Chapter 1

The Call

Max’s POV

Max here. Right now, I am with Jake, Ash, Wendy, and Chloe along with 3 new people: Jason, Paul, and Martha. We are at a base on a planet that’s not Earth, because we just got teleported here. This planet seems…abandoned and in ruins. Let me catch you up.

So, Ash, Chloe, Wendy, Jake, and I were at our school, Mountain View High School in Mesa, Arizona. We were in History class, taking notes. That was when my phone rang.

Right now, I’m wearing a white shirt, jeans, some sneakers, and a hoodie. Ash is wearing a blue polo shirt, with jeans and sneakers. Jake is wearing a leather jacket, jeans, and sneakers. Chloe is wearing a pink shirt, jeans, and heels. Wendy is wearing a purple shirt, jeans, and heels.

“Turn your phone on silent, Max,” Jake whispered. I took my phone out of my pocket. I was about to put it on silent, until I looked at who was calling. I sighed, because it was Sarah from the hero agency. I raised my hand.`

“Yes, Max?” our teacher, Mr. Pruett asked. Mr. Pruett was wearing his dress shirt, a tie, dress pants and dress shoes. He had dark brown hair and sea green eyes.

“Can Ash, Jake, Wendy, Chloe and I go out into the hallway?” I asked.

“Why?” Mr. Pruett asked. I walked up to Mr. Pruett’s desk and showed him that the hero agency was calling. Mr. Pruett looked at me. He knit his eyebrows, then raised an eyebrow, as if I was making a joke, but I stared at him, my face showing no emotion, my expression dead serious.

“Is that…?”

Mr. Pruett’s voice faded with shock. I nodded.

“So, should I answer it, or should I have the government come get me, or what should I do?” I whispered.

“You guys can go out into the hallway.”

“Thanks.”

I motioned for Ash, Chloe, Wendy, and Jake to follow me out into the hallway. They got up, knitting their eyebrows in confusion, and went outside.

“What, Max? Why are we here?” Ash asked.

“We have an issue.”

“What issue?” Jake asked.

I showed them my phone and that Sarah was calling.

“Why is she calling?” Wendy asked.

“How should I know? What do you expect me to do, ask why she’s calling?”

“Guys! Stop arguing and answer the phone!” Chloe snapped.

I didn’t want to argue with her, so I answered it. Sure enough, it was Sarah. I turned my speaker on.

“Oh, thank god you finally answered!” Sarah said in relief.

“This better be good, Sarah. We’re in school.”

“Yes, I am aware you’re in school. Anyway, this is important. A man named Harold Garbridge, who is the general of a base on a planet called Barthow, requested me to bring him 8 heroes. You are 5 of them.”

Everyone stared at me. They were expecting an answer. I shook my head, looking confused, as I did not have an answer.

“What’s going on?” Ash mouthed.

I shrugged, and mouthed, “I have no idea.”

“Okay…Why does Harold need 8 heroes?” I asked.

“His family and power crystals got taken, and his planet, Barthow is under attack by a man named Drake Stoneridge. Plus, his base lost power.”

“So…Why does he need us?” Jake asked.

“He needs help defeating Drake, along with fixing his base.”

“How does he expect 8 teenagers to do this? Especially if I cannot focus. You know I have ADHD!”

“Simple answer: Max is great with tools, so he can help with the base. And correct me if  I’m wrong, but do you still have that toolbelt from the last quest?”

“Yeah, I do.”

“Great! So, you can help fix the base.”

I sighed. Clearly, she wouldn’t let us out of this.

“Okay. We will do it. How do we get to Barthow?”

“You will be teleported. Just tell me when you’re ready.”

“Got it.”

We walked back into the classroom and grabbed our backpacks. We started to walk out, but Mr. Pruett walked in front of us and blocked the door. He raised an eyebrow.

“Woah. Where do you think you’re going?” Mr. Pruett demanded.

“Um…” Ash couldn’t get himself to say it. So, I said it for him.

“We’re going to save the world. Bye.”

We started to move around Mr. Pruett, but he blocked us again.

“Not so fast, guys. What are you doing?” Mr. Pruett asked.

“I just told you. We’re going to save the world,” I said.

“Yeah, this had better be a joke, Max,” Mr. Pruett said.

“Would I joke about the world ending?” I asked. Mr. Pruett shrugged.

“With you, it’s hard to tell. Jake, is he telling the truth?” Mr. Pruett asked. Jake nodded.

“Yes, Mr. Pruett. He is telling the truth,” Jake said.

“Is there any way to talk you out of this?” Mr. Pruett asked with hope in his voice. I shook my head.

“Nope.”

Mr. Pruett sighed.

“Okay. Go save the world,” he said.

We walked out, but I turned.

“Do we get extra credit if we survive?”

“Max, come on!” Ash said.

“But do we? I need it since I’m failing.”

Mr. Pruett chuckled.

“If you survive that long, then sure.”

I walked out of the classroom.

“Alright, Sarah. We are ready. How is this going to work?”

“Look under your shoes,” Sarah said.

“Uhh, why?” I asked, weirded out.

“Just do it and tell me if there’s a golden light,” Sarah instructed.

It was weird, but we looked under our shoes. Sure enough, there was a golden light.

“Yes, there is a golden light,” I said.

“Okay, good. The light will rise until it covers your faces,” Sarah said.

“What happens after it covers our faces?” Jake asked.

“Once the light covers your faces, you should be teleported,” Sarah explained.

“Got it,” Ash said.

“Where is the light at now?” Sarah asked.

We looked down to see the light was creeping up our chests.

“It’s at our chests,” I replied.

“Excellent! You should be teleported any minute now,” Sarah said.

We waited. A few seconds later, the light covered our faces and we teleported. When the light faded, we were on a place that was NOT Earth. It seemed like a completely different planet. Not to mention, this planet that we teleported to was in ruins and seemed abandoned. We looked around. There was not anything interesting, except for the massive base in front of us. I stared at it.

“Max? What’s up, buddy?” Jake asked.

“Nothing. I’m just looking at this base. We should go in.”

“Absolutely not,” Ash said.

“Aww! Why not?” I complained.

“Because who knows what could be in there? There could be really bad people inside.”

“So? If there are bad people, we can fight them. Besides, why would Sarah send us here if the base had bad people?” I asked.

Ash’s POV

“That’s true. Okay, fine. We can go in. But stay alert and stick together.”

Too late. Before I could finish talking, Max was already inside, gawking at everything. I sighed, then looked at Jake.

“Jake, will you please try to keep your boyfriend under control?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Got it.”

Jake walked ahead. Chloe walked up to me, with Wendy behind her. I took a breath from relief and exhaustion.

“Hey,” I said.

“Hey, Ash. How are you holding up?” Chloe asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I’m not 100% on board.”

“What do you mean?” Wendy asked.

“I mean I’m not sure if I want to save the world, or whatever.”

“But we’re heroes. It’s our job,” Chloe said.

“I know, but sometimes I wish I weren’t a hero. That way I could, you know, have a normal life. I wish I was a normal teenager who didn’t have to risk his life almost every day and not have to worry or think about if I’ll die or not,” I admitted.

“I get that but think about the feeling we get after knowing we’ve saved lives. Do you really want to give that up?” Wendy asked. She had a point. I shook my head.

“No, I don’t.”

“That’s good to hear. Are you ready to go inside the base?” Wendy asked.

I nodded.

“Yeah. Even if I am not, we should still go in after Max. Just because Jake is there with him, that does not mean Max won’t try to get Jake roped in and goof off with him. Come on. Let us go,” I said. We walked into the base.

Max’s POV

I ran inside the base before Ash could finish talking. Instantly after I walked in, I stopped and looked around. Sure, it was just a hallway, and it was in ruins, but somehow, I could see what it looked like before it got destroyed, or whatever, and what I saw was an amazingly built structure. The top and bottom had a gold trim. It was a shame this was in ruins, but that was not a big problem. I could fix it, or even improve it. However, I could not stop. I had to keep moving. I walked to the end of the hallway to see a door. There were 2 buttons: a red one, and a black one, which was below a speaker. Just then, I heard Jake.

“Max? You in here?” Jake called.

“I’m at the end of the hallway,” I called. Jake walked over to me. I was still looking at the buttons. Jake saw what I was looking at.

“Which one do you think opens it?” Jake asked.

“I’m guessing the button below the speaker is a doorbell. If that is the case, I’m assuming the red button opens the door.”

I reached for the button to press it; my palm open. A small yellow light shone in my hand. I knew that light was not there before. So, if the light was not there before, then…I flipped my hand over so that my palm was facing up. And on my palm, there was a small flame. I was afraid this would happen. I had sworn to never do it again. Not after the incident. Jake saw, and his eyes widened.

“Max, what? I thought you said you wouldn’t do it again.”

“I know I said that.”

“They why-?”

“I didn’t know it would happen.”

My eyes began to water as I remembered the incident: the day Uncle Mark died. His workshop had burned down, and he was still inside. His death was all my fault. Jake saw my eyes watering, and he knew what I was thinking.

“It wasn’t your fault.”

I did not have to ask what he was talking about.

“Yes, it was.”

“How was it your fault? You hadn’t realized it would happen.”

“But I knew about my powers. Everyone in the family did. If only I had been more careful…”

“But you didn’t know it would happen.”

“Exactly. Well, technically I knew.” I said.

“What do you mean?”

“I felt this urge…This…feeling in my mind. I heard a voice.”

“A voice?”

I nodded.

“What did it say?”

“It told me I knew I had to do it. It urged me to do it.”

“And you did.”

I nodded. A few tears came down. Jake hugged me.

“Hey, bud. Don’t worry. Whoever or whatever the voice is that you heard, we’ll find out who or what it is, okay?” Jake asked.

I nodded.

“Alright.”

We heard footsteps from the entrance of the base. We turned to see Ash and the girls.

“Hey boys,” Chloe said.

“Hey,” I muttered.

“Is Max okay?” Wendy asked.

“No, I’m not okay. Not at all.”

“Max, what’s wrong?” Ash asked. I opened my palm. As expected, a flame appeared.

Ash and the girls stared at it.

“Max-.”

“It’s back…”

“But you swore-.”

“I know what I said! I didn’t know this would happen, even though I had an urge.”

Everybody stared at me, and nobody spoke for a minute or two. Jake broke the silence.

“We shouldn’t stand around. We should go in.”

Everyone looked at me.

“What? Why is everyone looking at me?” I demanded.

“Are you going to open the door, or what?” Ash asked.

I stared at the red button, then at my hands, which were shaking with fear. I jerked my hand back and put it in my pocket.

“You okay?” Jake asked.

“No, I’m not. I can’t open the door.”

“Why not?” Ash asked.

“Look at my hands! Do you not see this?” I demanded.

“Okay, so your hands can be on fire. Why can’t you open the door because of that?”

“I don’t want to open the door because I’m scared that I’ll burn something.”

“Oh. Well then, I’ll open the door.”

Ash pressed the red button, and the door opened, revealing a room with 3 hallways: one to the left, middle, and right. We walked into the hallway to the left. Inside was a room filled with armor. We walked out and then went into the hallway to the right. Inside was a room filled with weapons of all sorts: from bows and staffs to swords and shotguns.

“Dude, this is awesome,” I said.

We walked out and then went into the middle room, which was a hallway. We walked until we had to open a door. We opened the door, and it was a room filled with computers, tools, etc. To our right was a door. We opened it to see another hallway, which stretched for some time before we turned left, still in the hallway. After a bit of walking, we made it to another door, but it was open.

The five of us looked at each other. It was clear that we were thinking the same thing: Why was this door open? Are there other people here besides us and the employees? If so, why are all the other doors closed but this one? Why didn’t the employees move or react near us? A million questions flooded my mind. After a few minutes of standing there, my hand moved up.

As my hand moved, I felt heat in my hand.

‘Please, no. Whoever or whatever is doing this, make it stop,’ I pleaded in my head.

‘Why should we make it stop? This is what you were born for. The fire in your hands is not a curse. It is a gift. Use it to the best of your ability,’ a voice said in my head.

I shook my head.

‘No. I swore to never use it again. Not after last time.’

Jake shook me and snapped me back into reality.

“Max? Max! Are you okay?” Jake asked.

“Huh? What happened?”

“You moved your hand, and then you stopped moving. It was like you were frozen. What happened?”

“I-.”

I wanted to tell them, but I was a little bit scared. I did not know how they would feel.

“I’ll tell you later.”

“What-?”

“Let’s just go inside.”

We walked inside. It seemed like a lounge: there was a TV, a couch, a fridge, cabinets stocked with snacks, etc.

“Now this is nice,” I said.

I must admit, we were so distracted that we did not even notice the 2 boys and girl staring at us as we were goofing off.

“Hey! What are you doing?” a voice demanded.

I thought it was Ash.

“Ash! Can’t you see I’m busy?” I snapped.

“Who is Ash?” the voice asked.

The voice was female. I looked up.

“Uh, hi,” Jake said.

“Hello. What are your names?” The girl asked. She was pretty. I walked over to her.

“My name’s Max. And you are? Wait, do not tell me. You are a beautiful young lady waiting to fall in love. Fear not, as I am here,” I said.

The girl looked at me in annoyance.

“You’re such a freak,” she said.

Ash stepped in between us.

“Sorry about Max. My name’s Ash. That is Jake, Wendy, and Chloe. What about you? What are your names?” Ash asked.

“Jason, Paul and Martha,” Jason said.

“Nice to meet you guys,” I said.

“Nice to meet you too,” Paul said.

“So, what do we do now? What are we even supposed to be doing?” I asked.

“We’re supposed to be helping Harold,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Oh yes. You are right. Where even is Harold?” I asked. After I asked that, a man walked into the lounge. He saw us, and his expression changed from normal to surprised and shocked.

“Hey! Who are you? How did you get in here?” the man demanded.

“Are you Harold Garbridge?” Jake asked. The man nodded but looked surprised.

“I-I am! How did you know that?” Harold asked in surprise.

“We got teleported here by Sarah from the hero agency. I think we’re the eight heroes you need,” Ash said.

Jason’s POV

My name is Jason Bell. Let me tell you how my best friend, Paul Turner and I got to Barthow. We were in English class, reading our books while Ms. Margaret, our teacher, was talking. That was when Paul’s phone rang. Ms. Margaret looked up.

“Whose phone was that?” she demanded. Paul raised his hand nervously.

“Mine, sorry. Can I see who it is?” Paul asked. Ms. Margaret nodded. Paul took out his phone to see who was calling. When he saw who was calling, Paul slapped his hand over his mouth. He shot his hand up in the air.

“Yes, Paul?” Ms. Margaret asked.

“Can Jason and I go out into the hall?” Paul asked. I looked up, not expecting to be involved with this. Ms. Margaret raised an eyebrow, casting Paul a confused look.

“Why do you need to go out into the hall?” Ms. Margaret asked.

“To answer my phone,” Paul said.

“Why can’t you answer it here?”

“Because it’s important and might be private.”

“Okay, so if it’s important and private, why does Jason have to go out into the hall?” Ms. Margaret asked.

“He needs to be involved with what has to be said,” Paul insisted.

“Is there any way I can talk you out of this?” Ms. Margaret asked with a hint of hope in her voice. Paul shook his head.

“No, there is not,” Paul said. Ms. Margaret sighed.

“Okay, you guys can go out into the hall,” Ms. Margaret said. Her tone made it clear she was going to regret her decision.

Paul went out into the hall and motioned for me to follow. I went out into the hall, closing the door behind me. When I got out into the hall, I saw Paul was pacing and muttering nervously.

“Oh my god, this is crazy!” Paul muttered nervously.

“Paul, is everything okay?” I asked. He didn’t respond or notice me, as he was too busy muttering and pacing.

“Paul, who’s calling?” I asked in a louder tone. Paul noticed me that time. He rushed over to me, a panicked look on his face.

“Jason! This is crazy!” Paul exclaimed.

“Who’s calling?” I repeated.

“Do you know that hero agency in California?” Paul asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I’ve heard of them. Why?” I asked.

“They’re calling me!” Paul exclaimed.

