

Fast forward a bit, they took me back to a special room that would test my reflexes and enter me into the system of magical beings. Crashing our little party, my dad, the fake one, barged into the shooting range-like room and morphed into the man he truly is. He yelled at poor Dr. Ascle and Mr. Chontos, gave me some dirty looks and called me a worthless piece of mortal flesh. Nice, right? Then my mother and brother came in and my dad tried appearing like nothing was wrong. He continued this until the moment I refused to go home and act like everything was normal. His rage started again and I wouldn't take it any longer. I lunged for the gun, with the nifty little sensor on it in which I was supposed to be practicing beforehand, but he grabbed my wrist. Suddenly, my fire powers took over and blasted everywhere mixing with another element. Lightning. With no time to think I glanced over at my brother assuming the obvious that he had powers too, and I grabbed his wrist wrapping my hand around the gun. This immediately transported us to where we are now. At the base of Mount Olympus.

I'm not sure why the sensor transported us here. I thought that the gun was supposed to be a tool used for training, not teleporting. I decide to have a little chat with Zarel.

"So, you just exploded with lightning," I say, chuckling, "Was that the first time that has ever happened to you?"

"Well... Yeah, kinda. I mean, I have been noticing for quite a while that I make things staticky when I am around them and that I sometimes make a light flicker when I walk by it... But other than that, no. That is the first time something that crazy has ever happened to me," Zarel says, looking a bit ashamed for some reason.

I just ignore the weird reaction. "Yeah, I thought so. You looked pretty bewildered."

"It was just so... sudden. I didn't know how to react. Dad was being a hellion and I couldn't watch him abuse you like that. So I was really upset and then it just happened."

"I'm sorry. That must have been scary for you."

"It was a little scary, but not as scary as seeing you shoot fire out of your hands." He chuckles reminiscing on that fateful event.

"Ha, yeah. I guess that was probably a little startling," I say, my thoughts going back to the look on Zarel's face when I tried to help him after I singed off his hair.

"Yeah."

"So, why do you suppose we were sent here? I mean, I don't even know how to get into the palace."

"I don't know. Maybe Dr. Ascle has some sort of control over the sensor and had it bring us here to be safe. It would help if you told me a bit about what happened though. I wasn't with you, remember?" Zarel says, looking a bit annoyed.

"Oh, yeah. Sorry, kid. He told me all kinds of things that would clear up any strange occurrences that we have ever had in life."

"Like what?" Zarel says, looking expectant.

"Well for one, our parents aren't our parents."

"I kinda figured that one out on my own."

"Yeah, but did you know that our fake dad is a god?"

"He's what!?" Zarel says, his eyes widening.

"His real name is Ares—"

"The God of War. Wow..." Zarel says, finishing my sentence. "That would explain a lot."

"Yeah... But also, Dad is an evil god. His plan is to take over Olympus and sit on the throne. The throne that is not rightfully his. And apparently, whoever our real parents are, they took great risks in trying to keep me safe. Dr. Ascle says that I have great potential and that it is the potential to be strong enough to hold the throne as my own. Which apparently is mine to sit on." Since we are here, we really need to figure out who our real parents are. If only I knew where to start looking.

"Whoa... So you are like a god or something?"

"Ha... I don't think I am a god; I am probably just one of those people that you would see being called a demi-god in the books and movies. But, I think that you are too."

"Huh... Cool!"

"Yep. So, now that we are here, I wonder if we can finally find our real parents."

"Yeah..."

I see Zarel's eyes start to glaze over and get a faraway look in them. The little visual clue that he is thinking. I decide to leave him to his thoughts and start looking for a way to get through the gates. Walking toward the steps I go to place my foot on the lowest. I carefully lift my foot and start bringing it down slowly onto the step.

"Tallia!"

I feel a strong yank on my shoulders and I stumble back away from the step.

"What the heck? All I was doing was putting my foot on the step. Is that such a crime?"

"No, but you would be committing suicide if you were to try and put your foot or any weight on the stairs."

"What? Why?"

"Tallia. Look a little closer. Without touching the stairs."

I cautiously walk back towards the steps and kneel down to peer closely at them. Good gods. Zarel is right! I almost killed myself. Looking closely at the marble slabs, I can see that they aren't all that solid looking. In fact, I can see right through them.

"Oh. Does everything have to be abnormal around these parts?" I say, rolling my eyes.

Zarel doesn't look surprised. I have always been one to just jump into things before looking first.

"Obviously we are going to have to find another way to get up then."

“Oh, thank you Captain Obvious. Bravo. I didn’t already think of that as soon as I saw that stairs are see-through.” I scoff.

“I don’t think I’m losing my mind here, but did you notice something about the clouds around the stairs?”

“Yeah, what about them?”

“What if, please don’t think I’m crazy, but what if those are the real stairs?”

I stare at my little brother, eyebrows raising, expecting to see a dumb smirk on his face, but instead, it looks as if he is being serious. Daggers. And laser glares.

“Okay, okay. Just making sure. Well, I’m not volunteering to find out. It was your ‘genius’ idea.”

“Ugh. Fine.”

He glances around until he stops at a rock lying nearby. Picking it up he chuckles it at the clouds that line the stairs. WHAM! The rock bounces off the clouds and comes flying back toward me!

