner cell phone they were using. Vex hadn’t finished her research yet, but they were out of time.

He pulled out the business card Allura had given him, dialing the number printed on it.

“Hello?” he heard the woman greet on the other end, and Percy took a deep breath.

“Allura Visoryn? This is Percival de Rolo. We’re going to have to meet as soon as possible.”

Chapter End Notes

I know this chapter is short, but shit’s about to go down and I needed a bit of filler to get from one point to another. Enjoy!
Chapter Summary

“You’re nothing.”
“You’re worthless”
“What kind of person can love someone as broken as you are?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Percy and Vex sat in the little café, waiting nervously. This was where they were meeting Allura to discuss how they were going to expose the Briarwoods and take them to court.

Vex was staring at her coffee, brow furrowed in thought. Percy reached over and gently placed his hand over hers, squeezing it gently.

“What’s on your mind?” he asked softly, and Vex sighed.

“Just… considering something.” She replied, squeezing his hand back in return.

Percy pressed a kiss to her temple, and sat up a little straighter when he noticed the blonde woman approaching them, taking a seat across from them.

“I’m so glad to hear you’re all right, Percival.” Allura murmured. “Uriel was distraught when he heard the news about Sylas, and that you and your sister were considered dead.”

Percy nodded, wanting to get straight to it. He pulled out the file of papers he had spent the previous night assembling, and placed them in front of Allura.

“This is all the information that was gathered concerning the deaths of my family, my own poisoning, and the attempts on my life.” Percy replied evenly.

Allura started leafing through the information, biting her lip as she skimmed it. “This is all quite damming.” She murmured, looking up at Percy. “But there are a few gaps in here, and we’re going to have to fill them if we have a chance of convincing the courts that you went underground to save your own lives instead of just running from responsibility, or even an insanity case.”

“We know.” Vex spoke up, taking a deep breath. “Allura, I’m trusting you with this, and I’m trusting you’ll be able to find us a lawyer who is going to be able to help.” She looked Allura in the eyes, and Percy looked over at her, confused.

“I used to be a thief. I’ve robbed a fair amount of rich people, and I know how to crack basically any security system in existence.” Vex told her. “If not for that skillset, Percy would be dead. The Briarwoods and Anna Ripley had him kidnapped, and were going to do who knows what to him if I hadn’t had gotten him out. Use that. Use that to show that we had to go underground to save them, and I will gladly and freely give you any and all information about my past.”

Percy was shellshocked. “Vex, I thought—“
“It doesn’t matter anymore, Percy.” Vex replied. “It was going to catch up to me one way or another, and I’m done. I’m done fighting it anymore. I’d rather we clear your name and get these fucking bastards brought to justice than be arrested and thrown in prison a few years from now if someone else squeals.” Her face was hard and determined. “If I serve time for this, so be it.”

Allura nodded, looking down at the files again. “We could use that.” Allura murmured. “And it would explain how you managed to make Percy and Cassandra disappear from the radar.”

Vex nodded, jaw firm as she looked at Allura. “Make this right.” She told her. “And everything I know is yours.”

***

When the meeting was over and they were alone, Percy gathered Vex up into a long, tight hug. He didn’t miss how she clung to him too, pressing her face against his shoulder. He just slid one of his hands into her dark hair, cradling her head protectively against him.

“You didn’t have to do this.” Percy whispered. “You’re risking so much doing this.”

“I know.” Vex whispered back. “But it has to be done.”

“I’m not asking this of you.” Percy whispered softly. “I don’t want you to do this unless you’re sure.”

“I am sure.” Vex replied. “There’s only so much I can do, and I just… just let me help, Percy. Please.” She entreated, and Percy couldn’t do anything but nod and hold her close.

***

Percy was in that room again. The beige and green floral wallpaper taunted him, and he looked around, searching for any kind of escape. The door that usually haunted him along with this particular dream wasn’t there, and strangely enough, that terrified him more than anything.

He heard a light, familiar chuckle in his ear, and he turned to face Anna Ripley.

She slapped him across the face, his cheek stinging with the force of the blow.

“You didn’t have to find out.” She hissed. “You would have been happy, and I would have been happy, and you wouldn’t have been the wiser.”