“Wait what?” I asked in surprise. Paul nodded and showed me his phone. Sure enough, the contact name read “Hero Agency”. I knit my eyebrows and gave Paul a confused look.

“How do you know it’s not a random person saying they’re the hero agency?” I asked in a confused tone.

“I added them to my contacts,” Paul admitted.

“You’re a stalker.”

“I am not! Oh, man, Jason! What do I do? Jason, you have to help me!” Paul said. His tone made it clear he was freaking out.

“Stop freaking out and answer the phone!” I instructed him. Paul answered the phone.

“Hello? H-hero agency?” Paul managed to ask.

“Hello. I’m Sarah from the hero agency. What is your name?” Sarah asked. I reached for Paul’s phone but waited for his permission. He nodded and I grabbed it.

“Jason Bell and Paul Turner,” I said.

“Nice to meet you guys,” Sarah said.

“Nice to meet you too. Hey, Sarah. I have a question.”

“Yes, Paul?”

“Why are you calling me?” Paul asked.

“I’m calling because a man named Harold Garbridge had his planet Barthow invaded and his family and power crystals were stolen by a man named Drake Stoneridge,” Sarah said. Paul and I exchanged confused looks.

“So, why are you calling…?” I asked.

“I’m calling to say that Harold requested eight heroes. You are two of them,” Sarah said.

“Oh, okay. So, where are we going?” I asked.

“You’ll be going to the planet Barthow,” Sarah said.

“How will we get there?” Paul asked.

“I’ll teleport you,” Sarah said.

“Oh, cool. Wait, did you say you’ll teleport us?” Paul asked in surprise.

“Yes, I did.”

“How will that work?” I asked.

“I’ll explain when you guys are ready,” Sarah said.

“Okay. We’ll go tell our teacher,” Paul said.

We walked back into the classroom and went up to Ms. Margaret’s desk.

“Ms. Margaret, can we talk to you out in the hall?” Paul whispered. Ms. Margaret nodded and followed us out into the hall, closing the door behind her.

“So, you wanted to talk to me?” Ms. Margaret asked. We nodded.

“Yeah, we do,” Paul said.

“About what?” Ms. Margaret asked. Paul hesitated, as he was nervous.

“This is going to sound crazy,” Paul said. Ms. Margaret chuckled.

“Paul, please. I deal with five classes of forty kids five days a week. I think I can handle whatever it is you have to say,” Ms. Margaret said. Paul took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell Ms. Margaret about the call.

“We just got asked to help a man get his family and some sort of crystals back from another man and they live on a planet called Barthow with six other people,” Paul blurted, going faster by the word. When he finished, Ms. Margaret stared at Paul in concern and confusion.

“Paul, are you feeling okay? Do I need to send you to the nurse?” Ms. Margaret asked in a concerned expression.

“I’m not crazy and I’m not making this up, I swear! Ask Jason, he’ll tell you the truth!” Paul insisted. Ms. Margaret’s gazed went from Paul to me.

“Jason, is Paul telling the truth?” Ms. Margaret asked. I nodded.

“Yes, Ms. Margaret. Paul is telling the truth,” I said. Ms. Margaret crossed her arms and gave Paul and I a skeptical look.

“I don’t believe you,” she said. Paul and I stared at Ms. Margaret in shock and disbelief.

“What? But, Ms. Margaret, we *are* telling the truth! Ask Sarah! She’s from the hero agency! She’ll tell you the whole truth,” I insisted. Ms. Margaret shrugged.

“Okay then. Sarah, is this true? Are Jason and Paul and six other people going to help get these crystals back?” Ms. Margaret asked. She had a smirk on her face, showing her reaction if Sarah said we were lying. Ms. Margaret was not ready for the truth.

“Yes, ma’am, that is true. Jason, Paul and six others have been chosen as heroes to help Harold get his family and power crystals back from an evil warlord named Drake Stoneridge,” Sarah said. Ms. Margaret’s jaw dropped in shock and surprise, as she wasn’t expecting Sarah to say that.

“So, can we go?” Paul asked with hope in his voice. Ms. Margaret sighed, making it clear she was going to regret her decision either way. Finally, she nodded.

“Yes, I guess you can go,” Ms. Margaret grumbled. Her tone made it clear she wasn’t happy with her choice. Paul and I exchanged confused glances, then gave Ms. Margaret a confused look.

“Really? You’re letting us go?” Paul asked in surprise. Ms. Margaret nodded.

“Yeah, I am. Now, go save the world, heroes,” Ms. Margaret said. She walked back into the classroom.

“Alright, Sarah. We’re ready to be teleported,” Paul said.

“Okay.”

“So, how will this work?” I asked.

“Look under your shoes,” Sarah said. Paul and I exchanged nervous and confused glances.

“Uhh, why?” Paul asked in a confused tone.

“Just do it,” Sarah instructed. It was weird, but we did what Sarah instructed. We looked under our shoes to see a gold light.

“Paul, you see the gold light too, right?” I asked. Paul nodded.

“Yeah, I do. Why?” Paul asked.

“I just wanted to make sure I’m not going crazy. Sarah, why is there a golden light under our shoes?” I asked.

“That golden light is how I’ll teleport you to Barthow,” Sarah said.

“What do you mean? How can a light teleport us?” Paul asked.

“Well, the light will rise from under your shoe to above your shoe and so on until it covers your faces,” Sarah said.

“What happens when it covers our faces?” I asked.

“Once the light covers your faces, you should be teleported,” Sarah explained.

“Oh, okay,” Paul said.

“Where is the light at now?” Sarah asked.

We looked down to see the light was creeping up our chests.

“It’s at our chests,” I replied.

“Excellent! You should be teleported any second,” Sarah said.

We waited. A few seconds later, the light covered our faces and we teleported. When the light faded, we weren’t in the hall. In fact, we weren't even at *school*. We were standing on a rocky ground.

“Did it work? What do you see?” Sarah asked.

“Well, we're not at school, so I think it worked. And we see a base,” I said. Paul and I looked at the base and grinned.

“Should we?” Paul asked. I didn’t need to ask what he was talking about. I knew what Paul wanted, and I wanted it too. I nodded.

“Let’s do it,” I said.

“Hey, Sarah. We’re going to go into the base. Bye, “ I said.

“Okay, bye,” Sarah said.

Paul and I walked into the base, opening doors until we reached what looked like a lounge. When we got into the lounge, we saw Martha.

“Hey, Martha,” I said. Martha was reading, so I guess she didn’t hear me. I repeated what I said, and she noticed me that time. She looked up from her book.

“Oh, hey. Sorry I didn’t hear you. I was reading,” Martha said. I shrugged

“It’s all good. What are you reading?” I asked.

“Book 3 of Treasure Hunters,” Martha said. My eyes widened in eagerness.

“No way, that’s my favorite series!” I exclaimed.

“I know!” Martha said. I looked at Martha, weirded out..

“You know?” I asked, weirded out. Martha chuckled.

“Oh, um. I know because I heard you and your friends talking about how it was your favorite series,” Martha said. She chuckled. Her chuckle sounded nervous, but I didn’t want to let her know. I shrugged.

“Oh. Alright. So, what are you doing here?” I asked.

“Me? Oh, nothing. I just got teleported here by Sarah from the hero agency to help out as a hero, I guess,” Martha said. I smiled.

“No way, so did I! I guess we’ll be doing this together,” I said. Martha smiled weakly.

“That’s…great,” Martha said. Her tone sounded nervous, but I decided not to ask about why she sounded nervous. Just then, we heard footsteps. We turned to see five people: 3 boys and 2 girls, standing there.

“Uh, hi,” a boy said. He had blonde hair and blue eyes.

“Hello. Who are you guys?” I asked.

“Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy and Chloe. What about you? Who are you guys?” Max asked.

“I’m Jason. That’s Paul, and this is Martha,” I said.

“Nice to meet you guys,” Max said.

“Nice to meet you too,” Paul said.

“So, what do we do now? What are we even supposed to be doing?” Max asked.

“We’re supposed to be helping Harold,” Jake said. Max nodded.

“Oh yeah. You’re right. Where even is Harold?” Max asked. After he asked that, a man stepped into the lounge. His expression went from calm to surprised.

“Hey! Who are you? How did you get in here?” the man demanded.

“Are you Harold Garbridge?” Jake asked. The man looked surprised but nodded.

“I-I am! How did you know that?” Harold asked.

“We were teleported by Sarah from the hero agency. I think we’re the eight heroes you need,” Ash said.

Martha’s POV

My name is Martha Jeg, and I’m here to tell you how I got to Barthow. So, I was in my Calculus when my phone rang. I raised my hand. My teacher, Mr. Stoll looked up.

“Yes, Martha?” Mr. Stoll asked.

“My phone is ringing. May I go out into the hall and answer it?” I asked. Mr. Stoll nodded. I went out of the classroom and into the hall, closing the door behind me. Once I was out in the hallway, I answered my phone.

“Hello? Martha here. Who is this?” I asked.

“Hi, Martha. I’m Sarah from the hero agency,” Sarah said.

“Is this some kind of a joke?” I demanded.

“This is not a joke,” Sarah said in a stern tone.

“Okay. Why are you calling me, Sarah?” I asked.

“I’m calling to say that a man named Harold Garbridge had his family and power crystals stolen by a man named Drake Stoneridge.

“Wait, so why are you calling?” I asked.

“Harold requested eight heroes. You are one of them,” Sarah said.

“Wait, I’m confused,” I said.

“About what?” Sarah asked.

If I’m one of the heroes, who are the other seven?” I asked.

“You will find that out shortly,” Sarah said.

“Okay, so where do I go to help this Harold guy?” I asked.

“You need to go to a planet called Barthow,” Sarah said.

“How will I get to Barthow?” I asked.

“I’ll teleport you,” Sarah said.

“Oh, okay. Wait, did you say you’ll teleport me?” I asked in surprise.

“Yes, I did say that.”

“How will you teleport me?” I asked.

“I’ll explain when you’re ready,” Sarah said.

“Okay, I’ll go tell my teacher,” I said. I walked into the classroom and went to Mr. Stoll’s desk.

“Mr. Stoll, can I speak to you out in the hall?” I asked. Mr. Stoll nodded and went out into the hall, closing the door behind him.

“What’s up, Martha?” he asked.

“Okay, this is going to sound crazy,” I started. Mr. Stoll chuckled.

“Martha, I’m a teacher who deals with 40 kids a day. I think I can handle whatever it is you have to say,” Mr. Stoll said. I took a deep breath, getting myself ready to tell Mr. Stoll about the call.

“I just got asked to save the world with seven other heroes,” I blurted, going faster by the word. Mr. Stoll stared at me, his expression confused with a hint of concern.

“Martha, are you feeling okay?” he asked in a confused tone.

“I’m not making this up, I swear! Here, ask Sarah. She’s from the hero agency. She’ll tell you!” I insisted. Mr. Stoll shrugged.

“Okay then. Sarah, is this true? Is she telling the truth? Is Martha one of eight heroes needed to save the world?” Mr. Stoll asked. He gave me a look that showed Sarah was going to say it was a lie. Boy, Mr. Stoll was not ready for the truth.

“Yes, sir, this is true, and Martha is telling the truth. Martha is indeed one of eight heroes needed to save the world,” Sarah said. Mr. Stoll’s jaw dropped in shock and surprise.

“So, can I go save the world?” I asked. Mr. Stoll nodded.

“Yeah. Go save the world, Martha,” Mr. Stoll said. He went back into the classroom.

“Alright, Sarah. I’m ready to be teleported,” I said.

“Great. Look under your shoes,” Sarah said. That weirded me out.

“Why?” I asked, weirded out.

“Just do it and tell me if you see a golden light under your shoes,” Sarah instructed.

“O-okay,” I said. It was weird, but I did what Sarah asked. I looked under my shoes. Sure enough, there was a golden light under my shoes.

“Do you see a golden light?” Sarah asked.

“Yes, there is a golden light under my shoes,” I replied.

“Okay, excellent. The golden light will be how I teleport you,” Sarah said. That confused me.

“How will a golden light teleport me?” I asked in a confused tone.

“So, the light will rise from your below your shoes to above your shoes, and so on, until it covers your face,” Sarah said.

“Okay. What happens after the golden light covers my face?” I asked.

“Once the light covers your face, you should be teleported,” Sarah said.

“Got it. Should I stay on the call or hang up?”

“I would stay on the call, that way we know it works.”

“Sounds good,” I said.

“Where is the light at now?” Sarah asked. I looked down to see the light was creeping up my neck.

“It’s creeping up my neck,” I said.

“Excellent! The light should cover your face and you should be teleported any second,” Sarah said.

“Got it.”

I waited. A few seconds later, the light covered my face and I teleported. When the light faded, I wasn’t in the hallway anymore. In fact, I wasn’t even at *school* anymore. I was standing on a rocky sand ground. There was a base in front of me.

“Did it work? What do you see?” Sarah asked.

“Well, I’m not at school anymore, so I guess it worked,” I said.

“Awesome. What do you see?” Sarah asked.

“I see a base. I’m going to hang up and go inside the base,” I said.

“Sounds good. Bye,” Sarah said.

“Alright, bye,” I said.

I hung up and walked inside of the base. I walked until I found a lounge. I walked into the lounge. There was nobody here, so I decided to take advantage of that and have some quiet time. During that time, I got some of my book read, got a homework assignment done, and took a nap. I was in the middle of reading when I heard footsteps. I turned to see my crush, Jason Bell and his best friend, Paul Turner.

“Hey, Martha,” Jason said. I pretended I didn’t hear him because I was reading my book.

“Hey, Martha,” he repeated. I looked up from my book.

“Oh, hey Jason. Sorry, I didn’t hear you. I was reading,” I said. Jason shrugged.

“It’s all good. What are you reading?” Jason asked.

“Book 3 of the Treasure Hunters series,” I said. Jason’s eyes lit up in eagerness and excitement.

“No way, that’s my favorite series!” Jason exclaimed.

“I know!” I said in an eager tone. Jason looked at me, weirded out.

“You know?” he asked. I chuckled nervously.

“Oh, um. I just heard you talking about it with your friends,” I said. I was hoping he wouldn’t detect my lie in my voice. Jason nodded.

“Oh, alright. So, what are you doing here?” Jason asked.

“I got teleported here by Sarah from the hero agency to save the world,” I said. Jason’s eyes widened with excitement.

“You did? So did I! I guess we’ll be doing this together,” Jason said. I smiled weakly.

“That’s great,” I said weakly.

Jason started to say something, but then didn’t because then we heard footsteps. We turned to see five people: 3 boys and 2 girls.

“Uh, hi,” a boy said. He had blonde hair and blue eyes.

“Hello. Who are you guys?” Jason asked.

“Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy and Chloe. What about you? Who are you guys?” Max asked.

“I’m Jason. That’s Paul, and this is Martha,” Jason said.

“Nice to meet you guys,” Max said.

“Nice to meet you too,” Paul said.

“So, what do we do now? What are we even supposed to be doing?” Max asked.

“We’re supposed to be helping Harold,” Jake said. Max nodded.

“Oh yeah. You’re right. Where even is Harold?” Max asked. After he asked that, a man stepped into the lounge. His expression went from calm to surprised.

“Hey! Who are you? How did you get in here?” the man demanded.

“Are you Harold Garbridge?” Jake asked. The man looked surprised but nodded.

“I-I am! How did you know that?” Harold asked.

“We were teleported by Sarah from the hero agency. I think we’re the eight heroes you need,” Ash said.

Chapter 2

The Attack

Max’s POV

It took Harold a little bit to process what was going on. Once he was calm, he gave us a tour.

“How long have you eight been in the base for?” Harold asked. I checked my phone. We arrived at 9:45 AM. It was now 10:00 AM.

“About 15 minutes,” I estimated.

“I see. So, I take it you have not been on the second, third or fourth floor yet. Is that correct?” Harold asked.

“Yeah, that’s right.” Jason said.

I admit, Jason seemed like a nice guy.

‘Should I talk to him? Would he be fine with my ADHD?’ I thought to myself. I shook my head, clearing the bad thoughts away. I decided to walk over to him.

“Hey,” I said.

“What’s up?”

“Nothing much. You?”

“Not too bad. It was funny when Martha was annoyed at you. No offense.”