“AHH!”

I swoop down just before the rock slams me in the head.

“Zaaaarellllll...” I stand up fuming.

“Sorry, sorry!” he says, quickly backing away. “I didn’t know that was going to happen!”

“Yes, but it was your genius idea to throw the rock as hard as you could at some weird probably magical objects!”

Then, right before I can say another word, a tsunami rushes down on me.

“Hi there... Ha-ha... I hope I didn’t get you too wet,” says a friendly but nervous voice from above. I glance up and see a boy staring back at me. He has dark brown hair, aqua blue eyes, and a friendly smile. And, he is riding a horse. A see-through horse.

“Oh, come on! What is it with weird things happening to me today!? First the powers, then the doctor’s office, then here, then the death stairs, and now a horse made out of water. WATER!! W-a-t-e-r.”

“Tallia! Calm down,” Zarel urges.

The water boy just looks down at me amused. He urges his horse to glide to the ground. He easily hops off the horse’s back and I can’t help but notice how many muscles ripple in his arms and back when he lands. He doesn’t look much older than me...

“I guess I should probably introduce myself. Hi. I’m Caspian.”

Zarel and I stare at him blankly.

He starts looking a bit uncomfortable. “Uh, and you guys are?”

“Zarel.”

“Tallia.”

“Cool. Nice to meet you. Sorry if I startled you. I was just taking a fly-by and noticed you guys. Then I saw that you were getting really upset and I knew right there and then that I needed to do something before you caused a not-so-natural disaster.”

“Wait, how did you know that when I get upset I pretty much explode?”

“Uh, because I assumed that you were a demi-god. Like me. And we all start catastrophes when we are angry. Luckily I didn’t get zapped when the water came down on you though. I wasn’t completely sure what powers you had but I just knew that fresh, cold, beautiful water would clear your mind.”

“Yeah, you got one thing right. Cold,” I say, my teeth starting to chatter. “Who the heck are you even? If you are so obsessed with water, enough to call it ‘fresh, cold’ and ‘beautiful’ you must obviously be a son of Poseidon.” Of course, I’m being completely sarcastic.

“Actually, I am!” he says, cheerfully. Clearly, nothing can burst this guy’s bubble.

“Of course...” I say, obviously intrigued.

“So then if you are the son of Poseidon, why aren’t you in the water?” Zarel asks.

“Well, since I am his son and not him, I don’t have to be in the water, like, 24/7. I can be out of it all day if I really want to. I do have to drink a lot more water than usual though if I do.”

“Making you the only person in the world that has to pee so much,” Zarel says, cracking up at his own hilariously. Such a boy.

Caspian starts to laugh as he understands Zarel’s joke. How could he be okay with this random dude just swooping in and disrupting our search for a way into the palace? Oh... Or better yet, Caspian probably knows how to get in...

“So, I’m guessing you probably want to get on your way now... Did you find out how to get through the gates yet?”

“Well, Tallia here was just about to take my genius idea of seeing if the clouds were the way in-”

“I was not! You were going to see if they were the way in and obviously they aren’t. So you might as well find another way. Or Caspian could just tell us.”

“Actually, that is the way in,” Caspian says.

Great. Now Zarel looks like a genius and I look like a stubborn idiot.

“Told ya,” Zarel says, smirking.

How does this Caspian guy win a person over so easily!? Fuming, I stomp my way over to Zarel.

“Come on. Let’s go.”

We start to walk towards the clouds. Zarel making it to the stairs first takes a deep breath and starts to run up the stairs... er, clouds. I follow him and go to place my foot on the first step. BOOM! I am knocked backward onto my butt as the clouds start to turn a dark shade of gray. All around us, the

brightness disappears and it starts pouring. Caspian's horse neighs loudly. Lightning begins to come out of the bottom of the clouds and they start spreading apart. Zarel stands halfway up the stairs looking as white as the clouds once were.

"Zarel! Get down from there before you fall through the gaps!" I scream.

Suddenly, he wobbles, slips and then just like that plummets to his death.

"ZAREL!!!" I shriek sprinting over to the edge.

"Tallia! Get away from there!" Caspian shouts.

Without skipping a beat, he runs over to his water horse, jumps on his back and heads into the storm. All I can do is watch and wait, hoping to see the boys come out of the storm safe and sound, but nothing happens. All around me chaos rains down. Literally. The rain droplets are the size of my hand and the lightning streaks all around me. I am trying to peer through my watery eyes but the mix of rain and my own tears make it so that everything looks blurry. I can't imagine how far Zarel has fallen by now. I pray to the gods that Caspian is able to catch him before he hits the ground, or whatever it is that is underneath us. I hear something! It's like a faint... neighing. They are safe! Caspian's water horse comes streaming out from within the storm clouds with both boys looking wet and shaken. They crash land a few feet away from me.

"Zarel! Oh, gods, Zarel... Are you okay?" I say, rushing over to him.

He tries to sit up but shudders and lays back down breathing heavily.

"I snatched him out of the air as quickly as I could, but he was passed out when I got to him. I tried to catch him lightly but still, the impact of the broken fall might have shattered a bone or two," Caspian says, sympathetically.

"Oh, Zarel!" I say, feeling the tears running down my face. "I'm so sorry. I tried to warn you."