A solid punch to his gut now, and Percy wheezed, bending over as he was forced to the floor. Anna straddled him, just laying into him with her fists before she started scratching his face with her long, pointed nails.

“You really think anyone would love you apart from your money?” Anna hissed into his ear, the pain of her nails ripping away layers of flesh causing Percy to scream. “That you are anything more than a spoiled, rotten little brat who doesn’t know what hardship is if it bit him in the ass?”

Percy just lay there, taking the blows. He wanted to fight back, he wanted to shove Anna off and run, but his dream self did neither of those things. Instead it cowered on the floor, just like he had when this moment had actually happened.

Once Anna had satisfied herself with bloodying his face, she reached over for one of the pokers next to the nearby fireplace, and started beating him with it.
The pain was excruciating, and every single blow was punctuated with a hateful quip from the girl he thought he had loved.

“You’re nothing.”

“You’re worthless”

“What kind of person can love someone as broken as you are?”

Tears were streaming down Percy’s face as the beating continued, longer than usual this time. Anna just continued to abuse him, and he did nothing.

And then, the worst part came.

Anna stopped wailing on his bruised and broken body with the poker, and reached over to start heating the metal in the heat of the fire.

Percy struggled, wanting to run, wanting to end this nightmare before this part came, but to no avail. Apparently he would have to see this to the end before his body would take mercy on him and let him wake up.

Once the iron was red hot, Anna jammed it directly into his hip, and Percy screamed.

He felt the familiar fracture in his mind, feeling like something gave way at the sound of her sadistic laugh, the blinding pain of the poker, the smell of burning flesh, and the sight of smoke, curling up and around her.

The moment when he lost his sanity, just as painful and real as the day it had happened.

Percy woke up with a cry, sweating and gasping for breath as he clutched at the old scar on his hip, trying to ground himself.

He felt Vex stir next to him, raising herself up. Her hair was tousled around her face, and her eyes were bleary, but concerned. “Percy?” she asked.

Cassandra too, looked over from her own mattress. “Brother, is everything all right?” she asked, voice filled with concern as well.

Percy just looked between the two before he shook his head, getting out of bed and going to take a long, icy shower.

He wasn’t surprised that the smoke swirled in his vision. This recurring nightmare had been even worse than normal.

Once he felt like he couldn’t feel the phantom pain of Anna’s poker, he went to take his medication.

His heart dropped out of his chest as he realized that the bottle was empty.

It was gone.

Percy just slumped to his knees, clutching the useless bottle to his chest as the eerie laughter of the voice echoed in the back of his mind.

"Poor Percival. First you lose your company, now you’re going to lose Vex, and then you’re just going to continue to lose your mind..."
Percy just started shaking, tears streaking down his cheeks, before he felt a gentle, comforting pair of hands on his shoulders.

Vex.

She gathered him up in her arms, saying nothing, and Percy just let himself cling to her. He didn’t speak either, the silence echoing in the little space, but he let Vex’s presence comfort him.

Anna had been wrong.

He had found his soulmate anyways, and despite how broken he was, Vex was still there.

He grasped her hand in his and just held her close, letting her heartbeat keep him calm, despite the sadistic laugh still echoing in his ears.

She couldn’t make it go away, but she could help him cope with it a lot better.

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie, I had kind of a shitty day and took it out on Percy here. I still love him, he just...happened to be my punching bag today.
The Trial

Chapter Summary

“Well, it’s time.” Allura murmured. “Wait until this room until you’re called for.”
Percy nodded, and the four of them went into the small room to sit and wait.

In the end, they decided that the suit would be filed in Uriel’s name, both to protect the remaining de Rolos and to make the case that much more shocking when they stood as witnesses, alive despite the Briarwood’s claims otherwise.

Percy didn’t think he had ever been so stressed out in his life, waiting for the day they went to court. He poured himself into the evidence as much as he could, meeting with Allura and their lawyer, a woman called Kima, on a regular basis.