“None taken. Yes. She is cute, but I feel like she’s not one to date. More like one to kill me,” I sighed with a bit of sadness. Jason put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, don’t worry about it. She wishes Paul and I weren’t around.”

“Why is that?”

Jason shrugged.

“Honestly, we’re not sure. I remember we used to joke about death, and she snapped. She told us we were being stupid, immature little kids, and never took anything seriously. Now, she is snapped at us before, but if we thought that was bad, this was worse. She looked shaken up, and her breaths were shaky. I assume she was hiding something.”

“Oh, I see…”

“It’s all cool.”

“So, um. Can I tell you something?”

“Sure, man. What’s up?”

“I’m…ADHD.”

I braced myself for his reaction.

“Me too.”

“Huh?”

I looked at him like he was joking. His expression was dead serious. Just then, an alarm blared. Harold rushed to the control room, logged onto his computer, then booted up a software. The software had a map of the galaxies on it. In the galaxy we were at, there was a blinking dot.

“What’s that blinking dot?” I asked.

“There’s an attack on the volcano planet, Maghearth.”

“An attack? You mean, like, monsters?”

“Indeed.”

Half of me hoped he was kidding, while the other half knew that my life was about to get a lot more complicated.

“What’s attacking?” Jason asked.

“I’m not sure. It looks like…a flaming eagle…?”

“What do we have to do?” I asked.

“Pick your weapons, get teleported, and fight.”

“Let’s do it.”

We ran to the weapons room. I picked a flaming sword. Jake picked an ice sword. Ash picked a water sword. Wendy picked a grass sword. Chloe picked a golden sword. Jason picked up a lightning spear. Paul picked up a bow.

“Okay. Now what?” Ash asked.

“You will be teleported. Stand on the teleport pads, and I’ll get you there.”

We did as we instructed and stood on the pads. Shortly after, we were on a volcano-like planet.

“Did it work? What do you see?” Harold asked.

“Well, it definitely looks like a volcano planet,” I said as I looked around. We were on an island. There was lava all around, and a bridge that led to a town. I pointed to the bridge.

“There’s a bridge. Want to head over?”

As we walked across the bridge, we could hear screams and we saw something attacking.

At first, it looked like the letter Y in flames, but as we got closer, I realized it was not the letter Y. It was a flaming eagle, and it had its head looking down at a man, a woman, and a small boy. I ran over to them. Just as the eagle was about to dive, I moved the family out of the way.

“Go get somewhere safe,” I ordered them. The family looked a bit shaken up, and in fear. They were so scared that they could not move.

“Ash! Get these people out of here!”

Ash nodded and ran over to them, then guided them to safety. I was so distracted; I didn’t notice the eagle shot fire at me. In fact, I did not even feel it. Everyone stared at me in shock and horror. Of course, being me, I had no idea what was going on.

“What did I do this time?” I demanded.

Nobody responded. They just pointed behind me.

“What are you-? Oh my god!”

Suddenly, it all made sense. I was immune to fire. I stepped towards the flaming eagle.

“Max! What are you doing?” Jason demanded.

“I’m going to tame it.”

“Are you crazy?!”

“I mean, yes, kind of. Just trust me. I know what I am doing. At least, I hope.”

I continued walking slowly.

“Easy, boy,” I started. I did not get very far in my talk with him, because he shot a fireball at me. I managed to grab it and throw the fireball into the lava. The eagle squawked at me, as if to ask how I was alive.

“You can’t burn me.”

I climbed onto the eagle’s back and tried stroking his wings. Yes, that didn’t work, because he flew fast.

“Belt, get me some reins!” I said quickly.

The belt obeyed, and I pulled out reins. I tied the reins as fast as I could. I was on the last one, and then we hit lava.

Jake’s POV

We watched in horror as Max flew into the lava, but there was still hope.

“He’s gone.” Ash said.

I shook my head.

“No.”

“What do you mean ‘no’? He just hit lava! There’s no way he could have survived!”

“He survived the fireball. Lava is a type of fire, right?”

“Yeah,” Jason said.

“Okay, lava is a type of fire. So?” Ash asked.

“So, if Max is immune to fire, and lava is a type of fire, then he could still be alive.”

After I said that, the ground rumbled, and up came Max.

Max’s POV

We dove into the lava. While we were in the lava, well, let us just say I had to yank the reins, a LOT to calm him down. I pinned him against the rocks and forced the eagle to look into my eyes. Only then did I notice the sadness, fear, and worry in his eyes. The poor fire eagle was manipulating from someone, and I had to save him. I reached for his wings, and he freaked out.

“Woah, boy! Easy there. I am not going to hurt you. I promise,” I said in a calm voice.

The fire eagle stopped struggling, then went over to me. He motioned for me to get onto his back. I got on and we shot towards the surface and out of the lava. We landed in front of the group, who stared. Jake ran over and hugged me.

“I thought I lost you!”

“Yeah. I’m okay, though.”

“But how? You went into the lava!”

“I guess I’m immune to fire, including lava.”

Jake turned to Ash.

“Ha! I told you!”

“Okay, Harold. You can bring us back to base,” I said.

“On it.”

And with that, we teleported.

Chapter 5

The Prophecy Begins

Max’s POV

Harold walked towards an elevator, and we followed. Harold pushed a button for the basement, and we went down. A few floors later, the doors opened. We stepped out, and it seemed like we were in a cave. It was dark, but we could see. Cobwebs were along the ceiling. Spiders and other bugs crawled along the floor. It was a cold cave, and I was freezing since I did not have a jacket. Bats and other animals made noises I could hear. The cave was long, with all sorts of turns. After a bit of walking, we were looking at a dog sitting on a brown, wooden stool.

“Aww. He’s a little cutie,” I said.

I reached out to pet the dog, but he barked. Well, it was not a bark. It was a voice.

“Get your filthy hand away from me, boy!” the voice said. I jerked my hand away.

“What the-?”

Harold was the only one who did not seem surprised. He had a calm expression. He stepped forward.

“Sorry about Rob,” Harold said while scratching Rob’s ears.

“Who-what is Rob?” Ash demanded.

“My pet and the Oracle.”

“The Oracle? You mean, like…he can predict the future, and tell prophecies? That kind of Oracle?”

Harold nodded.

“Indeed. Rob, it is time. Share with us the Prophecy of Eight,” Harold requested. Rob’s eyes glowed green, and fog came in.

“Very well. The Prophecy of Eight is as follows:

Eight heroes will rise

To stop the evil that despises

The gods will reach out to their children

And send them to defeat the villain

That is the first part. To know the rest, all parts must be completed.” The glow from Rob’s eyes faded. The fog cleared.

“Well, you heard it. Time to make it happen,” Jason said.

“We’ve got the first 2 lines covered, since we’re the 8 heroes. But what about the 3rd and 4th? What gods? What children? Unless…No. No way is this for real?! Oh my god, this is crazy!”

“Max, what is it?” Jake asked.

“The children mentioned…I think they’re us. We’re children of the gods.” “That’s not possible. They’re just myths,” Jason said.

Martha rolled her eyes.

“How dumb can you be, Jason?” Martha snapped.

“What do you mean?” Jason asked, looking offended.

“Think about it. You know how we teleported?” Martha asked.

“Yeah. So?”

“So, that’s not normal.”

“Martha is correct. Because of the ability to teleport, which is not normal, gods are real, and so are their kids, which are you,” Harold said. Martha smirked at Jason.

“Wait what?” Wendy asked, clearly baffled.

“Yep, it’s crazy,” I said.

“How do we know which god our parent is?” I asked, clearly confused.

“That I cannot answer. That is for the gods to answer. Come on. Let us head back up.”

Chapter 6

My Dream

Max’s POV

Even an hour after I found out my real father was a god, I had so many questions: Why did I just realize this? What villain? How long had Blazikus been watching me?

So many questions flooded my mind, but luckily, I did not have to worry because I was going to sleep.

Boy, I was wrong. I dreamed I was at a blacksmith’s forge. A warm breeze and the smell of smoke filled the air. I walked inside of the forge to see a man with gloves, beard, and heat proof clothes. He was working on a sword. He looked up and smiled.

“So, you’ve found me at last. Well done,” the man said.

It did not seem likely, but…

“Dad…? I mean, Blazikus?” I managed.

The man nodded.

“Hello, Max.”

Suddenly, anger boiled in my body.

“Why show up now?” I demanded.

“What do you mean?” Blazikus asked with a confused look.

“I mean why reach out to me now when you could have shown up 13 years ago? You could have helped me get through all the pain: the whipping, the beating, all of that! But instead of helping me, you spend your time in a forge, ignoring me. Some father you are,” I growled. Blazikus put his sword down and walked over to me.

“Max, about that…I was trying to protect you.”

My eyes watered.

“Protect me from what? The people who abused me. Yes, great job,” I muttered.

“They abused you for a reason.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“I-never mind.”

“You what?” I asked. Blazikus said nothing. He looked away.

“What did you do?!” I yelled.

“I told them to abuse you,” Blazikus blurted.

“What?”

Blazikus nodded.

“Indeed. At first, they did not want to, but when I told them why, they agreed.” “What did you tell them?” I growled.

“I told them it was to hide your powers. It was for your own safety.”

“So, you’re telling me that because they abused me, that helped hide my powers?” I asked. Blazikus nodded.

“Correct.”

“So that’s why Uncle Mark died…”

Blazikus nodded sadly.

“That’s right.”

More anger boiled inside of me.

“Why didn’t anyone ever tell me about this?” I demanded.

“You weren’t ready to learn the truth.”

“So, I ended up killing him. Jeez, thanks a lot.”

I sighed sadly.

“Max, it wasn’t your fault.”

“Yes, it was! I was the only other person in the building besides Uncle Mark! I opened my hand and started the fire!”

“Because she told you to.”

“She?” I asked. Blazikus nodded.

“Who?”

Blazikus closed his eyes.

“Who is it?” I demanded.

“Are you ready?” Blazikus asked me.

“Ready for…what?” I asked, clearly confused.

“Sit down. It’s time you learned the truth.”

I sat down in a chair.

“Her name was Gigantusnus. She was and still is the oldest and most evil goddess out there. Do you remember the 2 voices? One was saying do it, while the other one said don’t do it. Do you remember that?” Blazikus asked. I nodded.

“The voice that said do it…Was that her?” I asked.

Blazikus nodded.

“And the voice that told me don’t do it was you?” I guessed.

“Correct.”

“I’m so sorry,” I said.

“For what?” Blazikus asked with a confused face.

“I didn’t try to fight it. I went straight ahead and did it. All because I was too stupid.”

Blazikus put a hand on my shoulder.

“It’s not all your fault. You were only 12. You didn’t know any better.”

“That’s the point.”

I stood up, but Blazikus sat me down again.

“Stay there. There’s more.”

“Okay.”

“When you lit that fire, and managed to stay alive and not burn, Gigantusnus saw hope. She realized she could use you to do bad things. Very bad indeed. I reached out to Ash’s mom, Sally and explained what Gigantusnus was planning. She moved you guys from New York to California to start a new life.”

“And to get me away from the machine shop and my fears,” I guessed. Blazikus nodded.

“Exactly. But just because you moved, that doesn’t mean Gigantusnus isn’t watching you. She watches all the children of the gods, especially you guys. You need to be prepared for what’s coming soon. By soon, I mean 2 weeks.”

“What’s coming in 2 weeks?” I asked.

“A war. Now, it’s morning, so I’ll let you go. Now, Max. Go and tell the team. Prepare them for what’s to come. I’ll see you soon.” And with that, I woke up.

Chapter 7

Finding gods

Max’s POV

I looked at my phone.  It has 10:45 A.M. I got out of bed and went to find everyone.  They were in the cafeteria.

“Morning, Max.  You slept long,” Harold said.

“Yeah, I had an interesting dream.”

Harold could sense something was bothering me.

“What was it about?”

“I met Blazikus.”

“Anything else?”

“Yeah. Something big and bad is coming.”

“What is it?”

I explained about Gigantusnus, and how she was weakening us, and preparing an army to attack.

“At least we covered the first part of the Prophecy,” Harold said. I stared at Harold like he was crazy.

“Harold! There’s going to be a war, and all you think about is the Prophecy?!  Get it together, man! We have to get ready for what’s coming.” Harold nodded.

“Yes. You’re right. I apologize. How should we prepare?”

I thought about what Blazikus said.  See you soon.

“We need to meet our godly parents.”

“But, Max. We only know yours,” Jake said.

“I can sense who your godly parents are,” Harold said.

“How?” Jason asked.

“Jason… You have a look of confidence.  Your father is Skypshor, god of lightning and the sky. Martha… You have a sense of beauty. Your mom is Beauticus, goddess of beauty.  Paul… I sense you have the fighting spirit. Therefore, your father must be Hitome, god of fighting.  Ash… You have power, and order in you, but a calming way. Your father is Werit, god of water. Wendy… You have the love for nature.  Your father is Dergrut. Chloe… I sense your passion for good luck. Your mother must be Charmisian, god of luck. And Jake… you have a strong will, but when needed, you have a cold side.  Your father is Stormspirital, god of ice and ghosts.”

“Wow that that’s taken care of, now what?” Jason asked.

“We find our parents.”

“How will we get there?”

“I can teleport you to the Planet that your parents are most commonly at.” “Who’s going first?” Martha asked.

“Me,” I said.

“Why you?” Wendy asked.

“Because I’m the only one who’s met their godly parent so far.”

Wendy shrugged.  Clearly, she didn’t have a better answer.  I got on the teleport pad, and Harold teleported me.  When I got teleported, I wasn’t at the forge. Instead, Blazikus was looking at a gravestone I walked over.  The gravestone read, “Mark Wilson 1920 - 2017. Died in a fire.” I put a hand on Blazikus’ shoulder.

“Again, I’m sorry.  I didn’t mean it,” I said.

“No, no.  It’s alright.  You were just a kid. I’m the one who should be sorry.”

“For what?”

“For having your real family abuse, you, never showing up until now, for all of it.” “It’s okay.”

Blazikus smiled.

“We need to go somewhere private.”

“Why?”

“To discuss what is coming. We need to warn the other gods.”

“Alright. Where are we going?”

“The home of the gods: Mount Dorson.”

“Wait… Isn’t that the tallest mountain in the world?”

Blazikus nodded.

“It is. Way to keep up with your history.”

“Thanks.  But, how will we get up there?”

“If I remember correctly, you tamed that flaming eagle.”

“Yeah.”

I whistled as loud as I could.

“Jaden, come here boy!!” I yelled.

My voice echoed.  At first nothing happened, but a few minutes later, Jaden swooped in.  I rubbed his wings.

“Hey, boy!  So, I need you to take us to Mount Dorson.”

Blazikus and I climbed onto Jaden’s back, and we flew to the top of Mont Dorson, or at least until it got too foggy for Jaden to see hence it got foggy.  We had him drop us off.

“Thanks, bud.  See you soon.”

I swear Jaden whimpered.

Blazikus and I started walking along the dirt trail.  The mountain was, like, 20 degrees, so we had to summon fire to keep ourselves from freezing.  A few minutes into the walk, winds came in. I’m not talking about a breeze. I’m talking about heavy winds.  The wind was powerful enough to prevent us from going up.

The wind pushed me to the ground. Blazikus helped me up.

“Are you okay?” he shouted over the wind. I nodded, and we continued.  After a long walk, thanks to the wind, we made it to the top.  At the top was a white mansion.

“Whoa. The gods live here?” I asked in awe. Blazikus nodded.  He opened the doors, and we stepped inside, and let me say it was HUGE!  It was about 5 floors from the outside, so about the size of the mansion.

On the first floor after we walked in, there was a big couch, a 95-inch flat screen TV, a Nintendo Switch, racks and racks full of games, and a mini fridge.

“The living room?” I guessed. Blazikus nodded, and we went to explore the rest of the mansion.

The second floor had, like, 10 massive bedrooms and bathrooms. The third floor was a kitchen.  The 4th floor was a massive library. On the fifth floor was a recording studio, and when I say that, I don’t mean like where old bands like Eagles and The Beatles used (no offense to those who love those bands).  No, when I say that, I mean like a 10-star top state of the art, by big and fancy recording studios. Basically, it was 10 times better than ours. Lined up along the walls were guitars and other instruments. If I thought that was impressive, I was not ready for the main area.  There was a grand piano, microphones, etc.