Around us, the rain slows and storm clouds slowly disappear and are replaced with big fluffy white clouds. The sun peeks out from behind the clouds and the ground becomes warm and dry instantly. My little brother lays breathing slowly in a deep slumber while the sun's rays gently dry him. Without knowing what else to do I stand up and walk towards the forest to think for a bit. How could I have let this happen? Caspian hadn't warned Zarel or me that something might happen. I tense up. Caspian. This was all his fault. He is the one who let this happen. He could have prevented this from happening if he had just asked Zarel what powers he had or warned him that the clouds might not accept him. He almost killed my little brother.

I swing around about to rush back there and yell some sense into him but stop. He is kneeling over Zarel with a sorrowful expression tugging at his features. He is also performing some sort of magic on him it appears. He is waving his hands around in slow motions and collecting water off of Zarel. Then he is using the water to create some strange symbols in the air right above my brother's body. I start walking closer and I notice that coming from Zarel are little sparks of electricity. And these little sparks are mixing with Caspian's water. I thought that when electricity touches water, it fries anyone else in or touching the water... So that must mean... Oh... That is why Caspian had such a pained look when he came out of the storm. He sacrificed his life to save Zarel! I walk faster towards them and stop again. I

can't give this boy the satisfaction of me praising him for risking his life. I turn around and head toward the lush woods which surround the area.

"I wouldn't go in there if I were you."

"Eeek!" I shriek jumping about three feet in the air. Caspian is standing next to me gazing at the trees. When the heck did he get here? I quickly regain my composure and look away from those bright blue eyes.

"Oh yeah, and why is that?"

"Because there are some sketchy creatures in there."

I nod curtly and continue to stare into the woods slowly starting to tap my foot.

"Look, I'm really sorry," he says, turning to me. "I didn't mean for this to happen."

I stop tapping my foot and let all the air out of my lungs. "You sent my brother to his death. And then decided to save him at the last possible minute. I'm going to need a lot more than a pitiful 'sorry,'" I say, with a voice full of as much steel as I can.

"I did not send your brother to his death," he says, his aqua blue eyes turning stormy.

"You are the one who gave no warning before letting him walk on clouds!" I shout getting more annoyed by the minute.

"And you are the one who let your brother go first!" he shouts back.

"I let him go first because he was walking in front of me. I didn't bother asking you anything first because you are a demi-god and I THOUGHT YOU KNEW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE STEPPED ON THE CLOUDS!" I say, almost screaming now.

Caspian looks dejected as he turns away and I figure that I finally got through to him. He is a really nice guy I suppose. Risking his life and all for a boy he doesn't even know.

"Look. All I am saying is that just because I am a demi-god and live around here doesn't mean that I know everything. I wasn't paying attention to the fine print details that your brother might not be able to make it all the way up. I now realize that it was a bad idea to not warn you and that my actions caused harm to your brother. I'm sorry. There is nothing else to say, Tallia."

I stare at him and he looks away hurriedly. I can't be too mad at him I suppose. I too did nothing to secure Zarel's safety.

Sigh. "I'm sorry, Caspian. I didn't mean to yell at you. I know that it wasn't all your fault and that you mean well. You are a great guy and I really appreciate your selflessness for going after my brother." Yikes. Did I just call him a "great guy"? Oh, my gods, what am I thinking? He is going to think I am flirting with him.

"And I appreciate your apology... You think I am a great guy?" he says, starting to smile again devilishly.

"Oh Caspian, shut up and don't push it," I say, turning my back on him and walking towards Zarel.

I steal a little glance behind me and see a satisfied grin on his face. What a cheese ball.

“Are you coming?” I say, trying to hide my amusement.

“Yep! Be right there!” he says, before dashing towards a nearby stream.

I don’t question what he is doing, but, instead I kneel down to my brother’s side and look him over to see how hurt he is. Surprisingly, he doesn’t have any external injuries. Caspian says that he may have a broken bone or two, but hopefully, if he has, it isn’t too fatal. I wish Dr. Ascle were here. He would be able to fix my brother up, being the Medicine God and all. I hear soggy footsteps coming up behind me and turn to see Caspian walking with a huge ball of water in his hands.

“What are you going to do with that?” I say, confused.

“You’ll see.”

He carefully lowers himself to the ground near my sleeping brother and lets go of the water. Right directly over Zarel’s face. Splash! The water falls and bursts across my sleeping brother’s head. I hear a faint gasp as Zarel’s eyes fly open and he gulps for air.

“What happened?” he says, looking shocked and frightened.

Caspian and I look at each other passing on the message of, ‘are you going to tell him or am I?’ I nod to let Caspian know to tell him since he probably has more of an idea of what happened then I do considering he is the one who saved Zarel.

“After the clouds started to fall apart, you fell and passed out. I went after you on my horse and caught you bringing you back here. The only issue is that I think I may have broken one or two of your bones when I caught you,” Caspian says, apologetically.

Zarel groans. “That’s why it hurts so much,” he says, attempting to sit up and failing.

“I’m thinking you probably broke a rib,” I say, gently gliding my hand over his chest to feel if there are any pointy objects sticking out of his, once again, soaked shirt.

“Ouch!” he says, wincing.

Yep. Definitely a broken rib.

“So. I don’t really know how to get back to Earth, or if we are on Earth or whatever, but to get to my point, how do we get him help?” I ask.