Vex had her meetings with them as well, even though she attended the majority of his. She wouldn’t tell him what they would talk about, and though he respected her privacy and that she didn’t want to dampen the few moments they had alone together with talk of her former life, Percy was worried. He knew she had her own interrogation she was going to submit to in order to have her word have legal weight during his own trial, and he didn’t know what was going to happen there.

All he knew was that Vex and Vax were planning on a plea deal, that they were going to give up worse criminals to avoid prison themselves, and that by doing that, they could explain their doings and abilities to hide Percy and Cassandra.

He hated this. He never wanted anyone to sacrifice themselves for him, and here his soulmate and her twin were laying so much on the line for him.

He was lying in bed, staring at the ceiling and unable to sleep the night before the case. The smoke was pouring everywhere, and he was doing his best to ignore the voice in his head. He had gotten a little better at ignoring it, since he now had no choice, but it was still so difficult, especially on a night like this.

Both him and Cassandra had dyed their hair back to their original color, though his white hair was still tinged with blonde after the bleach. He knew it would be close enough though.

Percy watched Vex next to him. She was asleep, somehow, her tank top riding up and showing off the soulmark on her side. Percy gently rest his hand against it, shifting to press his lips into Vex’s hair.

Vex stirred a little bit. “Percy?” she asked softly, voice slurred with sleep.

“Go back to sleep, dear.” Percy murmured. “I just needed to hold you.”

Vex shifted and held Percy’s hand in hers, squeezing it gently. “Everything will be okay. I promise.” She murmured, snuggling against him before her breathing evened out once more.

Percy just held her, feeling the warmth against his body and letting himself fall into an uneasy sleep.

***
There was press at the front of the courthouse as they drove with Allura and Kima. Percy laced his fingers into Vex’s hand at the sight.

Vax looked over at the others in the car. “We’ve got this.” He murmured.

Allura nodded. “Just keep your heads high, and don’t answer any questions.” She murmured.

Percy nodded, looking at Cassandra. “Ready?” he asked.

Cassandra took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes.” She murmured, taking Percy’s other hand.

Percy looked between his sister and his soulmate, before nodding as they got out of the car.

The press surged forwards at the sight of Percy and Cassandra, shouting questions and trying to shove microphones into their faces.

Percy heard the chuckling of the voice and just squeezed Vex’s hand tighter. She gave him a soft smile and helped pull him through the crowd until they were in the court room, and silence fell.

Percy was gasping for breath, and Vex pulled him into a hug. “It’s okay. It’s okay.” She whispered softly, gently massaging his scalp.

Percy just held her until he felt like he could breathe again, resting his forehead against Vex’s shoulder.

“Well, it’s time.” Allura murmured. “Wait until this room until you’re called for.”

Percy nodded, and the four of them went into the small room to sit and wait.

And wait.

And wait.

Hours passed, and Percy felt like he was getting more and more wound up the longer the wait went on. He knew that Allura and Kima were doing their part, laying out the massive amounts of evidence against the Briarwoods before the witnesses would be called.

Eventually, someone poked their head in. “Vex’Ahlia and Vax’Ildan have been called.”

Vex looked at Percy and gave him a light kiss. “Be strong.” She whispered softly, before the twins left to follow.

Yep, this got a whole lot worse.

“This is going to end so poorly…” the voice cackled, and Percy shook his head.

More waiting.

More waiting.

The twins never came back.

Eventually, the same girl poked her head in. “Percival, you’ve been called.”

Percy took a deep breath and nodded, standing. He forced his head to stay high as he was escorted into the courtroom.
His eyes found the shocked and angry faces of the Briarwoods, and saw Vex stepping down from the witness stand. She gave him a tight smile, and went to sit down next to Vax, who looked slightly pale.

Percy took a seat on the stand, nodding respectfully as Kima came up to him. “State your name for the court, please.” She told him.

“Percival Fredrickstein Von Musel Klossowski de Rolo the Third.” Percy replied, doing his best to keep his voice steady.

Kima nodded. “Thank you. Now, Percival, if you could please tell us of the night you received the phone call from your sister, Cassandra.”

Percy took a deep breath before he started speaking.