“Whoa!” I explained.

Blazikus smiled.

“Welcome home.”

“Wait what?  You mean …? We’re staying here.  The 8 of us?”

He nodded.

“But … there’s not enough bedrooms, is there?”

“There is not.  But don’t worry.  We can add more.”

“How?”

He pointed to my tool belt.

“What about it?”

Even as I asked, I knew it would play a role.

“You know what to do.”

I nodded.

“Belt. Give me tools to build a floor for a mansion with 8 master rooms.

The belt obeyed and we went to work.

Jake’s POV

After Max got teleported, I decided I would go next.  When the gold light from being teleported ended, I was in a place with snow and ice.

“Jake! Can you hear me?” Harold asked.

“Yeah, I can hear you.”

“Cool.  Where are you?”

“A planet with snow and ice.”

“What can you see?”

I looked around.  Straight ahead was a base.  Everywhere else I just saw snow.

“I see a base straight ahead. I feel that urge. Like I should go inside.”

“Do it.”

I walked over to the base.  When I got there, I was covered in snow, but it didn’t bother me.  I knocked on the door. A few minutes after knocking, the door opened.  Standing inside was a man with furred sweatpants, snowshoes, and a backpack.

“Welcome, Jacob.  Glad you found me.”

“Stormspirital?” I asked.

The man nodded.  I crossed my arms.

“Prove it.”

“Okay.  See that boulder over there?”

He pointed to a boulder in the distance.

“Yeah.  So?”

“I can turn it into ice and break it.”

“How?”

“Watch.”

He opened his palm.  An ice bolt formed. He thrusted his arms out, and the ice ball hit the boulder.  He then spread his hands apart, and ice spread across the boulder. When it was all over the boulder, Stormville made a crushing motion, and the boulder exploded.

“Whoa! THAT is cool,” I exclaimed.

“Yes, it is.  Why don’t you come in?”

I walked in. It looked like a small shack from the outside, but inside was like a log house, and it seemed small. I saw a bed, a fridge, a TV, a closet, and a bathroom.

“So, Max said he had a dream about Blazikus mentioning a war.”

“Mhm. Continue.”

“What did he mean?  What war?”

“Sit.”

Stormspirital motioned me to sit on the bed, so I did.

“It’s time you know.”

“Know...what?”

“Everything. Are you ready?”

I nodded.

“I’m ready.”

“Okay.  Remember how Max said when he burned down his uncle’s workshop, and heard a voice?”

“I do.”

“The voice he heard. Her name is Gigantusnus. “

“Gigantusnus. The oldest, most evil goddess there is,”  I remembered from History. Stormspirital nodded.

“Yes. She is waking.”

“But the other gods… Didn’t they, um, kill her, or send her to the Darkness Pit?”

“Yes, they did.  However, she slowly rises when monsters are either dead or cured from her hypnosis. Anyway, once she fully rises, it will be bad.”

“Bad how? What can happen?”

Even as I asked, I knew.

“Very bad. Dead monsters will be reborn.  War will erupt, etc.”

“Is there anything we can do to stop it?”

Stormspirital shook his head.

“Not that we know of.”

“Then, what do we do? Nothing?”

“We will discuss this with the other gods. Come, let’s go to Mount Dorson, home of the gods.”

“How are we going to get there?”

“I have transportation that will get us there.”

“What is it?”

Stormspirital stepped outside and whistled.

“Here, Ice Wing,” he yelled.

At first nothing happened, but a few minutes later, the ground trembled, and a white eagle with icicles on its wings came up.

“Whoa!  Is he going to take us?”

Stormspirital nodded.

“Yep.”

We climbed on to Ice Wing’s back and flew to the top of Mount Dorson.  At the top was a 5-story mountain with a 6th floor in progress. Max was on top of the mansion (also known as the 6th floor), and he was working on floor designing.  I waved to him.

“Sup Max!” I yelled from the ground.  He came down.

“Hey,” Max said.

“What are you doing?”

“Making a 6th floor for the mansion so the 8 of us can have bedrooms.”

“Oh. Alright.”

“Come on. I’ll give you a tour and let you help with the 6th floor.”

Ash’s POV

I decided to go after Jake. I got teleported. When the gold light from being teleported faded, I was on a yacht. To be honest, I hadn’t seen my dad before and there was a party going on, so I had no idea who my dad was or what he looked like.  As far as I knew, he could have been any guy here. I walked around and explored the yacht. There were multiple rooms. I assumed for the crew, a casino, a stage, kitchens, and lots more.  After I finished exploring, I went to the bar and stared ahead, wondering where Max and Jake were.

“Hey there, kid.  This is for adults only.  What are you doing? How did you get here?” a man demanded.

“I -um-uh,” I stuttered.

I had no idea how to say it.

“I’m -”

“You’re getting out. That’s what.”

The man grabbed me and threw me overboard.  I thought I was done for. Suddenly, I had a feeling in my gut, and a voice in my head.

“Get your feet down.  In other words, stand up,” the voice said. I positioned myself so I stood up.  Right as I was about to hit the water, a man came up.  I landed on it like I was surfing. I made my way back up to the bar, and I back flipped on to the ship’s bar.  The man came back over.

“What the -?!  You got thrown overboard?  How are you alive, and how did you get back here?”

I shrugged.

“That’s what I want to know.”

“Being smart, huh?”

“No, I’m serious!”

“Sure, you are.”

The man threw a punch at me.  I dodged it.

“My turn.”

I thrusted my hand out, and a wave rose.  I pointed at the man, and a lot of water hit him, sending him backwards.  Once the water stopped, he was soaked. He spit out water.

“That’s it!  You’re done, kid!”

He started to change, but a voice made him stop in his tracks.

“Sam!” the voice yelled.

Sam winced.

“Y-Yes, Lord Werit?”

“What is going on?”

“Hold on.  Did Sam just say Werit?  As in the water god?” I asked.

Both nodded.

“Yeah.  Why?”

“Werit, I think I’m your son.”

“That would explain the way you fought. That was mighty impressive.”

The water started rumbling, and the boat shook.

“Dad what was that for?”

“That wasn’t me.”

“Then who was it?”

“Gigantusnus,” Sam said.

“The oldest and most evil goddess?” I asked.

Werit and Sam nodded.

“What about her?  How is she doing this?  I thought the gods defeated her and sent her to the Darkness Pit.”

“We did.  But that was a long time ago, about 100 years.  Now she slowly wakes.”

“How? Isn’t it impossible to get out or rise from the Darkness Pit?”

“She was in a long slumber, and now is awake, rising slowly.”

“Okay. But how is she rising?”

“Every monster you kill or break from her spell makes her rise 0.1%”

“So, then we won’t kill her or tame anything. That’ll stop her from rising, right?

Werit shook his head.

“I’m afraid not. When one person dies, 3% of her rises.”

“So, what do we do?  If we can’t fight or tame monsters, and if people die, either way she’ll rise.  What are we supposed to do about this?” Werit put a hand on my shoulder.

“We will discuss this on Mount Dorson, home of the gods.”

“Okay. How will we get there?  It’s a mountain, and we’re in water.”

“We can ride on water, as you discovered.  That is how we will get there.”

Werit jumped off the boat and started riding the waves. I hesitated, but jumped, and followed him. It took us about 5 minutes, but we made it to Mount Dorson.

Chloe’s POV

I got teleported to a field of 4 leaf clovers.  In the distance was a woman feeding birds. I walked over, and she looked at me and smiled.

“Hello, Chloe.”

“Hello. Charmisian?”

She nodded.

“So, my friends have been talking about a war.  What’s this about?”

“Gigantusnus wakes.”

“Gigantu - what?”

“Gigantusnus. The oldest goddess.”

“The evil one?”

Charmisian nodded.

“Yes. Do you know what happened?”

“Gigantusnus wanted Mount Dorson for herself, but the other gods disagreed.  She went ballistic. Then the gods and her had a fight and Gigantusnus lost.  She was sent to the Darkness Pit, and went into a deep sleep, right?”

Charmisian nodded.

“Correct. And now she wakes and is rising.”

“Right. How much is she rising by?”

“When a monster is either dead or tamed, she rises 0.1%.  When a human dies, she rises 3%.”

“Well what can we do?”

“We will discuss ideas at Mount Dorson, Home of the Gods.”

We went to Mount Dorson.

Wendy’s POV

I was next. I got teleported to a grassy field.  There were lots of flowers around. In the distance was a man staring at a gravestone.  I walked over. I read the grave.

“Marie Stephenson.

Died as Well Known.”

I sat down.  The man looked at me.

“Are you … Dergrut…?” I managed.

He nodded.

“Wait, so if the woman on the grave is Mom, how is Chloe’s mom a goddess?”

“You have different powers.  It’s a bit complicated to explain, but I’ll do my best.  Chloe’s dad was mortal. Your mom was mortal.”

“So, we’re adopted sisters?”

“Basically, yes.”

My heart sunk.  All these years, I thought we were REAL sisters.  No offense to Max. But I had never realized or thought about being adopted.

“Oh…” I said sadly.

The wind picked up, and it was getting faster by the second. I thought it was Dergrut. I stared at him.

“What was that about?”

“It wasn’t me.”

“Then who was it?”

Dergrut stood up.  He had a fierce expression.

“She’s rising.”

“She? Dad, who is it?”

“Gigantusnus.”

“Gigantusnus?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Isn’t she the evil and oldest goddess?”

Dergrut nodded. I cleared my throat.

“Dergrut, I have a feeling something bad is going to happen. Very bad,” I said.

“What do you mean?”

I told him what Max’s dad said in his dream.

“My, my. That seems hard.  Perhaps we should chat with the other gods about this at Mount Dorson.”

“I agree.  I assume to get there, we’ll fly?”

“You assumed correctly.”

We flew to Mount Dorson.

Martha’s POV

I got teleported to a salon. A beauty salon, to be exact.  A woman walked in and sat next to me.  She looked like a model.

“Hello, Martha,” she said.

I looked up at her.

“Hi. Are you … Beauticus?” I whispered.

She nodded.  My body was filled with anger.  I motioned us outside.

“Why?” I demanded.

“Why what?”

“Don’t play games with me, Beauty Queen. You know what.”

“Martha, what are you talking about?”

“You left when I was 10!”

“So?”

“So, Dad thought you died!  And because of that, Dad turned so abusive it got him sent to prison and he died!”

“What?”

“Don’t question me!  It’s your fault he’s dead!”

“Martha, calm-”

“NO!  Do NOT tell me to calm down!  Especially when you got him killed!”

“Martha-”

“You know what?  No Let’s just … go to where the gods are.”

We walked to Mount Dorson.

Paul’s POV

I got teleported to a fighting arena.  A big beefy guy stood in one corner of the ring, while I was in the corner across.  There was a ref in the middle of the ring.

“In the corner to the south, we have the uncontested Champion, Bulky Bob!”

The crowd roared with excitement.

“And in the opposing corner, Paul Turner!”

The crowd went dead silent.

“Let the fight begin!”

Bulky Bob charged at me.  My mind was screaming, but I guess my instincts kicked in, and I jumped out of the way, causing him to ram into my corner.  He turned around, and he looked MAD. He jumped off the ropes, and I punched him in the gut. He didn’t move after that. I pinned him down.

“1...2...3!  He’s out! Paul wins!” the ref said.

The crowd screamed with excitement and chanted my name.  After the fight, I walked to the locker rooms to chill. A man walked in and gripped my shoulders. I thought he was going to flip me over or slam me into something.  Instead, to my surprise, he hugged me.

“What is going on?  Why are you hugging me?  Who are you?” I demanded.

“Easy, Paul. You don’t have to worry.  You know me.”

It seemed like a long shot, but …

“Hitome…? Is that you?”

He nodded.

“Dad… Max mentioned something about ‘her’ rising, or a war coming.  What did he mean? Who is she? Dad, what’s going on?”

“Paul, calm down.  I’ll tell you. What is your question about this?  I’ll do my best to answer.”

“First question…Who is ‘she’?”  I asked.

“Her name is Gigantusnus.”

“Gigantusnus? THE Gigantusnus? The oldest goddess whose evil?”

Hitome nodded.

“That’s her alright.”

“Is she rising?”

“Yes. She is rising. Slowly but surely.”

“How is she rising?  I thought you guys defeated her, sending her to the Darkness Pit.”

“We did, but that was 100 years ago.”

“Oh. So how is she rising?”

“For every monster turned or defeated, she rises 0.1%.”

“Okay. So, we won’t fight or tame monsters.”

“It’s not that easy.  When a human dies, she rises 3%.”

“What? Okay, that’s dumb.”

“I agree.”

“So then how do we stop her from rising?”

“I’m not sure.  It seems like whatever we do, she still rises.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Again, I’m not sure.  We shall go to Mount Dorson and discuss ideas.”

“Cool. Let’s go.”

We went to Mount Dorson.

Jason’s POV

I got teleported. When the gold light faded, I was falling.

“Position yourself so you’re standing,” a voice said.

I didn’t know who the voice was, but I didn’t want to argue, so I positioned myself.  I wondered how it would feel to go splat on the ground. Then I wondered if it wouldn’t happen.  I felt myself slowing down, and then stopped. I looked down. I was floating mid-air.

“Come up.”

There was the voice again.  I thought about going up 1 [word] upwards. I went up until I reached a castle in the sky.  I went into the castle. 2 guards stopped me.

“Hey, kid.  How did you get up here?” the first guard demanded.

I explained how I was falling after I got teleported, how I flew here, etc.  They looked at me like I was joking.

“Sure, you did.  If you can fly, prove it.”

“Alright.”

I thought about hovering, and my feet were lifted off the ground. The guards stared in shock.

“He can’t be. Not possible,” Guard 1 said.

“It’s true. He’s a son of Skypshor.”

“Skypshor. The god of the sky and lightning,” I asked.

“Indeed,” a voice said. I thought it was in my head, but the guards flinched and turned.  Standing there was a bearded man.

“Lord Skypshor!  We think this boy is your son.”

Skypshor walked over and studied me from bottom to top.

“I’d say he is, after all. Let’s see if he can summon lightning.”

I raised my hand, pointed at the sky. Lightning struck my finger, but it didn’t hurt. Instead, I felt a surge of power.

“Yeah. That’s my son. Welcome, Jason.”

“Is there a war going on? Didn’t the gods fight her and win?”

“Yes.”

“She vanished to the Darkness Pit and fell into a slumber.”

“How is she waking?”

“Every time a monster rises or gets tamed, she rises from up 0.1%, and every time a human dies, she rises 3%.”

“So, what do we do?  Either way, no matter what we do, she’ll still rise.”

“That’s true.”

“It’s like she wants us to make her rise.”

“We’ll discuss this with the other gods, on Mount Dorson.”

We walked to Mount Dorson.

Chapter 8

Discussions

Max’s POV

Once everyone was at Mount Dorson, we had a meeting to discuss ideas. Right away, it was at a bad start.

“We can’t prevent her from rising,” Ash said.

“So, what do we do?” Jason asked. Ash shook his head with confusion.

“We don’t do anything, I guess,” Ash decided. We stared at him in disbelief.

“That’s insane,” Jake said.

“Insane but true.”

“There has to be a way to stop this,” I said.

“Max, whatever we do, she still rises,” Jason said.

“Well we can’t just do nothing!” I yelled, as I threw my hands in the air. I stood up and started pacing the room.

“Max, there’s no preventing this,” Blazikus said.

“There has to be a way. What if we move people away?” I suggested.

“The monsters will find them,” Wendy said.

“Okay, okay. So, what else can we do?” I asked.

“We don’t do anything. I already told you,” Ash said.

“Ash, I don’t care what you already said! I’m not going to just sit around and do nothing while people’s lives are on the line! Don’t you get that?! Use your brain!”

“At least I have a brain!”

“Okay, that’s it.”

I pinned Ash to the wall.

“Listen here. We aren’t going to do nothing. We’re going to do something. Got it?” I growled. Ash said nothing. I punched him in the arm.