“Er, Apollo?” Caspian says.

“I’m sorry, who?”

“Apollo. God of Medicine, Healing, Archery, et cetera. Or, we could find one of his kids. Either way, we will find your brother a healer.”

“Okay, and where would we find Apollo or his kids?”

“In there,” Caspian says, pointing at the gates.

I stare at him pointedly.

"How do we get in there?"

"I carry your brother, and you walk," he says, simply.

"Correction, I don't trust you with my brother's life, therefore I will carry him," I say, in a friendly but firm tone.

Caspian puts his hands up and shrugs surrendering. I go to carefully lift Zarel up and I can't even lift him a full foot off the ground.

"Ow! Watch it!" he squeaks.

"Sorry, sorry!"

"Here," Caspian says, lifting my brother up swiftly and easily. "Let me help you,"

I can't help but blush thinking how strong he is and how nice his muscular arms look. Then I realize that I am angry at him and quickly put a scowl back on my now red face. Caspian gently sets Zarel in my waiting arms and walks over to his horse.

"I will meet you up there. Git up, boy!" he says, smacking the horse's flank after he has swung up onto him. With a whinny and a snort, the horse leaps into the air and makes its way towards the gates. For a second, I watch as his mane blows in the wind and sends a fine mist of droplets onto my face.

"Okay. Here goes nothing," I say, already envying how easily the horse has already made it up and past the gates.

"Sorry about this, Tallia," Zarel says, grimacing.

"It's okay. Let's just get in this place get out, and continue on our... search."

Taking a deep breath I walk towards the clouds, my arms straining. I hold the air inside my lungs as my foot wavers above the first bit of fluff. I shake my head to get rid of the unnecessary fear that has crept into my mind. Planting my foot firmly on the cloud I let the air out. Not wanting to waste much more time, I will my legs to move and start jogging at a tortoise-like speed up the deadly white clouds. Zarel doesn't make any comments but does grunt a bit as I land on each 'step.' I imagine I am jostling his wounds and making him suffer. Oh well, I bet being born is more painful. The sweat is making its way down my brow as we near the gates. I feel the strong urge to cover my eyes from the brightness that is radiantly blazing from within. Since my hands are a little busy keeping my brother from falling to his death, again, I just squint my eyes best as I can without losing sight of what is under me. Reaching the very last cloud-stair, the gold structures tower in front of me as I stand catching my breath. Without warning, the gates start to creep open swinging inward. Zarel and I look at each other and shrug. Walking confidently through the gates I feel a strange tingly feeling wash over me that brings goosebumps to my skin. Once completely through the gates, I turn around startled as they close again. I turn back around and gasp at the sight that lies before us. The true Mount Olympus.

"Whoa..." Zarel says, in awe.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I say, to him unable to tear my gaze away from the palace.

The palace looks like a towering Greek wonder. The walls and towers are made of pure gold (haha, imagine that) and the windows are made of glass so clear that it looks like you could walk right through them. The entire structure is way more fascinating than either of us could ever describe it. A few feet in front of us is a brick road, much like the one from the magical ancient film, leading up to the palace's entrance. I can see Caspian jogging towards us, his shaggy brown hair blowing in the summertime breeze.

"Hey, you can set him down now. This is just a normal road. I promise," he says, after seeing the hesitant look on my face.

I set Zarel on his feet and my arms feel an immediate rush of energy; though they are aching like crazy.

"Do you feel well enough to walk now?" Caspian asks my still weary brother.

"Yeah," Zarel says, grunting as he moves his arm running his fingers through his hair. "I think I will be okay."

"Will it be too difficult for us to get inside the palace?" I ask being impatient.

"No. Not unless the guards aren't happy with you having no ID," Caspian says.

"Why would—" I stop. That would be a stupid question. Why would the guards not be happy with having two demi-gods walk into a palace?

Caspian looks at me strangely then says, "All right. Now that Q&A is over, it's time to go on the tour."

He walks toward the two guards stationed at the palace entrance. (Wow! The entrance to this place looks nothing like from my shows. I should become a movie producer so that those peeps down on Earth can have some straight facts.) We follow him hoping with all of our might that he can talk them into letting us get help for Zarel. They must have some sense enough to understand that a kid hunched over and gasping needs assistance.

"What is your business here?" asks the guard on the left as we halt in front of them.

"Caspian," the guard on the right says curtly nodding at the water-boy.

"Hey, guys. Looky here. I just stumbled upon those two demi-gods that were outside of the gates. I helped them to get through, but in doing so this one here got hurt," Caspian says, using his thumb to point to the side towards Zarel. "Is there by any chance we can get these two in even though they don't have an ID?"

"You know the rules, son," says the first guard softening up a bit. "Zeus doesn't want to take any chances of Hades or his minions getting into the palace. I'm sorry."

Caspian looks as if he was expecting this answer and doesn't waste a second taking a big stride towards the guard and whispering something in his ear.

"Uh-huh, uh-huh... Really?" the guard says, raising his eyebrows and glancing at Zarel.

The second guard is starting to fidget not knowing what his companion is being told.