***

It took a few hours before he was finished, getting off of the podium feeling raw. The Briarwood’s lawyer had torn him apart, forcing him to speak about things he’d rather not have thought about. His mental illness, which they had somehow found records of, what it was in detail, and making him relive the moment it had happened. His relationship with Vex, and discussions on how involved he was in the twin’s criminal activities. He understood now why Vex had told him nothing- so he could honestly reply with his ignorance.

He felt empty and raw and just wanted to go home, but instead had to sit and listen to Cassandra’s testimony as she spoke of the night she had learned their family had been murdered.

Now, the jury was set to decide on the fate of the case, and the fate of the Briarwoods, and Percy had never felt so afraid.

Vex made her way over to Percy and just held him close. “I love you darling. You know that, right?” she asked softly.

“I know.” Percy whispered. “I love you too. I just want this to be over…”

“I know.” Vex murmured softly. She pulled him into a gentle kiss. “No matter what happens after today, know that I always love you, and I’m proud of you, and I’m proud to call you mine.”

Percy frowned. “Vex, why are you talking like we won’t see each other after this?” he asked softly.

Vex just kissed him once more. “It’ll be fine. I promise.” She murmured, and sat next to him. She held his hand the entire time, and Percy rest his head against hers, trying to let her presence make him forget that the people who wanted him and his sister dead were mere feet away.

Eventually, the jury returned, and Vex left Percy, having to take her own seat.

The head juror stood with a sheet of paper once the courtroom settled down.

“Your honor, this jury has found Sylas and Delilah Briarwood…guilty of the murders of the de Rolo family.”
Consequence

Chapter Summary

Percy had overcome so much hardship because of the Briarwoods, won back his legacy from them.

But at what cost?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Percy felt like his heart stopped as the juror continued to read off the charges. They had been found guilty on all counts. On his attempted murder, on the intent to sabotage the company for their own financial gain, of the theft of the de Rolo fortune, everything.

The judge nodded. “I sentence you both to life in prison.” He told the Briarwoods, before banging his gavel.

“NO!” Delilah screamed, pulling a small pistol from her side and aiming it towards Percy, eyes cold and calculated. Percy let himself drop to the ground as she pulled the trigger, and he felt a wisp of wind hit the top of his head as he did.

Screams echoed through the courtroom as the Briarwoods were tackled and handcuffed by some officers standing nearby, and Percy pulled himself up, looking wildly to see where the bullet had gone.

Some random man he had never seen before was holding his arm, shouting in pain, and Percy felt a beat of thankfulness. The bullet hadn’t struck anyone he had cared about. Maybe that was a horrible thing to think, but right now, Percy would take every inch he could get.

As the Briarwoods were taken away, facing worse charges now, Percy struggled through the panicking crowd to try and find Cassandra and the twins. The crowd was difficult to traverse, and he resorted to calling their names.

“VEX! VAX! CASS!” He shouted over the uproar, needing to find them.

He managed to make his way outside, bumping straight into a large, muscular man. A very familiar one.

“Percy!” Grog yanked him roughly out of the way, giving him a huge hug. Percy felt like he couldn’t breathe, and when the man finally set him down, Percy turned and felt his heart ache at the sight.

His found family was standing there, waiting for him. Keyleth and Pike pulled him into tight hugs, Scanlan following shortly after.

“We heard, they were found guilty and then tried to kill you…again. Are you okay?” Keyleth demanded.
“I’m fine, the bullet missed, but I can’t find Vex or Vax.” Percy replied, looking back towards the crowd, trying to find the familiar black haired twins in the midst.

Keyleth looked a little pained at that. “…Vex didn’t tell you?” she asked.

Percy looked back at her, face intense. “Tell me what, Keyleth?” he asked, voice desperate.

Keyleth just shared a glance with Pike, before handing him a folded letter. “She asked me to give this to you when you asked for it, but I think you best read it now.”

Percy just tucked the letter away in his pocket. “I have to find them.” He replied, and ignoring the warning from Pike, went right back into the crowd.

He found Cassandra after a few moments, leading her back to the group. Before he could dive back in in search of the twins, Keyleth grabbed his arm.

“Percy, please, read the letter.” Keyleth was almost begging him, and the desperation in her voice made him stop. He looked at her then, really looked at her, and noticed that she had deep shadows under swollen, tear filled eyes.