“Got it?!” I yelled. He still said nothing.

“Answer!”

I started kicking him. Jake pulled me back.

“Whoa. Easy there, bud. Chill.”

“How do you expect me to chill right now? Especially when Ash says we should do nothing? Okay, we can’t just sit around and not do anything when people’s lives are on the line!”

Blazikus stood up.

“Max, I understand you’re stressed. Maybe all we can do is nothing,” Blazikus said.

“You know what? I don’t care. We’re going to fight. Rise or not, I’m not letting people die.”

“But Max-” Wendy started.

“This discussion is over.”

I stormed out and walked to my room.

Chapter 9

Drake calls Me

Max’s POV

I woke up at 1:00 AM with a start because my phone rang.

“Who in their right mind would call at 1 AM?” I muttered. I picked up my phone to see who was calling. I dropped it in shock, as it was Drake Stoneridge. It was the same Drake who kidnapped Harold’s family…I decided to answer.

“Hello?” I asked.

“Hello, Max. You look tired.”

“Well, yeah. It’s 1 in the morning. You woke me up.”

“Sorry about that.”

“What do you want anyway? Why are you calling?” I demanded.

“I’ve been keeping an eye on you. I must say, I’m impressed. I had no idea you could summon fire. And to survive lava? Impressive!”

“Thanks, I guess. So, why are you calling me?”

“I’m calling to tell you that you’re strong. I could use someone like you working with me.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Well, I imagine you wouldn’t.”

“You got that right.”

“However, if you do decide you want to work with me, I’ll give you a reward.”

“A reward? Like what?”

“Something like, oh, I don’t know. Your uncle, perhaps?”

That won me over.

“Show me. Prove to me that you have him.”

“Wanting proof, eh? I can do that for you.”

Drake snapped his fingers, and a mirror appeared in my hand. I stared at him like he was crazy.

“This is a mirror.”

“Indeed.”

“You said you would show me Uncle Mark.”

“I did say that, yes. The mirror will show you.”

“But it’s just a mirror!”

“A magic mirror.”

“Wait what?”

“Say this: ‘Oh, Magic mirror. Show me whatever it is you want to see’. Okay?”

“O-Okay… Oh, Magic Mirror. Show me Mark Wilson, brother of Tom Wilson and son of Mike Wilson.”

The mirror cast a golden glow. When the glow faded, I saw Uncle Mark hanging in chains.

“-Last time! Where is the boy who survived the eagle?!” a voice demanded.

“I-I don’t know who you’re talking about.”

“Liar! It is your nephew, Max. I sense you have a connection to him.”

“Max…I hope he’s okay.”

“Where is he?!”

“I don’t know!”

“Lying!”

A man stepped into view of the mirror. When I saw him, I shuddered. He wasn’t human. He was a giant demon, and he looked familiar. He shot his hand up, and lightning struck Uncle Mark.

It took all my power not to yell. When the lightning faded, Uncle Mark looked bruised. His skin was covered in soot from the lightning. His shirt was torn. In other words, he looked terrible. I wanted to scream, go to wherever he was, and murder the demon.

“Why do you refuse to share his location?!” the demon snapped.

“George, you can torture me all you want, and maybe even kill me, but I will not let you near my family!”

I couldn’t believe this. Uncle Mark was basically sacrificing his life for me. I wanted to save him, but I couldn’t betray the team. I looked at Drake.

“Can you save him?” I asked.

“I can indeed. However, if you want me to save him, you must stand by my side. No matter what.”

I hesitated. Part of me didn’t care that I was betraying the team. The other part of me knew it would end badly. I made up my mind.

“Okay. I’ll do it.”

“Excellent. Now go. Come to me.”

“How do I know where you are?” I asked.

“The mirror will tell you. See you soon.”

Drake hung up. I stared at the mirror. I didn’t want to betray the team. On the other hand, I wanted my uncle back. I knew what I had to do. For some reason, the Oracle’s voice was in my mind. A prophecy was coming. I had to tell the team.

Chapter 10

Expanding the Prophecy

Max’s POV

When everyone woke up, we had breakfast. I guess I looked nervous, because everyone was staring at me.

“Hey, you look nervous. Are you okay?” Jason asked.

“I don’t know why, but I have a feeling.”

“What feeling?” Ash asked.

“I had an…interesting night. Anyway, I have this feeling in my gut that the next part of the prophecy is ready.”

“What was your night like?” Jake asked. I hesitated to tell them. I didn’t want them knowing. Not yet, anyway…

“I’ll tell you later. Right now, we have a prophecy to worry about,” I said. We got into the elevator and went to the basement, where Rob was. I stepped forward to Rob.

“Um, hi Rob. I need something from you,” I said.

“What is it that you request?” Rob asked.

“So, I had this feeling that there’s another part to the prophecy. Is that true? Is there another part to it?”

Rob didn’t say anything. It was like he was frozen. Then, he spoke.

“Yes, there are more parts to the prophecy. The second part of the prophecy is as follows:

The forgotten flame will light once more

And open the Hellish Doors

One may turn against you

There may be something you can do

That is all I can say for now. Have fun figuring it out!”

Rob fell silent. After the prophecy finished, everyone looked at me.

“What? Why are you all looking at me?” I demanded.

“Max, it’s time,” Ash said.

“For what?”

Jake walked over to me and put a hand on my shoulder.

“It’s time to do it again. We know you’re scared, but you must do this. You have to summon fire,” Jake said.

I shook my head.

“No. I can’t. Not after Uncle Mark's death.”

“Max, you can do it,” Ash said.

“No, I can’t.”

“Yes, you can. You will,” Ash said.

“No, I won’t.”

“Yes, you will!”

“No!”

“Just do it!”

“Shut up!” I yelled. I threw my hands down, palms facing the ground. Everyone stared in shock and horror.

“What is everyone staring at?” I asked. Jason pointed to my bands. I looked at them to see my hands-on fire, the flame bigger than before. I quickly put out the flame.

“Max, what was that all about?” Ash asked.

“I don’t know,” I muttered.

“Why did you get so mad?”

“I don’t know. I’m sorry. I guess something came over me, but I don’t know what.”

Just then, the alarm blared. I ran upstairs to the computer. There was an attack on the ice planet, Cainia.

I investigated the details to see what was attacking. It was Drake. I ran to the teleport pads and teleported. When I got there, Drake was standing on a hill, looking down at a town being destroyed. I walked over and stood next to him.

“Hello, Max,” Drake said, not taking his eyes away from the destroyed town. “Hi, Drake.”

Chapter 11

The Fight

Max’s POV

“I’m glad you and I are going to be working together,” Drake said. I nodded.

“I feel the same way,” I said. Just then, golden lights appeared. We turned to see the team.

“What are you doing? Why are you here?” I demanded.

“We’re here because the alarm went off. Why did you leave before us?” Jason asked.

“That’s none of your business!” Drake snapped.

“Max, are you working with him?” Wendy demanded.

“Like he said, that’s none of your business,” I said.

“Yeah. Now leave,” Drake said.

“What?” Jason asked.

“You heard me. Leave,” Drake said sternly.

“No,” Ash said.

“Ash, it’s not worth fighting. Just leave before someone gets hurt,” I said.

“We’re not leaving you or letting you work for Drake,” Chloe said.

“I hate to break it to you guys, but you can’t stop me from working with Drake. Why? Because that’s already happened. Now, I suggest as we’ve said, leave before things turn ugly.”

The group looked at each other, drew their weapons, and looked at me.

“We don’t want to do this,” Martha said.

“I don’t feel the same,” I growled. All 7 of them charged at me. That was a mistake. I thrusted my hands out when they got close. A circle of flames rose around me. Just then, Harold teleported to us.

“Max, what are you doing?!” Harold demanded.

“What I have to do!” I snapped.

“You don’t have to do this!” Jake said.

“Yes, I do!”

“Why?”

“To bring back my uncle!”

“Wait what?” Jason asked.

“What do you mean ‘bring him back’? What happened?” Paul asked. I hesitated to tell them, but I told them.

“When I was 9, I ran away from my real family, since they abused me. Then, Ash’s family adopted me. Life was good. I felt free of all my pain and troubles. Then, when I was 12, Uncle Mark and I were working in his machine shop. Then, I heard the voice. It told me to open my palm, so I did, and the fire started. The workshop burned down with him still inside. Don’t you get it? It’s my fault he died! Then I got a call from Drake last night. He told me if I worked for him, he would bring back Uncle Mark. I must do this, for Uncle Mark! Because like I said, it’s my fault he died.”

Ash stepped forwards towards me. So did Jake. The rest of the team stared in shock.

“Ash! Jake! Get back here! What are you doing?” Wendy demanded.

“We’re fixing Max.” Ash said.

“What?” Chloe asked.

“Just trust us. We know what we’re doing. At least, we hope,” Jake said. Jake and Ash looked at me.

“Max, you have to realize that this isn’t your fault he died, and that we’re here for you,” Ash said.

“Since when have you ever been there for me?!” I demanded.

“Since I met you, you little-”

“Ash, calm down!” Chloe snapped.

“Sorry. Jake, you try.”

“Max, Ash is right. That wasn’t your fault, and we are here for you. Now, you need to calm down.”

“I-I can’t calm down! The power…it’s too much! Can’t…control…Hellish Doors…they’re opening!” Drake’s eyes widened with excitement.

“Yes…yes! Open the doors!” Drake commanded.

“Max, don’t listen to him!” Jake yelled.

“I can’t control it!” I yelled.

“Yes, you can! Listen to me. I know you can control this. We believe in you. I believe in you. Close your eyes and relax.”

I closed my eyes. What I saw was not relaxing at all.

“What do you see?” Jake asked. I knew he was next to me, but his voice seemed far away.

“I see…”

My voice trailed off as I watched.

“What is it?”

“Millions of people’s points of view…and millions of deaths…I see the Hellish Doors opening. Jake, you told me to relax. Well, I’m not relaxed! What do I do?! Jake what do I do??”

“Think good thoughts. Food, music, me. Anything that makes you happy. You can fix this, I know it.”

I thought good things, hoping it would fix it. I opened my eyes to see it didn’t work, because right in front of us were two doors. Drake laughed with glee.

“Thank you! Oh, thank you! You did it!” Drake said with joy. I stared in horror at what I did.

“You said you would bring back my uncle.”

“So?”

“So, where is he?”

“Oh. He’s right there.”

Drake snapped his fingers. A portal opened, and out came Uncle Mark. I ran over and hugged him.

“I’m so glad you guys are okay,” Uncle Mark said.

“I thought you were dead. How are you here?” I asked.

“Creatures from the Darkness Pit got me out. Now, I know you’re glad to see me, but you have to get away from me,” Uncle Mark said.

“What? No, we just got you back. Why would we leave you?”

“Please. Someone from the Darkness Pit followed me here and wants to and is going to kill me.”

“Who is it? We’ll fight them,” Jake said with confidence. Uncle Mark shook his head.

“No. He’s too strong. You could die trying to fight.”

“I don’t care if I die. I’m not leaving you again!” I said.

“Max trust me.”

Just then, a portal opened. Out came the demon from the mirror.

“Hello, Mark.”

“Hello, Leviticus,” Uncle Mark said. Leviticus looked at us.

“I see you have a good family. I assume you care for them,” Leviticus said.

“Yes, I love them.”

“Then they must die.”

Leviticus flew at us, and pointed his sharp claws at us. I wondered if I would die. I opened my eyes to see Uncle Mark was cut and bleeding.

“No!”

“Max, it’s okay.”

“No, it’s not. Harold. Teleport him to the base now, but don’t leave us.”

Uncle Mark teleported to the base. I turned to face Leviticus. Hatred and anger boiled inside of me.

“Who do you think you are?” I demanded.

Leviticus snickered.

“What do you mean, child?”

“Why do you think you have the right to come on in and hurt our uncle?”

“Because I’m his brother!”

“Wait what?”

Leviticus nodded. I crossed my arms.

“Prove it.”

“Okay.”

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a wallet. Inside were pictures of us.

“Uncle-Uncle Levi?” I managed. He nodded. Just then, he fell to his knees. Drake had shot him.

I stared down at Uncle Levi’s dead body, then looked at Drake with anger and hatred in my eyes.

“What is wrong with you?!” I yelled.

Drake shrugged.

“Oh, you know. I killed your Uncle Levi.”

“Why?!”

“Hey, at least you got Uncle Mark back.”

“You’re a dirty liar,” I snapped.

“Yes, I am.”

“Why did you lie?” I demanded.

“Because I’m evil, duh!” Drake said.

“That’s it. I’m going to kill you,” I growled.

“No, you’re not.” Ash said.

“Why not?”

“Not alone, at least.”

I nodded, and we pulled out our weapons. We faced Drake. Drake snapped his fingers, and the team blacked out.

“Well then. Just me,” I said. I knew I had no chance of defeating him, but I had to try. I charged with my sword, but I didn’t make it far because Drake thrusted his hands, and we flew through the Hellish Doors.

Chapter 12

Welcome to Hell

Max’s POV

The 8 of us fell on the ground through the Hellish Doors. I thought I knew pain, since I had been abused by my real family. And if you thought that was the end of pain after I got adopted by Ash, well then, you’re wrong. I’ve been in fights a lot. I’ve had glass bottles shattered over my head from bar fights, bloody nose from fist fights, etc.

But that was nothing compared to the feeling of falling and hitting the ground with a SPLAT! Everything hurt. My body exploded with pain. I felt a bone in my leg stick out, or at least it felt like that wasn’t supposed to happen. I tried not to look, but I looked. As I pushed myself up, my hands and arms filled with pain. I examined them. My right arm and leg were both broken. I heard groaning. I turned to see the team was awake. They looked around.

“Where are we? What happened?” Ash asked.

“I guess we’re in Hell,” I said.

“Wait what?”

“Drake shoved us into the Hellish Doors, so I assume, based on the name, that the doors lead to Hell.”

I looked around. I saw mainly black stone ground, which is what we’re on, above lava. In the distance, I saw a cave. I pointed to the cave entrance.

“Hey, there’s a cave over there.”

“Let’s go,” Jake said.

“Hold up,” I said. Ash sighed with annoyance.

“What is it now?”

“Well, in case you haven’t noticed, my right arm and leg are broken.”

“Oh. Dang, dude. What happened to you?” Jason asked.

“We fell from up high and hit the ground. Hard.”

“We all fell?” Martha asked.

I nodded.

“If we all fell, then why are you hurt the most?” Paul asked.

“I don’t know. Now, if anyone would mind, could someone help me?”

“Why do you need help?” Chloe asked.

“My arms and legs are broken.”

“But didn’t you learn first aid?” Wendy asked.

“Yeah. So?”

“So, if you know first aid, then you can fix yourself.”

“You’re right. Where’s my belt?”

Jason pointed to it.

“Bring it here, would you?”

“Sure.”

Jason brought me my belt, but it was broken. It must have gotten damaged in the fall.

“Aw no! No, this isn’t good!”

“See if it works,” Chloe said.

“Belt, give me a bandage,” I said. I reached inside. Nothing.

“It’s busted.”

I sighed sadly.

“Time to quit,” I said.

“What?” Ash asked.

“I said time to quit.”

“Max, you never quit. You always know what to do,” Wendy said.

“No, the belt always knows what to do. With it busted, I’m useless because I won’t be able to help anyone. Not even myself.”

“Well, I always have a backpack full of tools. Maybe we can fix it,” Jake said.

“We can try.”

We got to work. After an hour, we fixed it. Or at least, we hoped.

“Belt, I need a first aid kit,” I ordered.

I reached into it and pulled out a first aid kit.

“Awesome, it’s fixed!” I exclaimed.

“You’re welcome,” Jake said.

“Oh, right. Thanks. Time to patch up my arms and legs,” I said.

I looked at the first aid kit.

‘Maybe I don’t need the belt,’ I thought. I put the first aid kit in the belt pocket.

“Belt, take this back,” I said.

“Max, what are you doing?” Wendy asked.

“You guys were right. I do know what to do. I realize that, even though I don’t like the thought, that one day I may not have the belt to get me out of issues. Therefore, I’m going to try and use the belt as little as possible,” I decided.