"Hm. Well, if that is so, I guess I could call up to the boss. But you'd better be telling the truth or else he will throw one of his bolts at you. He is a very busy man you know," the guard says, appearing to comply with letting us in. "While I'm at it, I will send a message to Apollo and ask him which room Apollonia is staying in. She should be able to heal your friend here once I get permission from the big guy."

"Thank you so much, sir," I say, my hopes soaring. "It means a lot."

The guard just smiles warmly and nods his head.

"I will be right back. You just sit here," he says, as a cloud appears to the left of us.

I help Zarel hobble over to the cloud and we sit down. It is so fluffy and soft. Sitting on a cloud is more comfortable than any manufactured couch.

"So, Allen. How has the new position been going for you?" Caspian asks the remaining guard.

"Great! Moving up from apprentice to full-fledged guard has been exciting," says the younger-looking man.

"Good, good..." Caspian says, staring far away lost in his own thoughts and daydreams.

An awkward silence fills the space we occupy. Luckily, just then, we see Alec the guard heading back our way.

"Okay, kids. You have gotten permission to enter the palace. Apollonia is staying in room 4010 on the 400th level," Alec says, handing me a scroll. "If you follow this, her room will shine brighter on the map as you get closer to the real thing. A bit like the mortal game of 'Hot & Cold.'"

"Wait. I'm sorry. Did you say the 400th level, room 4010?!" I ask.

"Yeah. This palace has to house a lot of gods, goddesses, and demi-gods," Caspian states.

"Oh... Yeah," I say, feeling heat rush up my to my cheeks. "Well, what are we waiting for? Thank you very much, sir. You have helped us out a bunch."

"It was my pleasure," Alec says, beaming.

The two guards step aside and Caspian and I help Zarel make his way to the nearest elevator. Thank goodness for the modern technology in this place. I push the "up" button and watch the see-through elevator descend towards us. Ding, it sings as it slows to complete stop in front of us. The doors swoosh open and we step inside. I press the button for the 400th floor and look around as the doors close. Luckily the floor is solid looking and made of dark wood. The walls and the ceiling though, "Yikes!" I exclaim.

"What's wrong?" Caspian asks, looking worried.

"Oh, nothing. It's just that I haven't even been in a see-through elevator and it is a bit nerve-racking," I say, glancing over at Zarel expecting him to agree with me. Unfortunately for me, he is in too much pain to respond.

"Hey, it's okay," Caspian says, giving me a reassuring smile and a quick squeeze on the arm.

Oh goodness. Why did that just make my heart rate speed up? The average human heart rate is about 60 to 100 beats per minute. I think mine might be nearing around 200 beats per minute. Medically speaking, I have a 15-second case of extreme tachycardia. Look it up if you aren't as brilliant as me. Hey, don't judge. I have abnormal flare-ups of extreme genius. Nothing to be ashamed of.

Five minutes later the elevator does that annoying thing that makes your stomach rise to your eye-balls. AKA, it stops. We have arrived at the 400th level and all that is left to do is use the magical map and our brains to find room 4010. As we step out of the elevator, it whiskers away quickly making me jump.

"Fire-girl, you sure are nervous around me," Caspian says, having coincidentally come up behind me just as I jumped.

"Maybe that's because I don't want any more tsunamis crashing into me," I say, rolling my eyes.

"Fair enough," he says, shrugging his shoulders with a mischievous grin.

Caspian goes over to help Zarel walk down the long hallway to our right. Unfurling the map scroll I look to see that Apollonia's room is already shining a bit brighter. Glancing up to the right I see that the hallway the boys are heading down will be our fastest choice. I start to walk down the hall and look in wonder as I pass highly and quaintly decorated rooms. Room 4001, 4002, 4003... It looks as if all of these rooms are demi-goddesses rooms. The doors have top to bottom posters of famous mortal boy actors and singers, sparkly pink and gold flowers, and the letters of their first name's shimmering with gold and pink glitter. As I pass by room 4008 the map shines brighter and brighter.

"Almost there, buddy," Caspian says, to an exhausted-looking Zarel.

Finally, we make it to door 4010. I stand looking at the door not wanting to be the one to knock. Luckily, Caspian seems to sense that and hobbles over to the door with Zarel.

"Here goes nothing," he says, looking a bit nervous.

Caspian lifts up his hand to knock but the door swings open.

"Hi, there! You guys must be the ones that were walking around outside of the gate until Caspian found you."

In front of us stands a beautiful girl of about sixteen. She has long, brown, wavy hair that is loosely pulled up in a ponytail secured with a wide blue headband. Her dress is mid-length, made with cream-colored layered chiffon and styled with a halter neckline. Her eyes are a piercing emerald green and she unsurprisingly has a quiver hanging over her shoulder. I already see her as a threat. Prissy, and too pretty. My eyes flit over the room looking for the closest weapon. On top of that, Caspian probably knows her and they are already dating or something. Get ahold of yourself, Tallia. I clear my throat and try to push down my thoughts as I spit out faster than anticipated. "My brother is hurt and needs your help. I think he may have a broken rib or two and there aren't any normal doctors around here."

"Well then. Let's see what I can do. Why don't you come on in and stay for a bit," she says, in my opinion, a way too cheerful voice.