Percy just stared back. “…Keyleth, what’s going on? Where are Vax and Vex?” he asked slowly.

Keyleth bit her lip, her face crumpled, and Percy hated the tears he saw welling in her eyes. “Just… Percy please…” she asked, voice cracking.

Percy pulled out the envelope now and opened it. He pulled out a folded piece of paper, wrapped around one of Vex’s usual blue feathers. He unfolded it, seeing Vex’s familiar handwriting, and began to read.

Percy,

Maybe I’ll have the strength to say this to your face, but maybe I won’t. I don’t know how this case is going to go, and I don’t know how you’re going to be in the next few weeks leading up to it. I hope, since you’re reading this letter that we won. That the Briarwoods are gone and you can reclaim your family’s legacy and make it right.

You’re a good businessman Percy, even though I know that’s not what you wanted. You’re hardworking, and so brilliant, and you’re going to make sure your company thrives no matter what happens. But make sure you take time for yourself, too. Keep working on those little projects you always have going on. You never know, maybe you’ll invent something someday that’ll change the world.

I’m rambling at this point, mainly because I’m hoping I at least have the strength to say what I can barely bring myself to write. Probably not. I’ve always been good at keeping things quiet.

I had my interrogation today, and I’m writing this before I get home to you. Hopefully I’ll be able to tell you then, but who knows. Vax and I took the plea bargain to avoid jail time. We squealed like fucking pigs, gave names and contact protocols and all kinds of dirty information about the people we knew in the past. We made a lot of enemies today, Percy, and not all of them are tame.

As a result, Vax and I have agreed to protective custody. We’re going to need it. There are going to be a lot of people out there now with our names on their lists and carved into their bullets. But neither of us are going to take it until after your trial. You need our testimonies, and frankly, I need you right now.
The plan is to disappear during the chaos of the trial. To stay for the verdict, and then slip out. Hopefully you know this, hopefully I told you and managed to give you the goodbye you deserved.

If not, then I’m sorry. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, and you didn’t deserve to find out like this. I’m a fucking coward sometimes, you know.

But Percy? I love you. I love you so incredibly deeply and I never want you to forget that. This is not going to be forever, I promise, but right now, Vax and I have to stay safe and we’re risking everything even staying as long as we plan to. I hope you understand that.

One day, I’ll return to you. I promise. Until then, shine. Stay safe, and promise you’ll take your medication again! I’ll sic Trinket on you when we get back if you don’t!

And try to quit the cigarettes. They really are shitty for you and I’m sorry I ever got you started on them. I’ll never regret our balcony talks, though. We never would have found each other without them.

I love you, Percy. My heart is forever yours.

Stay safe.

-Vex

Percy carefully folded the letter back into the envelope, carefully protecting the blue feather. “…they’re gone.” He said, and his words sounded as hollow as he felt.

Keyleth nodded. “I thought Vex would have told you. Vax told me.” She whispered.

Percy just nodded dumbly, feeling so numb. The voice wasn’t even bothering him, and somehow, the quiet felt eerie.

Why did he feel like his world was crashing around him even though they had won?

“…I want to go home.” He decided then, looking around at the rest of them. “Back to the apartment. Please.”

“Yeah, course.” Grog murmured, and the group of them pushed their way through the throngs of reporters to get to their car, Percy barely able to hear them.

He felt so empty and alone in a way he hadn’t before, even when he had broken Vex’s heart.

Was this how she had felt, when he left her alone like this?

Percy had overcome so much hardship because of the Briarwoods, won back his legacy from them. But at what cost?

Chapter End Notes

This fic is going to be wrapping up soon, within 2 or 3 chapters. I hope you enjoy the aftermath!
Chapter Summary

“What do you have planned, hmm?” Keyleth asked, voice teasing and reminding him so much of Vesper that it made Percy’s heart ache in his chest.

Instead, he smiled and looked up at her. “You’ll see.” He murmured.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Percy was laying on the couch about a month later, staring up at the ceiling. He had gotten his life at least slightly back in order- he had received custody of Cassandra, and she was enrolled now in a local school in Emon. He was proud of her; despite all the education she had missed from the months of being on the run, she was already one of the top in her class.