“You can try, but how are you going to take care of your arm and leg?” Martha asked.

“I know how to keep the bone in place, and I can wrap a cloth around my arm. However, this is going to hurt. A lot.”

“Do it,” Jason said. After a lot of bone pushing, wrapping cloths and screaming, I managed to get my injuries taken care of.

“Now that that’s taken care of, what do we do now?” Paul asked.

“We go into the cave and hope we won’t die.”

We walked into the cave. Almost immediately after all 9 of us were in, rocks closed the entrance.

“Okay…I guess we’re staying for a bit.”

It was dark, and we could hardly see.

“Belt, give me a flashlight,” I requested. I reached into the pocket and pulled out a flashlight. I turned it on and shone the light around so we could see our surroundings. To our left, right and straight ahead were tunnels.

“Which way do we go?” Paul asked.

“Well, there’s 3 tunnels, and 9 of us, so that means 3 of us per tunnel,” Ash said.

Just then, Rob appeared.

“A new part of the prophecy has been added,” Rob said.

“Tell us what it is,” Jake said.

Rob’s eyes glowed green, meaning he was about to tell us a prophecy

“Here is the next part of the prophecy:

The riddles are the key

To open the door of the cave and see

The children and wife are free

That is all I can say. Good luck.”

We looked at the caves, then at each other.

“Who’s going with who?” Paul asked.

“I’ll go with Ash and Jake,” I said.

“I’ll go with Wendy and Chloe,” Martha said.

“Then I guess that leaves me with Jason and Paul,” Harold said.

“That's taken care of. Who’s going in which tunnel?” Ash asked.

“I vote we take the tunnel on the left,” I said.

“Why the left?” Ash asked.

“I just want to.”

“Okay then.”

Ash turned to the girls, along with Harold, Jason and Paul.

“Who’s taking which tunnel?”

“We'll take the middle,” Martha said.

“That leaves us to the tunnel on the right,” Jason said.

“Okay then. See you soon,” Jake said.

We walked into our tunnels. We walked for a while until there was a door. We tried to open it, but it was locked.

“Hey! Open the door!” I yelled.

“Who are you yelling to?” Ash asked.

“I don’t know. I guess Gigantusnus can hear, so I’m talking to her. Now, OPEN THE DOOR!”

“Yelling isn’t going to solve anything. Maybe there’s a kay somewhere, or some sort of clue to open the door,” Jake said. Ash nodded.

“He’s right. Let’s look around.” After a while of looking, we heard a voice.

“Fools!” the voice boomed.

We turned in surprise. I screamed. We got close together and were shaking with fear. Can you blame us? That was scary. And the fact that Ash was shaking made it worse, because he never gets scared.

“H-Hello? Who’s there?” Jake asked. His voice trembled with fear.

“You don’t need to ask. You already know,” the voice said. At first, I wasn’t paying much attention to how the voice sounded, as I was too scared. But now the voice was clear, and it was female. I shuddered as a thought came to me.

“What are you talking about?” Ash asked, as he paced nervously in a puddle. He tried to sound upbeat and strong, but he couldn’t. I understood why. He was scared.

“Gigantusnus,” I said. I had a chill through my body as I said that. Why? Because she had gotten into my body. I fell to my knees and went face first into the cold stone ground.

Ash’s POV

“Max? Max!” I yelled as he fell to his knees. I ran over to him and knelt, putting a hand on his shoulder.

I pressed my hand to his heart. Thankfully it was still beating. Jake looked at me, his expression scared.

“Is-is he okay?” Jake asked. His voice was soft, yet shaky because he was scared, and I completely understood why: his boyfriend had an issue.

“He’s alive. His heart is beating and he’s breathing,” I said. Jake sighed with relief, feeling better now that he knew Max was alive.

“Thank god. Turn him on his back. That way he can get some fresh air,” Jake said. I nodded and rolled Max onto his back. Seeing Jake look out for Max like this made me feel guilty, as I never bothered to try. Part of me wondered if Max or anyone else would care if I died. I closed my eyes, trying to think. I felt a tear run down my cheek.

“We would definitely care if you died,” Jake said. I opened my eyes. Jake was sitting on a rock, watching over Max.

“Huh?” I asked. How had Jake known what I was thinking?

“Oh. Guess I forgot to mention I can read people’s emotions, thanks to Stormspirital being a god of ghosts and ice. Come sit next to me.”

Jake motioned to the rock next to him. I walked through a small puddle and tripped over a root, as it was dark, and made my way to him. The tunnel was dark, so I had my hands in front of me so I could feel the rock. I felt the rock and sat.

“Why would you think we wouldn’t care if you died?” Jake asked. I honestly didn’t want to tell him, but I had to tell somebody. I took a deep breath.

“I’m not sure. Maybe it’s the fact that I feel guilty,” I said. Jake looked at me, confused.

“Why do you feel guilty?” he asked. I stood up and paced in the puddle, not caring that my shoes were wet.

“I just…I feel like I’m not being the big brother I should, and I feel like that because I never bothered looking out for Max the way you and the girls do,” I said. When I was done, Jake nodded.

“I know how you feel,” he muttered. Jake kicked a pebble. I stared at him in disbelief and shock. Jake was a great kid, always looking out for people and caring. He was one of the nicest people I ever knew. And to wonder if people would care if he died? That thought crushed me. I put a hand on his shoulder.

“Don’t say that. Imagine how Max would feel if you were to die. He would be devastated, crushed,” I said. Jake looked at me with sadness in his eyes.

“I appreciate the thought, but why would Max be crushed?” Jake grumbled. A small amount of anger rose in my body, but I managed to control it. I took a deep breath and calmed down.

“Jake, listen to me. Max and you are great together. Max NEEDS you in his life,” I said. We sat back to back on the right.

“I need you,” I said quietly. Jake turned so we could face each other.

“Thanks for helping me realize that I mean something,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Of course. I can’t imagine Max without you,” I said. Jake nodded in agreement.

“Me either,” Jake said. He stood up and brushed himself off, as the tunnel was dusty.

“Speaking of Max, where did he go?” Jake asked.

“What do you mean?” I asked. Jake pointed to where Max was.

“Look. He’s not there.”

I thought about what to do. This wasn’t a game of hide and seek. Max would never take a crisis like this as a joke.

“Max? Max! Come out wherever you are!” I called. There was no response. Jake motioned to move.

“Let’s look around,” Jake said. We walked and back tracked through the tunnel. I know it was dark, but for some reason it seemed darker. Water dripped from the roof. Soon, we were at the place where the tunnels were.

“Well, he’s not here. What should we do now?” Jake asked. I looked at the tunnels to the middle and to the right.

“Let’s warn the others,” I said. Jake and I walked into the middle tunnel. It was more lit up than the left one, but it was a nature mess. I kept tripping over roots, and the puddles went up to my ankles. After a long walk, Jake and I finally made it to the girls. I guess they could tell we were out of breath, because they stared at us.

“Dear god! What happened?” Wendy asked. If there’s one thing I’ve learned about Wendy, it’s to tell her the truth. She can sniff out a lie better than a hound on steak.

“Max’s body got taken over by Gigantusnus,” I blurted, throwing my hands in the air. After I said that, I felt my eyes water. I sat in the puddle, putting my head in my hands, sighing. A few tears came down. Chloe put a hand on my shoulder.

“Ash? What’s wrong?” Chloe asked. Therefore, I love her: she’s so nice and supportive. Honestly, I didn’t want to share what I was thinking, but she was supportive, and I needed support.

“I’m…scared,” I admitted.

“Scared of what?” Chloe asked. I sighed with sadness and put my hands on my knees as I sat up.

“Honestly, I don’t know. After Max got possessed, I guess I feared the thought that I might lose him. And who knows? He could be dead by now, and I would feel terrible because I wasn’t there for him. We have to tell Jason, Paul and Martha,” I said sternly. My lip quivered as I spoke. The fact that my younger brother was in trouble made me hopeless. Now, in the past he’s come close to dying, but then I was able to help him out. This was different. He was possessed by an evil goddess, and we had to get her out of his body. Chloe hugged me.

“Hey. It’ll be okay. We’ll get Max back. I promise,” Chloe said. Another reason why I love her: she keeps promises. I nodded.

“I hope so. Come on. Let’s go to the last tunnel where Paul, Jason and Harold are,” I said as I walked out. After a long walk of tripping and not being able to see, we finally reached Paul, Jason and Harold. We were dirty, as our clothes were dusty. They let us know by looking us up and down.

“What happened to you guys?” Paul asked.

“We’ve been looking for Max,” I said, breathing hard. I was out of breath.

“What do you mean? I thought he was with you guys,” Jason said, eyeing us.

“He was,” Jake said.

“Then what happened?” Harold asked. He crossed his arms, waiting for an answer.

“He got possessed by Gigantusnus,” I said. Paul scoffed, as if he didn’t believe me.

“Prove it,” Paul said.

“Why prove it if you know it’s true?” a voice asked. The voice was female, but it was gravely and heavy, like nails on a chalkboard. We turned, but nobody was there. My lip quivered and my body shook with fear.

“H-Hello…?” I called nervously. There was no answer. Behind me, I heard a splash from a puddle, along with a rock hitting the wall. I turned around to see a shadow sitting on a rock. I unzipped my backpack and pulled out a flashlight. I turned it on and shone the light at the shadow. Max was there. He turned and hissed at the sight of the light.

“Ash, turn it off,” Jake said. I nodded and turned it off. Jake tiptoed towards Max.

“Max…? You okay, bud?” Jake asked calmly. Max quickly shook his head.

“Max…gone…” Max said. This wasn’t the female voice. It was his own.

“Max, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“Max…shouldn’t be here…Monster,” Max muttered. He threw a rock at the wall. I shook my head.

“You’re not a monster, and you should be here,” I said as calmly as I could. To my surprise, I sounded and felt confident, even though I was scared.

“I am…Monster,” Max muttered. I looked at the rest of the team for help, but they were just as clueless as I was. Except Jake. He looked at me with confidence and nodded, signaling me that I was doing good.

“How are you a monster?” I asked. Max lowered his head.

“Uncle Mark…Burned…Dad…stabbed.”

A tear went down Max’s cheek.

“That wasn’t your fault. You didn’t know,” I said. I put a hand on Max’s shoulder, and felt his body rapidly shake and shudder. He squeezed his eyes tight and fell to his hands and knees. He yelled in pain, then stood, breathing with anger.

“Max is no more, for I am now in control!” He yelled. This wasn’t his voice. It was the same female voice from before.

“Gigantusnus?” I asked. Anger started to come into my body. I clenched my fists.

“Indeed. It is I, Gigantusnus! The eldest of the gods and goddesses. Hello, children,” Gigantusnus said.

More anger rose inside of me, as I clenched my fists harder.

“Leave Max alone! Get out of him!” I shouted. I was breathing with anger, as I knew an evil goddess was in my brother.

“Never! This body is mine!”

“What do you want from him? Why his body, huh?” I demanded.

“This body has potential and power.”

I felt anger fill my whole body.

“Then turn around and fight me!” I yelled. I knew as I said that, I would probably lose. Max could easily beat me in a fight on his own, but with an evil goddess possessing him. I shuddered at the thought. Gigantusnus scoffed.

“Are you sure you want to fight me?” Gigantusnus asked. I nodded and raised my hands. I prayed that the puddle would rise and form a wave.

“As you wish,” Gigantusnus snarled. Gigantusnus turned around to face me, still in Max’s body. Max looked the same except for his eyes. They weren’t sky blue anymore. They were dark grey, like rain clouds. I charged towards Gigantusnus, and Max’s eyes began to glow. It suddenly felt like I was slower. It was like Gigantusnus had slowed down time. Right as I was about to hit Max, he rose his arms, and I froze. He made a pushing motion, and I flew back and slammed into the tunnel wall and fell to the ground. Max walked towards me and drew his sword. He raised it. Just as he was about to stab me, his body shuddered. His eyes flickered from gold to blue.

“N-no. Leave…him…alone!” Max grunted is his normal voice. I stared at him and looked at everyone.

They were just as confused as I was. His eyes went back to gold.

“Shut up! You can’t stop me!” Gigantusnus said. Max’s eyes flickered again.

“Yes…I…can!” Max yelled. Suddenly, Max’s belt, which was on a rock, began to glow.

“Ash! The belt! Get what’s in it!” Max instructed. I ran over to his belt and pulled out a knife. I stared at it, then at Max. I looked at Max like he was insane.

“Max, you can’t be serious,” I said in disbelief. He motioned for me to give him the knife.

“I’m not going to kill you. I’m going to stab myself,” Max said. I looked at him like he was out of his mind. I shook my head.

“I’m not giving it to you,” I said. Can you blame me? I was scared. Even though it could save him, I didn’t want him stabbing himself. I stepped back with the knife in my hand.

“Why not?” Max demanded. He stepped towards me. I tried to step back, but my back was against the tunnel wall.

“I’m not going to let you stab yourself!” I said sternly. I turned to my right and got behind Max, still holding on tight to the knife.

“Just give it to me!” Max demanded angrily. He turned around and stepped towards me. He stepped into a puddle. When his foot touched the puddle, I felt an urge to blast him with water. I made it seem like I was going to give him the knife.

“Okay. You win. Here you go,” I said.

Max reached for the knife. Right as he touched the handle, I thrusted my hand in the air. Water blasted from the puddle. Max got soaked and lost his grip on the knife. When he lost his grip and was getting soaked, I took the knife. I slowly lowered my hand, and the water stopped. It splashed and formed back into a puddle.

“Why do you want the knife?” I asked. I don’t know why I asked. I knew why.

“I need it to stab myself in my weak spot. That way, Gigantusnus will hopefully leave my body,” Max said. He shuddered and his eyes turned gold.

“Foolish child! You know that will not do anything!” Gigantusnus said. He shuddered, and his eyes turned back to gold.

“Shut up, Gigantusnus! I don’t care if I die as long as it gets you out!” Max yelled. Max turned to me.

“Ash, please. Give me the knife,” Max said desperately. I felt like I didn’t have a choice. I gave him the knife. He took it and moved it to the back of his left knee. His hands were shaking, as he was nervous. I didn’t blame him. If I was possessed and had to stab myself in my weak spot, I would be nervous too. Max shoved the knife and stabbed himself in the back of his left knee. He screamed in pain, and his eyes rapidly changed from gold to blue. The flickering of his eyes slowed down. Soon, his eyes were back to blue. Max swayed and looked dazed.

“What’s going on?” he muttered before he collapsed onto the tunnel ground. Luckily, Jake caught him and gently lowered his head on a rock. Screaming could be heard, and it was loud and echoed throughout the tunnel. A shadow slid out of Max’s body, and it turned into human form. The human form was an old lady wearing black robes. She had long grey hair, and red shoes with high black socks. She gave us an angry look, and with her stormy-grey eyes, it was clear she was mad. She opened her arms as if preparing for a hug. None of us moved. She then hovered against the tunnel ground. The tunnel was dead silent except for Max talking in his sleep and shivering from the cold. Jake covered him up with a blanket from Max’s belt. Gigantusnus took a deep breath.

“Do you have any idea what you’ve just done?!” she screamed. Her face was as red as her shoes, and a fire formed in her eyes.

“Yeah. We got you out of Max’s body,” I said. Gigantusnus was breathing heavy with anger. She was trying to control it, but she wasn’t doing so well. She shook her head and grabbed her hair. She screamed with anger.

“This isn’t over! You understand?! I’ll be back for the war! I have an army ready and waiting. You hear me? I will be back! See you guys soon!” Gigantusnus said. Her body flickered, and she disappeared. We looked at each other. Nobody said a word. Jake was the first to speak.

“Well, that happened,” Jake said.

“What did she mean when she said she’ll see us soon? And what’s all this about a war and an army?” Jason asked.

Everyone turned to me, expecting guidance or answers.

“What do we do, Ash?” Chloe asked. I knew everyone was depending on me for answers, but I didn’t have any. I shook my head.