I look over at my little brother expecting to see a mirrored look of disgust in his eyes, but alas, I should have known better. Fourteen-year-old boy brains don't work right and he is instead looking at this girl as if she is an angel. If he were to drop his jaw any lower he would start drooling. I glance over to Caspian to see if he too has the same dreamy effect washing over him, but he is still sensible and just chuckles looking away. Not wanting to waste any more time with this apparent drop-dead gorgeous girl, I quickly grab Zarel's arm and drag him into her quarters.

"Ow!" he squeaks. "You could be a bit more gentle!"

I just roll my eyes, ignoring him. At least he snapped out of that trance easily enough.

I see a spark of something flash over Apollonia's face changing her expression quickly from cheerful and kind to peering through me right into my soul. Just as soon as it appeared though, it is gone and she smiles even brighter.

"Right this way!" Apollonia says, directing us into her entry room. I walk through the doorway and it feels as if a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. There seems to be some strange sort of essence that relieves some of the heartache and pain of the last few days. It must not be just me that feels it for Zarel seems to stand up taller. Then again, it could be because he silently refused help from me and Caspian and instead is walking beside Apollonia with a stupid grin on his face.

Apollonia's quarters are quite organized and nothing seems out of place. The ceilings are high and the room wide. The walls are off-white with huge diamond-shaped designs spread across each. Guiding us further into her room we walk around a huge tapestry-like curtain and into her bedroom. My mouth drops open and I stop dead in my tracks. In front of me is the most beautiful room I have ever seen in all my life. On the left wall, a huge picture window is placed with rich purple and creamy white curtains. To the right, an eloquently designed gilded door, likely leading to the lavatory. And on the far wall extending towards the center of the room, the most extraordinary bed I have ever laid eyes upon.

"Wow," is the only word I can manage to spit out.

The footboard is low to the floor and made out of two thick entwined pieces of gold. In the center of the entwined metal is a floral design made of rose gold. The headboard is of normal height and created out of a large white board held in place by two gold posts. The bed itself is enormous and in a square shape. The sheets are pure white and the comforter is silk created with a light shade of violet with a dark purple accented pattern. The comforter spills off the sides of the bed onto the grass-like white rug which lays extending beneath the bed. The pillows are more decorative looking than comfortable but creatively accent the room. The wall behind the bed has patterns of gold bars and circles and there are two brightly shining lamps on either side of the bed. Now you know why I am in such awe.

"Huh, nothing much has changed, Apollonia. It definitely still fits right along with your style," says an interestingly un-impressed Caspian.

He has been here before?! This makes me suspicious. Zarel on the other hand, not surprisingly, just looks all the more adoringly at Apollonia. I am beginning to think that this wasn't such a good idea after all. Just what I need is for my little brother to be obsessed with a demi-goddess. He will want to stay here on Olympus instead of going- home. With all that has been happening, I was starting to forget that we have an even bigger problem on our hands. We don't have a home anymore.

"Can we live here too?....." Zarel says all dreamy-eyed.

I just roll my eyes. Ares is trying to find a way to take the throne, and I need to figure out who my parents are. I know that the God of War is weak and unable to make the journey here, but it still scares me of how powerful he is. If not himself being able to get here and harm us, then one of the gods, goddesses, or his own demi-god kids that have his back. This hits me in the gut all over again. Instead of complaining about Zarel I should really be thankful that we have someone to heal him. He is the one who I trust the most in life and our powers combined are our strongest weapon.

Apollonia interrupts my thoughts. "Do you guys mind stepping out for a moment while I fix him up real quick?" she says, unnervingly innocent.

"Over my dead body," I say, plopping down and her bed clearly making it known I am not going anywhere.

I happen to glance at Caspian in time to see him trying to conceal a smirk. He walks over to the bed and sits down next to me making the bed wobble and in turn making my shoulder accidentally hit his. I blush, unable to hide my giddy embarrassment, and quickly make the space wider between us. I glance up to see Zarel roll his eyes and go back to stealing glances at Apollonia.

"Okay. Well, that's settled then," Apollonia says, looking a bit flustered. "Zarel, sit right here, please." In the previously empty spot where she is pointing, a chair magically appears along with a table covered by well-organized medical instruments, ointments, and bandages. Still being a bit new to this whole magic thing, my eyes widen and I raise an eyebrow gasping a bit.

"Pretty cool, huh?" Caspian says, leaning over to whisper in my ear.

I nod trying to conceal the goosebumps that just coursed across my skin. I have really got to get over this kid. I don't need any distractions in the events ahead.

"So, how come you guys are here?"

"In this room?" I say, pleading in my head that he isn't stupid.

"No," he says, rolling his eyes, "I mean why are you here on Olympus?"

"Well, it is kind of a long story... But to cut it short we are running from Ares—"

Everything in the room stops and Caspian and Apollonia stare at me with looks of fear.

"Ares?" Apollonia says, shakily.

"Um, yeah. Well... uh, as I said, Caspian," I say, turning back to speak to him, "to make this long story short, we are here to find out who our real parents are."

"Well, I am not really sure why you are running from such a powerful god, but I can help you find out who your parents are," Caspian says, looking as if he is trying to shake Ares out of his head.

"You can?" I say getting excited.

"Yep. I will lead you to the pedestal room after we are done here."

Across the room, Zarel sits down in the chair with the aid of Apollonia. I can tell that sitting down causes him a lot of pain, but he doesn't express it.