He had also received access to the entirety of the de Rolo fortune, with a portion of it set aside for Cassandra when she came of age. Percy knew that his family was well off, but the sheer amount of money he received almost made him pass out when he saw it.

And thanks to the court case, he had removed the entirety of the board and started from scratch. He promoted people he could trust- Yennin, a long time employee who had always been loyal to the de Rolos. Uriel, too, he offered a position to for his thanks in his help to uncover the true reasons behind the deaths of his family, as well as a handful of other trusted people.

He heard gentle footsteps and felt someone sit by his head. He looked up, heart aching as he was reminded of the times Vex did that to him, only to see Keyleth.

“Hey.” Keyleth murmured, gently coaxing her fingers through his hair. “Everything okay? The smoke isn’t bothering you, is it?”

“A little.” Percy admitted softly, letting her pet him. He had resumed taking his medication as soon as he could get it again, and the silence in his head was a blessing. He couldn’t imagine what would happen with Vex gone, and no medication.

Keyleth continued gently massaging his scalp. “Does this help?” she asked.

“Yeah.” Percy replied softly, closing his eyes and letting her continue.

Keyleth just kept doing it, comfortable silence falling between them for a while.

Finally, Percy spoke up. “Keyleth? Thank you.” He murmured. “For everything.”

“Anytime, Perce.” Keyleth murmured. “You’re my best friend, you know. And… and you understand, more than anyone else.” She admitted.

Percy didn’t have to ask to know what she was talking about. “I know.” Percy murmured. “…and I’m sorry. You’re suffering too because of this. So many people gave up so much, just for me, and I just…” he sighed. “It’s been weighing on me, you know?”
Keyleth nodded. “Just know that every single one of us would do it again.” She murmured. “You’re family, Percy. We weren’t about to give that up, give you up. We might be hurting now, but losing you would have left a hole in all of our hearts.”

Percy just nodded, quiet again for a little while. “…Keyleth. Hypothetically speaking, if I want to do something insanely expensive for you all, how do you think everyone would react?” he asked.

“I think that entirely depends on what insanely expensive thing you have in mind.” Keyleth replied. “If you buy out a winery, Scanlan and Grog would be thrilled.”

Percy chuckled softly. “Not quite that… I know that rent was hard on all of you while Vex and I were gone, and you all picked up the slack, kept this apartment and our rooms even though it would have been easier to downsize or get new roommates. But you didn’t.”

Keyleth nodded. “Well, duh.” She murmured. “We wanted you to have a home to come back to, once all was said and done.”

Percy just nodded. “…thank you.” He murmured. “That’s all I needed to know.”

“What do you have planned, hmm?” Keyleth asked, voice teasing and reminding him so much of Vesper that it made Percy’s heart ache in his chest.

Instead, he smiled and looked up at her. “You’ll see.” He murmured.

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This plan of his took a little while to get settled, but in the end, Percy didn’t blink an eye at dropping the down payment for the perfect little house, on a plot of land off of Greyskull Lane. He even paid more than the house was worth to close the deal sooner, just wanting to be able to break the news to the others as soon as he could.

He took a deep breath as he handed the large stack of papers back to the realtor, taking the key with a polite smile. “Thank you.” He nodded to her, and made his way out of the office. He immediately went to the nearest hardware store, making seven additional keys. He made sure to personalize them too. And if he made sure that Scanlan’s key was a Disney Princess key, well, he knew that the musician would get a kick out of it.

He got into the car and started making his way across town to the apartment, the keys safely in their little paper pockets in a plastic bag. He had made sure that everyone would be home for this, and the nerves were rattling slightly at him. What if they decided not to come along?

He pushed the negative thoughts aside. Today was not for that. Today would be the day that he thanked everyone in his own way for all of their help while he struggled to keep his life together. The nights had been long and dark, especially without Vex, but never lonely. He was never left alone to struggle through the entire time. There was always someone there for him, like Keyleth had been the night he had been missing Vex particularly.