“It’s a lot to think about, but we shouldn’t worry too much about it. Let’s try to get some sleep,” I said. Everyone nodded and quickly fell asleep. Meanwhile, I was trying to sleep. That was easier said than done. I had so much on my mind: Max, what we were going to do next, etc. A few minutes later, my eyes closed, and I drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 13

Dreams

Max’s POV

After Gigantusnus came out of my body, I started dreaming. I hate dreaming. The reason for that is because they’re never normal dreams. Instead, they’re visions of the future or something. In this dream, I was on the ground with Jake. We were both bleeding and breathing slowly as we were dying. Jake looked at me. His face was all cut and bloody.

“Max, what are you...?” Jake croaked. His tone was soft as it hurt to speak. I touched his hand.

“I’m not losing you again,” I said.

“As long as we’re together,” Jake agreed. The rest of the team came running over.

“Max! Jake! No, don’t go! We need you!” Ash sobbed. I put a bloody finger to his lips.

“Shh. Ash, it’s okay,” I said.

Ash shook his head, refusing to believe me.

“No, it’s not! It’s not okay!” Ash protested.

“See you in the Darkness Pit,” I whispered.

Jake’s POV

I don’t want to sound like a wimp who’s scared of dreams, but what I saw was terrifying. Max and I had just died, and we were in the Abyss. Everything was fine until we laid down on the ground to rest. Max and I looked up at the sky, hoping to see stars. No such luck. All we saw were spirits flying in the sky, occasionally stopping to see us.

Ash’s POV

I dreamed about riddles, and opening doors in the tunnel. A riddle was written on the tunnel wall:

The call of annoyance

Shall break the brother’s patience

It was the same tunnel, with the 3 of us. Max looked at the riddle, then me, then grinned. I knew what was coming. Before I knew it, Max was shooting questions at me.

“Shut up!” I yelled. Max looked at me.

“Bro, are you mad?” Max asked. I pinned him to the wall,

“If you don’t shut up, I will lose my patience. Actually, I’ve already lost it!”

Then, the door opened.

“Hey, it opened,” Max said happily.

We walked through the door and saw…a giant dragon. The other doors opened and out came the rest of the team. Above the dragon was a cage.

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Jason’s POV

I dreamed about fighting an army. Drake’s army, to be exact. I saw Martha’s hands were full. I wanted to help, but I knew that wouldn’t be smart. She was so distracted fighting that she didn’t notice the rock above her that was about to fall. I ran over and pushed her out of the way. She glared at me.

“What in the world are you doing?!” Martha demanded. She pushed me away.

“I saved your life,” I said. She gave me a confused yet disgusted look.

“What are you talking about?” she asked.

“The rock was about to fall on you, and I pushed you out of the way,” I explained. Martha gave me a skeptical look.

“Why would you save me? Why not let me die?” Martha asked. I hugged her.

“Because I love you,” I whispered in her ear.

“You do…?”

I nodded. Her expression softened, and we blushed.

“I love you too,” she admitted.

We kissed.

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Martha’s POV

I dreamed about Jason. We were busy with the army, and I had my hands full. Jason shoved me out of the way. I glared at him and demanded what he was doing. He explained that he saved me, and we kissed.

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Harold’s POV

I dreamed about my family in a cage. Below them, as they were hanging, was a dragon. We were all in the room.

“Jason, fly up there and get the cage down,” I said. Jason did that, and I let them out. I guess we were a

little loud, because the dragon woke up.

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Paul’s POV

I dreamed about Martha and Jason dating. How could he? He knew I loved her!

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Wendy’s POV

I dreamed about an argument with Chloe.

“Chloe! Don’t you get it? We’re not sisters!” I yelled. Our faces were red from yelling.

“We have to be!” Chloe yelled. She ran out of the room crying.

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Chloe’s POV

In my dream, Wendy and I were arguing. She said we weren’t sisters, and I ran out of the room.

Chapter 14

Riddles

Max

I woke up with a start. My cheeks were wet, and my face was red from crying. Everybody looked at me, Jake came over to me.

“Are you okay?” Jake asked. He had concern in his voice, and a worried look.

“Yeah, just had a bad dream,” I said. Ash gave me a confused look.

“You had a bad dream too, huh?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“What was it about?” Wendy asked. I explained my dream. When I was done, everyone looked at me.

Nobody said a word. Ash was the first to speak.

“Well, I don’t know what to do about our dreams, but I know how we can open the doors,” Ash said.

We nodded, but Jason had a confused look.

“But how do we open the doors?” Jason asked. Ash led the way into the left tunnel. Once we were all there, Ash pointed to the wall. Engraved on the wall were words:

The call of annoyance Shall break the brother’s patience

We looked back at Ash.

“They’re just words,” I said. Even as I said it, I knew they were much more than just words.

“They’re riddles. And to open the doors, you guys must solve them. Go back to your tunnels,” Ash said.

Jason, Paul, Martha, Harold, Wendy, and Chloe went back to their tunnels.

After they left, I was still looking at the riddle. I looked at Ash and grinned. I knew what to do. I had to annoy him, and I was good at that. I had to do that until he lost his patience. I began shooting questions at him until he pinned me to the wall. I laughed.

“Bro, are you mad?” I asked while laughing.

“What do you think?! Ash yelled. I giggled because making him mad was always fun.

“How’s your patience with him?” Jake asked. Ash glared at him.

“That’s it! I’ve had it! You guys have broken my patience! So, shut UP!” Ash yelled. His voice echoed through the tunnel. The walls shook, and the door opened.

We walked through the door to see stone walls, chairs and an announcer’s booth. It seemed like we were in an arena. The other doors opened, and out came the rest of the group. We looked up at the ceiling to see a cage hanging. Inside were people.

“Harold is that you?” a woman asked.

“Mia! Yes, it’s me. How are Nick and Sophia?” Harold called. Mia looked like she was talking to Nick and Sophia.

“They’re okay!” Mia called. Harold gave a thumbs up.

We heard growling in front of us, and when we turned, my heart almost stopped. We saw a giant dragon.

“Um, you guys see the giant dragon too, right?” I asked. Everyone nodded.

“Okay, cool. I just wanted to make sure I’m not going crazy,” I said with fear. Jake put a hand on my shoulder, which calmed me down.

“Hey, bud. Calm down. It’ll be okay. We just have to be quiet,” Jake said. I nodded and looked at Harold.

“How will we get them down?” I asked.

“Jason, I need you to fly up and bring them down.”

Jason nodded and did as he was told. Once the cage was brought down, I opened it with some tools from

my belt. Harold and his family had a nice reunion, but I guess we were too loud, because the dragon woke up.

Chapter 15

The fight with the giant dragon

Max’s POV

Once the dragon saw us, he roared in anger. We backed up nervously. I looked at the doors. I started to walk towards them, but I guess Ash saw what I was doing, and he dragged me back.

“Oh no you don’t. You’re going to stay and fight with the rest of us,” Ash said sternly. I didn’t want to argue, so I decided to shut up and not say anything. We faced the dragon. We pulled out our weapons, then charged. Jason summoned lightning, then I summoned fire, and the dragon got burnt and smite.

Chapter 16

The final lines

Max’s POV

After the dragon died, its body glowed gold, and it vanished.

“Well, okay then. It’s gone. Now what?” Jake asked.

There were doors that the dragon had blocked that were now opened. I pointed to them.

“There’s doors over there. Should we go through and see where they go?” I asked. Ash shrugged, and everyone looked at each other.

“I mean, we don’t have any other ideas, so why not?” Ash said.

We walked towards the doors. When we got close, the doors vanished.

“What the-?!” Paul exclaimed. Suddenly, all the doors in the arena closed, including the ones we came from. We heard small chuckling. Then, the chuckling turned into a normal laugh. Then the normal laugh turned into a hysterical laugh. We all yelped and looked around. There was nobody here but us. Soon, the laughter died down.

“Oh, boy. That was entertaining!” a voice said. We still looked around the arena to figure out who was talking.

“What are you all doing?!” the voice demanded.

“We’re looking for you. If you’re invisible, show yourself like a man!” I demanded. The voice sighed with annoyance.

“Ugh. Fine.”

Drake shimmered into view. I glared at him.

Anger filled my body, and hatred built into me as I looked at me. I wanted to punch him, shoot him, do anything that would make him leave existence. But I knew that was impossible. He was an immortal god. As far as I was concerned, that meant he couldn’t die.

“Oh, hello, Max. Glad to see you again,” Drake said with fake happiness.

“What do you want?” I asked. I didn’t know what he wanted, since Uncle Mark was gone/ Drake gave an innocent look.

“Whatever do you mean?” Drake asked innocently. I glared at him, and my face turned angry. Looking at him made me mad in ways I can’t explain.

“Don’t play games with me. Why are you here?” I demanded.

Drake giggled playfully.

“Oh! So that’s what you mean!” Drake exclaimed. He smiled proudly, like he figured something out.

“Okay. I’m here to tell you that you guys are in Hell,” Drake said like it wasn’t obvious.

I sighed and shook my head with annoyance.

“Well duh! We already know that!” I snapped. I took a deep breath and calmed down.

“Okay, we know we’re in Hell. What are we supposed to do to get out?” I asked. Drake shook his head. “Oh, Max. Sweet, innocent, stupid Max. You can’t escape Hell. Not unless…”

Drake smiled evilly.

“Not unless what? Tell us!” Jason demanded. Drake shrugged.

“You can’t leave until you defeat me!” Drake shouted. His voice was booming and loud. It echoed throughout the arena. We glared at him. This wasn’t a fair fight at all, since he couldn’t die. However, I remembered that gods could be sent to the Darkness Pit, but they wouldn’t stay there for long. I shrugged.

“Alright. We’ll fight you,” I said.

Suddenly, Rob appeared. His eyes glowed green and fog formed.

“This prophecy has 2 parts. These are the final lines. Here is the first:

To obtain the crystals

The dark Lord shall fall

In the battle of heroes and gods

He will be long gone

Here is the second and final part of the prophecy:

To put Gigantusnus away

A sacrifice from his loved one shall be made

As it will restore the world

And seal up the Hellish Doors

That concludes the prophecy. “

Rob vanished, as if he was an illusion. We looked at each other, then at Drake.

“Let’s do this,” I said.

Chapter 17

The Crystals

Max’s POV

We glared at Drake. I was starting to get nervous, since there were no gods around. Just then, a golden light shined. When the light faded, the gods were there. Drake summoned an army.

“Charge!” I yelled.

We charged at Drake and his army and began slashing and hacking at his army. We got cut a few times, but that was fine. I mean, at least we were still alive and fighting. I had a bunch of Drake’s buddies around me, so I summoned fire, and spun around, burning them.

Jason’s POV

I summoned lightning at the baddies around me. I noticed Martha was in trouble, and a boulder was about to hit her. I ran over and shoved her out of the way. She glared at me, then her expression softened.

“You had that dream too, huh?” Martha asked. I nodded. She hugged me. I was surprised at first, but I hugged back.

“Thanks for saving me,” Martha whispered in my ear.

“Of course. I love you.”

And with that, we kissed.

“Hey! Fight now, kiss later!” Max yelled.

Ash’s POV

I summoned water and blasted the baddies around me. They drowned and fell to the ground, dead. I looked over to see Max was in trouble with baddies. I blasted them with water, along with Max. The baddies died from drowning, and Max got soaked.

Max’s POV

I was in trouble as I was surrounded. Then out of nowhere, we got blasted with water. I stared at Ash as I spit out water.

“Thanks. Next time give me a warning,” I said annoyed. Ash nodded, and we went back to fighting. Meanwhile, the gods and Drake were busy. The gods were doing good: they were blasting him with water, fire, lightning, pretty much all the elements. They were on a roll until Drake hit them with spikes that he summoned.

They fell and hit the ground. Hard. I wanted to help, but we had our own fight. Then I got an idea.

“Jason, follow me! The rest of you keep fighting!” I called.

Jason ran over.

“What’s up?” he asked.

“You can summon lightning, right?” I asked.

To prove it, he smoked baddies.

“I have a plan. We’re going to combine our powers,” I said. Jason gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“So, I was thinking the team would distract Drake. Then you would summon lightning and hit him.

Keep going for a bit. Then, I’ll summon fire and we'll have-.”

“Fire lightning,” Jason finished my thought. I nodded.

“Exactly. Let’s go tell the team.”

We came back to the fight.

“Where were you guys?” Ash demanded.

“We have a plan to stop Drake. Huddle up,” I said.

We huddled up.

“Jason’s going to summon lightning, then I’m going to summon fire. In other words, we’re going to combine our powers,” I explained.

“What do we have to do?” Ash asked.

“Distract Drake,” I said.

“Alright. Let’s do it.”

Ash’s POV

While Max and Jason ran behind Drake, we ran to the front of him. I shot water at him to get his attention. It worked. He looked at me annoyed.

“What do you want?” Drake asked.

“I um…” My thoughts stopped, and I tried to think of something. Luckily, Chloe came to the rescue.

“He was just wondering why you turned evil, right Ash?” Chloe asked. She winked at me, signaling me to play along. It was stupid, but I decided to play along since it would buy Max and Jason time.

I looked over at Max. He pointed to his watch. He needed more time. I nodded and turned around to face Drake.

“Yes, that’s right. I’d like to know,” I said I tried to not sound sarcastic. Drake began with his childhood.

“I had an abusive family. They abused me every chance they got. I got bullied in school. Nothing I did was right. So, I turned evil to get revenge.”

Max’s POV

Listening to Drake’s story made me feel bad. I put a hand on Jason’s shoulder.

“Maybe we shouldn’t do this,” I said. Jason stared at me like I was crazy.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Because he’s already been through so much in his life. He doesn’t deserve this. Come on. We have to tell him what we were planning.”

“But-”

“That’s an order.” We walked over to the group.

“Excuse me?” I asked.

Drake looked at me.

“Yes?” he asked.

“We have something to tell you,” Jason said. We looked down in shame.

“What is it?” Drake asked.

“We were going to kill you,” I admitted.

“What?”

“See, when Ash asked you to explain your story, that was to distract you. We were behind you. But after we heard your story, we realized you’ve been through so much in your life, and you didn’t deserve to die,” I said.

“Why were you trying to kill me?” Drake asked.

“So, we could have the crystals. Sorry about that,” Jason said. Surprisingly, Drake wasn’t mad.

“I see… Well, if you want them, you could have asked. I can just give them to you,” Drake said.

“But didn’t it say in the prophecy you would fall as in die?” Martha asked. Drake nodded sadly. “It did, didn’t it?”

We nodded. Drake sighed.

“Well, I guess you’ll have to kill me,” Drake said. I couldn’t believe it. It didn’t seem fair that he had to die. Then I had an idea.

“Maybe you don’t have to die,” I said. Everyone glanced at me, confused.

“Max, what are you talking about? The prophecy said-”

“I know what it said. I have an idea.”

“Okay, what’s your idea?” Wendy asked.

“My idea is to have Drake see if he can just give us the crystals,” I said.

Everyone turned to look at Drake.

“I guess we can try,” Drake said. He pulled out 8 crystals and gave them to each of us. The problem was that they just looked like rocks. They had no color, no glow, no nothing.

“Should these be glowing? Because they’re not,” I said.

Drake scratched his head, and he had a confused look.

“They should be. I don’t understand why they’re not,” Drake said. Suddenly, the ground rumbled, making us fall to our butts. Laughter could be heard, and it was loud and female.

“Foolish idiots!” the female voice boomed. We gasped, as we knew that voice. It was Gigantusnus.

Anger filled my body. I clenched my fists with anger. I hated Gigantusnus. Hated her for possessing me.

“What do you want? Why are you calling us idiots?” I demanded. Gigantusnus laughed.

“I called you idiots because it is impossible to change the destiny of a prophecy. Knowing that, you tried, and failed. That is why you are foolish children,” Gigantusnus said.

A lump formed in my throat. I knew that meant we had to kill Drake. I didn’t like it or wanted to do it, but we had no choice.

“So, we have to kill Drake for the crystals to work?” Jason asked.

“Correct,” Gigantusnus said. We looked at Drake sadly.

“Drake, we’re so sorry,” Martha said. Drake shook his head.

“It’s okay, guys. I know you don’t have a choice. Go ahead and, you know, kill me,” Drake said. We nodded sadly. I summoned fire and burned him. Jason summoned lightning and smoked him. Then, we combined our powers. After that, Drake was on the ground. He coughed.