As Apollonia starts working on Zarel's wounds, I take out the map that the guard gave us and give it another look over. Expecting to see only the apartment-like areas of Olympus shown, I am startled to see places appear that are currently going through my mind. Our little town of Zeesus back down in Greece. My home and backyard. And Dr. Ascle's office. What I am really thinking of though are my parents and all of the people involved in the chaos back down on Earth. I can't wait to find out who my real parents are and finally be able to live a normal life.

"Okay! All done," Apollonia says, once again interrupting my thoughts. She waves her hand over the table and everything disappears. Zarel blinks rapidly looking confused.

"Is there something wrong?" the radiant girl asks, sounding concerned.

"No, it's just that... How did you do that so quickly? I didn't even feel a thing!" Zarel says, looking a bit freaked out and amazed at the same time.

"You have really got to get used to all of this god stuff, Zarel," Caspian says. "We have the ability to heal and do magic very quickly."

Zarel just kinda nods his head and stands.

"Well, you should probably get going now so that you can get on with your day," Apollonia says, hinting for us to leave as she slowly walks out of the room.

The three of us follow her back out through her living room area and to her entry door. Opening it, she gestures for us to walk through.

"Thank you again, Apollonia," Zarel says, hanging back a bit wistfully.

"No problem. Come back anytime," she says, blushing a bit.

Zarel beams and practically prances through the doorway. I smile and wave to Apollonia ready to get away from her presence and get my brother back.

"Do you know the way to Zeus's throne room pedestal room thingy?" I ask Caspian.

"Yep. Right this way," he says, leading us back down the hall and to the elevator.

As we step on and start moving back down towards the main floor, I get that wishy-washy feeling again and stumble a bit. Immediately, Zarel and Caspian come to my side and support me. I just glare at them and shove them off feeling embarrassed that I would come across as needing help from a boy. Zarel just shrugs being used to my sudden mood changes but Caspian looks a bit hurt. I feel a bit bad about it but decide that he will get over it by the time we are off the elevator. Not two seconds after I think this, the whole elevator shudders and lurches downward making me panic and my stomach drop.

"AAAAH!!" we all scream diving to hold on to each other.

"What's happening!?" I yell at Caspian.

"I don't know!?"

Zarel's face turns deathly white. "I feel sick!!"

The puffy, creamy, white clouds outside the glass whiz by as the elevator picks up speed.

I lunge for the button panel trying to hit the "help" button but miss. The car wobbles and throws me across the floor. I shake attempting to stand back up and walk back towards the button panel again but am thrown to the floor once more.

Phwwwwht!! A piercing whistle sounds from behind me. Caspian frantically looks out the window after whistling as loudly as he could. Then, out of the middle of nowhere, his water horse appears next to the plummeting elevator.

"Tallia!" Caspian shouts, "You need to blast fire through the glass so that we can jump onto River!"

"What!? No! I can't!" I yell, panicking.

"Tallia, we don't have a choice! It's our only way out!" he says, looking agonized. "Feel the power and harness it! Hurry! We are almost to the bottom!"

"Okay!"

Come on, Tallia. You either figure this out, or we all die. Just because we are children of the gods doesn't mean we don't perish and go to Hades. Taking a deep breath I stand up and try to steady myself. The whole elevator is shaking even more as it is dropping out of control. Focus, draw the energy from your core and blast it at the wall. Everyone is depending on you. I spread my palms towards the wall and strain my mind to blast through that glass and get us out of here and to safety. With no time to lose, I feel my powers obey and the flames shoot out of my hands and instantly blast through the glass.

"JUMP!" Caspian shouts hopping out the red hot hole.

I jump out after him and land right on the horse.

"Hurry, Zarel!" I yell holding my arms out ready to catch him.

He jumps and lands in my arms with an "Oof!"

We come to a stop hovering in the air as the elevator crashes with a huge clang and shatters below us.

"We are alive," I say, panting.

River glides through the nearest balcony and lands in the hall. Zarel flops out of my arms and I hop off the horse after him. Not wanting to waste time talking about what just happened, I say to Caspian, "So, where is that pedestal room?"

We walk through a long, wide and tall hallway until we reach enormous golden doors. They have two giant metal ring pulls on them and, like everything else in this place, have an intricate gilded design. We near the door and two guards seemingly appear out of thin air and heave to pull the heavy doors open for us. Caspian nods at the two men and then continues into the room with us close on his heels. In front of us, I expected to see a throne room. Instead, I see twelve birdbath-like pedestals placed in a symmetrical circle. Caspian stops near the outside of the ring and turns to us.

"You go ahead first, Zarel," Caspian says, stepping aside.

"What do I do?" Zarel asks.

"Step inside the center of the circle. Walk around stopping at each pedestal as the objects start to rise out of the bottom. This is going to determine who your parents are, Zarel. It will also help you delve further into how powerful your powers are."