When Percy got home, he smiled at the sight of his little found family in their cuddle pile on the couch. The two empty spots were obvious, but none of them could bring themselves to fill them in. It would be like accepting the twins were never coming back, which Percy didn’t think anyone was ready for despite the fact that it had been months at this point since any of them had heard a word.

“I have a surprise for you all.”

“Is it what’s in the bag?” Grog asked, examining it curiously.
“It has to do with what’s in the bag, yes.” Percy replied.

Percy went to join them on the couch, taking his spot next to Keyleth and ignoring the gap to his left. He took a deep breath before fishing out the papers, making sure each key made its way to the right person.

Grog frowned a little in confusion as he looked at his skull key. “What’s this to?” he asked.

“Why is mine Princesses? I think you got mine and Pike’s confused.” Scanlan asked.

“First of all, I did not, that key is specifically for you.” Percy chuckled. “And this is my way of thanking you all for everything the past year. These are your keys. I just signed the lease this morning, and as of…two hours ago, I became the owner of a house with enough room for all of us. Rent free.”

The entire apartment fell quiet, everyone looking at either each other and their keys with wide eyes. Percy looked over all of them, feeling nervous. What if this was too grand a gesture? He fidgeted slightly. “I know a lot of you gave up a lot to cover my rent and give Cassandra a home, when you didn’t have to.”

“Of course we did.” Keyleth replied easily. “You’re family, Percy.”

“And family takes care of family.” Scanlan added.

Percy nodded. “Yes, we do.” He murmured. “So let me take care of you all. I don’t want to see a cent from you for this, I just want us to be able to have a place that’s all our own. Our own home.”

He didn’t get anything else out before he was tackle hugged as Keyleth wrapped her arms around him, beaming. “You’re ridiculous and we love you.” She smiled at him, and Percy couldn’t stop the smile on his face.

“I love you all too.” He murmured, and suddenly he was being pressed in from all sides from the massive group hug, everyone telling him that he didn’t have to do this but of course they would move in.

For the first time in months, Percy’s head was quiet and calm, and he relished in the love of the people he called his family.

He just wished that the twins were there to share in their joy with them.

Chapter End Notes

Some of you got a glimpse of this when I screwed up and posted the first draft of this as a chapter before realizing that EVERYTHING I had time skipped past was, well... the plot.

There is going to be an epilogue, but this is the official end of Smoke and Feathers <3
Epilogue: Two Years Later

Chapter Summary

He read the letter a few times, staring at it, before looking out at the balcony attached to the room. When he had claimed this one as his own, large enough to hold two people with the balcony, none of the others had protested. They knew how much Percy missed Vex, and no one was going to poke that bear with a stick.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Life was going well. Percy was managing to balance running a company and attending college at the same time. He was a year behind the rest of his friends at this point, but it didn’t much matter. He had been through enough that no one faulted him for taking his time finishing school, especially remaining as CEO of Whitestone Marble.

Everyone had settled into their house, affectionately nicknamed as “Greyskull Keep.”, and Percy was happy. He really was. He had his friends, everyone with their own room and space and the entire house decorated in a mishmash of everyone’s styles, just like the apartment had been.

He had his sister, who was blossoming into a strong, incredible woman that Percy was so proud of. It helped too, to have a house full of people who loved her as a sister too. When Cassandra attended her fencing matches, she always had a large group of people cheering her on.

The only thing missing, Percy thought, was the twins.

No one had been surprised that the twins had completely disappeared. Neither of them had breathed a word to the rest of the group since the day of the trial. Despite the fact that it had been years, both twins had rooms set up in their house.

Percy found that as time went on, the ache in his chest faded slightly. He still missed Vex, would never stop missing Vex, but the wound wasn’t as raw anymore. And when times got tough, he would pull out her letter and her feather, reading her words and her promise to return one day.

Today was one of those days. Somehow, despite everything, Anna Ripley had managed to slip away. The case he had brought up against her had found her innocent of her crimes, and she had blown Percy a kiss on the way out of the room. Percy was livid, and felt a little raw.

He read the letter a few times, staring at it, before looking out at the balcony attached to the room. When he had claimed this one as his own, large enough to hold two people with the balcony, none of the others had protested. They knew how much Percy missed Vex, and no one was going to poke that bear with a stick.

He was itching for a cigarette.

He sighed softly, going to his dresser and pulling out the pack he kept there for emergencies. He had done his best to cut back, trying to keep his promise to Vex, but on days like this, he just needed a smoke.
With memories of Anna pushing at him, maybe memories of Vex would push them away.

The memories of her didn’t hurt nearly as much anymore.

Percy slid the door open and walked out into the night air, leaning against the balcony and lighting the cigarette. He let out the plume of smoke, watching it curl and feeling a phantom ache against his side as he thought of his soulmark.

He missed her.

A light, familiar chuckle caused a pang of pain to echo through Percy’s chest. It had been a while since his damn voice took on Vex’s tone to torture him, but today, of course, would be the day it did.

“I thought I told you to quit.” The familiar voice of Vex echoed, and Percy froze, trying to figure it out. It sounded so real, so fucking real, but it couldn’t… it was just…

He turned around then, and noticed for the first time a woman sitting in one of the chairs he kept out here. Her hair was cut into a bob and dyed a brilliant red, and she was clearly older than the last time he had seen her.

Despite this, Percy knew her the moment their eyes met.

His mouth dropped open in shock, and he just froze, watching her intently, trying to figure out if she was real or if his mind was just torturing him.

She stood then and moved to his side, taking his hand in his and pressing it to her chest. Percy felt the familiar heartbeat there, and he let out a strangled noise before wrapping her up in his arms.

“It’s you. Holy fucking hell, it’s you.” His voice cracked, the weight of her in his arms feeling so perfect and so right,

Vex smiled and hugged him back just as tightly. “Hello darling.” She whispered into his ear. “I promised, remember?”

Percy just held her close, and he heard Keyleth’s shriek of joy from inside the house. Vax must be here too, then.

Vex pulled Percy into a long, deep kiss that Percy couldn’t help but melt into. It had been years, but now in her arms, it felt like no time had passed at all since the last time he saw her.

“I love you.” Percy whispered against her lips. “And I’ve missed you. So, so much.”

“And I love you, and I’ve missed you too.” Vex whispered back, just holding him close.

Percy hugged her for a long time before they pulled away slightly from each other. “Is this… is this just a visit, or…?” he trailed off, letting the unspoken question hang in the air.

Vex gave him a soft smile. “The majority of the people we turned in are behind bars or dead. There are a few left, but not nearly as dangerous as the ones taken care of.” She murmured. “So despite a few halfhearted warnings, Vax and I came home.” She gently touched the side of Percy’s cheek, feeling the new stress lines there. “We were quite shocked to find a new group in the old apartment, but a little bit of digging led us here.”

Percy leaned into her touch. “…there are rooms for you both here.” He admitted. “We never gave up hope that you’d come home.”
Vex smiled, and pulled Percy into another long, deep kiss.

Percy held Vex close, his heart light and happy as he gently rest a hand on her waist, over the mark that told them she was his, and that he was hers.

When the kiss broke, Vex gave him a slightly hesitant smile. “Are you sure you want to have me back?” she asked. “It’s been a long while.”

Percy chuckled. “Well, there’s a reason I chose the room large enough for two, and with the balcony.” He murmured, looking around them. “…if you want.”

“There’s nothing I want more.” Vex replied, and Percy kissed her once more, unable to get enough of her now that she was back.

Vex was home.

His heart was whole again.

And they had a long, bright future ahead of them.

Chapter End Notes

I promised you guys a happy ending <3

Once again, the fact that I managed to see a story this long to completion absolutely blows my mind. I couldn't have done it without you guys and your amazing comments, subscriptions, kudos, and bookmarks. Seriously, I have never felt so much a part of a community, and the Critters continue to blow me away. So thank you all for your unending support.

And a huge thank you to dancer4813, without whom I would have been stuck for a long time. You're awesome dear, thank you for all your help in digging me out of my writer's block moments.

I hope you continue to follow me to the other stories I have, both in progress and in the wings, and thank you all again for the love and support. It truly, utterly means the world.

Love, Cinder

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!