Zarel looks a bit shocked and turns to look at me. His expression is one of a wide-eyed 'is this the right thing to do?' kind of look. I just grimace a bit attempting to smile and give him a small nod. He takes a deep breath and walks into the very center of what is going to change his life forever. He looks around waiting for something to happen. Suddenly, the pedestals start to hum and glow. He braces himself for impact, but instead, twelve objects float above their resting places. He does as Caspian told him and starts walking around the circle stopping for a moment at each pedestal. He walks up to the fifth and pauses. Hovering above it is a strange black scepter-like object. I hold my breath as Zarel waits for something to happen. The scepter just floats back down and doesn't move. Zarel shrugs and moves on. Going to the sixth pedestal a single arrow floats. He walks up to it and it sinks back down. This same thing happens for each object on each pedestal until he reaches the twelfth one. He takes a deep breath and steps near the final object. Floating in the air is a thunderbolt buzzing with electricity. The thunderbolt rises higher and higher into the air becoming brighter and brighter. Zarel shields his eyes as the blinding light flashes and then goes out. Appearing on his forehead for a split second is a burn in the shape of a thunderbolt.

Zarel's face is frozen in a look of shock as the thunderbolt disappears, melting back into the air and re-appearing back on the pedestal. I for one have been holding my breath just about the whole time and finally, let it go with a huge whoosh!

My body feels drained and I stumble, trying not to fall over.

"Tallia!" Zarel shouts running over to my side and holding me up. He looks frightened. "What's wrong!?"

"Tallia! Are you okay?" he says, fear creeping into his voice.

I swallow and gulp for air.

"Zar- ..." I start sweating.

"Tallia!?" His eyes widen and he looks concerned. "How about you just sit down and take a rest."

"No. I need to do something. There is something..." I shove the boys off and half drag myself in a purposeful walk towards the pedestals.

"Tallia? What is going on?" Caspian says, his voice faltering as he attempts to keep it steady.

I just give him a blank stare and continue on my way.

I step into the circle and wait.

"Tallia, I don't know what is going on, but this seems like something the Oracle needs you to do," Caspian says.

The pedestals start to hum and glow and I close my eyes. The force of the truth I just learned of feels as if it is draining all of the life out of me. My eyes snap open and I walk towards the first pedestal. A ruby-red flower starts to rise higher into the air getting brighter and brighter. I abandon that pedestal and head towards the second one. A flaming hammer rises and glows brightly. Gasp! Hephestus.

I walk back towards the center of the ring and the two objects fly into place above my head. I close my eyes and raise my arms as an invisible force lifts me off the ground and into the air. I can feel magic swirling around me and I hear gasps from below. The light that comes off of the objects is brighter than it was for Zarel. Through my eyelids I see it searing around me. Then, just like that, it flashes and goes out. I drop to the ground landing on my feet and one hand crouched just like a cat. I slowly rise up as I feel a sharp pain on my forehead come and go.

Before anyone can say a single word, I hear an ear-piercing sound echoing outside and all around the building.

“Intruder! He has gotten in the palace!” a voice yells.

“We need to get out of here fast!” Caspian says, running to me and grabbing my hand.

He drags me towards the door and Zarel follows closely behind.

“No! We need to stay here and help. What if Zarel and I are the cause of this!?” I huff through heavy breathing as we run down the hall.

“Someone or something has gotten into the palace! We need to find safety!” Caspian yells rushing to explain his reasoning.

“Could that have been why our elevator malfunctioned and almost killed us!?” Zarel shouts over the sirens.

“I wouldn’t doubt it!” Caspian shouts back.

“Caspian! Stop!” I yell stopping in my tracks and jolting him making him stumble.

“Fine, fine...” Caspian says, giving in and starting to turn around.

He lets go of my hand and sprints to the side of the hall and out onto one of the balconies. FWEET!! Caspian whistles as loudly as possible. His water horse comes from the middle of nowhere and lands quickly on the balcony.

Just then, an earth-shaking roar booms from hundreds of feet below us.

“Hop on!” Caspian yells.

“But we need to stay here!” I yell back.

“We are! But we need to at least get around on him so that we aren’t as slow!” Caspian shouts being sensible.

“What about Zarel!? He can’t go on the water horse!” I say, being even more sensible.

Turning around to glance at Zarel, I hear another high pitched whistle mixed in with the still blaring noises from below. This time it is coming from Zarel. Just as Caspian's horse came out of the middle of nowhere, a horse made of swirling dark storm clouds materializes out of thin air and stands in front of Zarel tossing its staticky mane. My mouth drops open. With no time to stand in awe pondering, I hop on the back of Caspian's horse and Zarel hops on his.

With a whinny and a shove off the railing, we are off and shooting through the halls almost as fast as an airplane. An airplane skydiving towards the sound of the most deadly creature I have ever heard.

"Caspian, my dad is Hephestus," I say, still in an adrenaline shock.

"Um, yeah. That's pretty cool." He responds too distracted.

Left, right, and left again we shoot through the halls.

"What do you think came into the palace?" I say, loudly to Caspian holding onto him tighter as we take a quick turn.

"My best guess is a minion of Hades. They are always trying to get into the palace to cause chaos. But if it isn't..."

As we whiz by the hundreds of windows lining the walls, I notice something strange.

"Hey, um, Caspian," I say, my voice faltering. "What is that?"

Outside the windows, the world is turning a dark shade of gray. It looks as if a spiraling black soot is rising from the ground and making its way up the whole palace. My body is thrown forward as Caspian stops his horse abruptly. Zarel stops as well and hovers next to us.

"What's going on, guys?"

We both look at Caspian expectantly awaiting his answer. His eyes grow wide with fear and his face pales.

"Ares."