“Thank you,” he said. Those were his final words before he closed his eyes. He was now dead.

Chapter 18

Gigantusnus Rises

Max’s POV

After Drake died, the crystals cast a glow. Gigantusnus laughed evilly.

“Why are you laughing?” I asked.

“Oh, Max. You have no idea what killing Drake did,” Gigantusnus said.

“Um, yes I do. It gave power to the crystals,” I said.

“That’s one thing it did.”

“Well, what’s the other?” Jake asked.

“It made me fully rise!” Gigantusnus said. Her voice boomed throughout the arena.

“Oh. That’s bad,” Paul said.

“Indeed, it is. For you guys! Now that I have fully risen, I shall storm Barthow! And there's nothing you can do to stop me!” Gigantusnus said, laughing.

“We’ll see about that. Once we’re out of Hell, we will stop you. One way or another,” I said.

Gigantusnus laughed.

“That’s what you think.”

We walked through the doors of the arena to teleport pads. We stepped on them and got teleported. I thought we were still in Hell, because Barthow was awful: there were fires, destroyed buildings, etc. Worst of all: the huge army. And behind them was Gigantusnus. She wasn’t lying when she said she had fully risen. We stared at all the destruction she caused, then looked at her army. She had destroyed so much and killed many people. We had to stop her. This meant war.

We stood facing Gigantusnus and her army. Ash looked at me.

“What do we do, Max?” Ash asked. I didn’t take my eyes from the army.

“We fight,” I said.

The army advanced towards us. We walked in their direction.

“Uh, they’re not stopping,” Paul said. We kept walking.

“Neither are we.”

We ran at the army, weapons out. The army was massive. There was at least a few thousand monsters. But that wasn’t going to stop us. I slashed my sword and stabbed my sword at many monsters. It wasn’t enough to kill them, so I summoned fire and thrusted my hands out. Fire came rushing out of my hands and burned some monsters.

Ash’s POV

I shot water at some monsters to get their attention. After I got their attention, I raised my hands up. I felt a tug feeling in my gut. I thrusted my arms out at the monsters. The water slammed into them and they disintegrated.

Jason’s POV

I raised my hand up with my finger pointed at the sky. Lightning came down and I electrocuted some monsters, killing them.

Martha’s POV

I had the power/ability to shoot glitter. I know it sounds stupid, but it was effective enough to disintegrate monsters. Max stared at me.

“I’m never going to underestimate glitter again,” he muttered. Jason looked at me, impressed and smiled.

“Nice one, babe!” Jason called. I blushed.

Paul’s POV

I started punching monsters so hard they slammed into walls and disintegrated. Then I kicked them. I figured I had taken out a lot of monsters.

Max’s POV

After a lot of fighting, it was down to us and Gigantusnus.

We looked at Gigantusnus. We were standing across her. She was taller than before. MUCH taller. I looked at the team.

“What do we do, Max?” Jake asked.

“We take this evil goddess down,” I said.

“And how do you think you’re going to do that?” Gigantusnus asked. My mind blanked. I didn’t think about that.

“If I’m being 100% honest, I’m not sure at all. I guess we’ll fight,” I said.

Again, she laughed.

“We’ll see how that turns out.”

We charged at her. Bad idea. She thrusted her arms out and shoved us back. We hit a wall, groaning in pain. While everyone was shaking off the pain, I stood up and ran at Gigantusnus. She punched me, and I flew back, slamming into a wall.

Jake’s POV

I thought about the last lines of the prophecy. I knew I was the sacrifice to stop her. I wondered how I was going to sacrifice myself. Then I remembered: Stormsicle was the god of ice and ghosts. I figured I could possess Gigantusnus and kill her. I focused on the thought. It worked. Soon, I was in her body. I grabbed her sword and stabbed her in the heart, killing both of us.

Max’s POV

I watched with confusion as Gigantusnus stabbed herself. A very bright golden light appeared and covered her body. I shut my eyes. When the light faded, Jake was on the ground with a sword through him. I ran over to him and knelt.

“Jake...What-?” I stammered.

Jake put a finger to my lips, which shut me up.

“Max, it’s okay,” Jake said softly. I shook my head, trying so hard not to cry.

“No! It’s not okay!”

“I was the sacrifice.”

Jake coughed.

“Max. Know that I love you. And promise me-.”

Jake coughed up some blood.

“Promise you what?”

“Promise me you’ll stay strong, keep fighting and come back to me,” Jake said.

Those were his last words before he closed his eyes. I cried softly as I held his body. I wiped my tears.

“I promise,” I whispered.

After Jake's body dissolved, all the destruction Gigantusnus had caused was reversed.

Chapter 19

Farewell

Max

It’s been 2 days since we defeated Gigantusnus. That also means it had been 2 days since Jake had sacrificed himself. I stood barefoot in the grass, outside of our mansion on Mount Dorson. The grass was wet, as it had just been watered, but I didn’t mind. I was looking down at the city below. A breeze blew by. I didn’t pay attention to my outfit, but it wasn’t very warm: just a T-shirt and jeans. Ash walked out of the mansion and walked over to me. He was wearing a black jacket and jeans.

“Hey,” he said. I was still looking down at the city.

“Hey,” I said, not taking my eyes off the city.

“How are you holding up?”

I looked up from the city. I sat in the grass and sighed. Ash sat down next to me.

“You miss him, don’t you?” Ash asked.

I nodded.

“I know you’re sad. I am, too. But know that he sacrificed himself for a good cause.” “Yeah. I get that. I just can’t believe he’s gone,” I said.

A tear came down. I hugged Ash and allowed the tears to fall. I sat up and wiped my eyes. Everyone else came out. Jason wore a yellow shirt and blue shorts. Martha wore a pink shirt with jeans. Wendy wore a dark green hoodie with sweatpants. Chloe wore a purple shirt with shorts. Paul wore a grey hoodie and shorts.

Soon, Harold and his family came out. We sat in a circle.

“It’s crazy to believe we actually did it. We beat Gigantusnus,” Paul said.

“Not only that, but when Jake sacrificed himself, it erased Gigantusnus from existence.” “How do you all feel that we won?” Martha asked.

“Besides Jake dying, I’m happy. We won. No more trouble for a while, hopefully,” I said. We nodded.

“We should celebrate. Cookies?” Nick asked.

“Heck yeah, dude,” Paul said.

We walked inside to celebrate. I stayed behind to get one last glance at the city. Then I walked inside to join the group. That was it. We won. Everyone was happy. So, I get this is Max Wilson, signing off for now.

???’s POV

Hello there, puny, worthless, humans. I am Dominic, the leader of aliens. I happen to be an alien myself.

Anyway, I was in the control room, scowling as I looked at the main computer monitor.

“Gigantusnus has failed us,” I said, shaking my head. Kenan, my crew member, looked at me with concern.

“It seems she was possessed and killed, erasing her from existence. Not only that, but Drake is gone,

too,” I said.

“Who or what killed her?” Kenan asked.

“Computer, show us what killed them,” I commanded. The computer obeyed and went into a file called

“Details”. Inside the file were pictures and documents of the following people and gods: Max, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Martha, Jason, Paul, Blazikus, Stormspirital, Werit, Beauticus, Dergrut, Charmisian, Skypshor and Hitome. I scowled.

“Bah! I should have known!” “Who did it?” Kenan asked.

“Humans and gods. Computer, show me their locations,” I commanded. The computer pulled up a map.

I was expecting their exact locations, but all I got was a map of galaxies. The galaxy they were in was the Milky Way, which was a long way away from our galaxy, Redtrico. It would take ages to fly there, then search for their planet. But I guess I had no choice. I walked to my ship, hoping it would be repaired from the battle with the cyborgs earlier this morning. No such luck.

“Brady! Adrian! Get over here!” I yelled. My two henchmen scrambled down from the sixth floor, which was the lab where we tested experiments. They tripped over the stairs of the third floor and fell over to me. I gave them a look of disgust and raised an eyebrow. I had a low growl in my throat. They noticed I was mad, got to their feet and saluted. Adrian was a green alien with a black uniform connected with four purple dots, with two pads on his shoulders, one with our logo. Brady had the same thing, except his pads had the menacing tanks that we are so well known for. They both had gloves and jeans to hide their tentacles. I was wearing the same uniform, but with a cape, red buttons, and a tag that said, “Alien Lord”.

“Y-yes, Dominic?” Adrian asked. His tone made it clear he was nervous and scared of me, which I absolutely loved.

“What is it?” Brady asked.

“Do either of you have an answer as to why my ship hasn’t been repaired yet?!” I asked, first calmly, then releasing my rage. They cowered in fear.

“S-sorry, Dominic. We got distracted,” Adrian said. I took heavy, deep breaths, trying to control my anger.

“You say you got distracted?” I asked quietly. They nodded quickly, shaking with fear.

“Yes, Dominic,” Brady said.

“By what exactly?” I asked.

“Huh?” Brady asked.

“What distracted you?!”

“We were playing video games and taking a break,” Adrian said.

“Adrian, fix the ship. Brady, come with me.”

Brady and I began to walk. But Adrian stopped us.

“Wait! I can’t fix this myself!” Adrian complained.

“This is the alien talking who fixed and rebuilt my parents’ base, right?” I asked. Adrian nodded.

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“Then if you can fix a base, you can fix a ship.”

“But-.”

“Fix. The. Ship!”

“Yes Dominic,” Adrian said quickly. He began working on the ship. I turned to Brady.

“As for you, Brady.”

“Don’t hurt me!”

“What? No, I’m not going to hurt you. Shut up and listen. I found out that the humans and gods have powers. I need you to build me a device that removes their powers and transfers them to me,” I said. Brady thought about something.

“Hmm…It sounds a little bit complicated, but I’m sure I can do it. After all, I did invent that blaster that can turn humans, or anything really, into nothing just like that,” Brady said. He snapped his fingers to demonstrate how fast the blaster was. I nodded with approval.

“Yes, you did invent that, didn’t you? Well, if you can invent something like that, I’m sure this will not be a problem for you,” I said. I started to walk to the control room when Brady stopped me.

“Dominic, I was wondering, while Adrian is working on the ship and I’m working on the device, what will you do?” Brady asked. That question stumped me. To be honest, I had no idea what I was going to do.

Then I had an idea.

“I’m going to give them a call,” I said.

Chapter 20

A new threat

Max’s POV

We were on the couch, watching TV when suddenly a symbol came on. The video call app opened itself. We had a request to answer a caller who was unknown.

“Let’s answer it,” I said. We had nothing better to do, so we decided to answer it. When we did, a green alien appeared on the screen.

“Hello?” the alien asked.

“Hello. Who is this?” I asked.

“I am Dominic, lord of the aliens.”

“Oh, alright,” Jason said. Dominic looked surprised.

“Did I cut out? Did you not hear me? I said I’m lord of the aliens,” Dominic said.

“We heard you,” Ash said.

“You don’t seem surprised about that,” Dominic noted.

“Dude, we just had a fight with an evil goddess, so you don’t scare us,” I said.

“Yes, you did fight and defeat an evil goddess, didn’t you?”

“How do you know about that?”

“Because I’m her boss.”

“Oh, so does that make you immortal too?” Paul asked.

“Well, no,” Dominic admitted.

“Then how are you her boss?” Martha asked.

“That doesn’t matter! What matters is that you killed her!” Dominic yelled.

“She was evil!” Ash protested.

“Okay, that may be true. But I sensed a high level of energy coming from your galaxy!”

“And you think that high level of energy is coming from us?” I asked. Dominic nodded.

“I do think that, yes. I know Max can summon fire. That’s a high amount of energy that trails off it,” Dominic said. The team looked at me. I stared at the screen.

“How do you know my name?” I asked in a stern tone. Dominic laughed.

“Foolish boy! I know everything!”

“What do you want, Dominic? Why are you even calling?” I asked. Dominic shrugged.

“No reason. Just to, oh I don’t know. Take your powers and transfer them to me,” Dominic said.

“Why do you want our powers?” Jason asked.

“So that I can be stronger than all of you!”

“Okay…Well, good luck finding us,” I said.

“I know where you are. You’re in a mansion on top of Mount Dorson.”

“Oh boy. That can’t be good. Well, even though you know, we still won’t give you our powers,” Ash said.

“Oh, stupid children! Thinking you have a choice!” Dominic said gleefully.

“What are you talking about?” I demanded.

“Whatever do you mean?” Dominic asked.

“Don’t play games with us, alien! What do you mean we don’t have a choice?” I demanded. Dominic smiled evilly and laughed.

“Oh, you’ll find out soon enough. Until next time, humans!”

Dominic hung up. I stood up from the couch and looked at the team with a panicked look.

“What do we do?” I asked.

“About what?” Jason asked. I stared at Jason like he was insane.

“Jason, you have got to be kidding,” I said. Jason shook his head, clearly confused.

“Dude! This alien is going to come over to us and take our powers!”

“So?”

“How do you not see that this is a problem? Without our powers, we can’t help anybody.” “Oh. That’s bad,” Jason said.

“Yes, it is!”

“So, what do we do about it?” Jason asked. I shrugged.

“For once in my life, I don’t know,” I said sadly. I sighed and put my head in my hands, then flopped down onto the couch. Ash put a hand on my shoulder.

“Don’t worry, man. We’ll figure it out,” Ash said. I nodded.

“I hope so,” I muttered.

Dominic’s POV

After I hung up, I went down to see how Adrian was doing with the ship.

“How is it coming?” I asked. Where the ship was, there was a giant curtain over something. Adrian came out from under the curtain, smiling.

“It looks better than ever!” Adrian exclaimed.

“Okay, let’s see it.”

“Okay. 3…2…1!”

Adrian threw the curtain off. When I saw it, I thought I was dreaming. This was one of the best ships I had ever seen. It had 4 wings on the back, a big engine, a couple of rooms, and even a captain’s office. And that was just the outside.

“Do you like it?” Adrian asked.

“No,” I said. Adrian’s smile faded and he looked down.

“I love it!” I exclaimed. Adrian looked up in surprise.

“Huh?”

“Adrian, this is the best ship I’ve ever seen! I absolutely love it!” “Y-you do?” Adrian managed. I nodded.

“I do indeed.”

I went to check on Brady.

“How is the device coming?”

“It’s all finished,” Brady said.

“Excellent. Now let’s go pay our friends a visit.”

Chapter 21

Flying to Mount Dorson, Dining and Discussions

Dominic’s POV

We loaded into the ship that Adrian had built. Once we were settled in, we took off and left the landing

station.

“Adrian, set course for Mount Dorson in the galaxy Milky Way,” I commanded.

“Yes sir!” Adrian said. He ran up the stairs and into the captain’s office. While he ran up the stairs, his gloves fell off, revealing his tentacles. He didn’t seem to notice. After some silence, I sat down on the couch and decided to talk to Brady.

“So, the device. What can it do?” I asked.

“Oh. Well, obviously it can take their powers and transfer them to you,” Brady said. I noticed he looked

a little sad.

“Hey, are you okay?” I asked. Brady said nothing. Finally, after a minute or two of silence, he talked.

“Yeah, it’s just…my parents.”

“Oh. You miss them, don’t you?”

I remembered Brady’s parents died in a war when he was a little alien. I took him in, so I was like his father in a way. Brady nodded sadly. Tears were coming down. I put a hand on Brady’s shoulder.

“I…Yes, I do,” Brady said quietly.

“I know it’s hard. Just try not to think about it. Think about something else. For example, maybe think about the fact that we’ll be in a new place,” I said. For his sake, I tried to sound upbeat. Brady nodded and smiled slightly. He hugged me. I was a little surprised at first, but I hugged him back.

“Thank you, Dominic,” Brady said. I was too stunned to speak. Luckily, Adrian came into the room, so I didn’t have to speak.

“Okay, the course has been set,” Adrian said. I looked at him, confused.

“Wait…Who’s flying the ship?” I asked.

“It’s on autopilot.”

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes sir.”

I nodded with approval.

“Impressive.”

“Thanks,” Adrian said.

We flew in silence for a while. My stomach rumbled, making me realize I hadn’t eaten all day.

“You hungry?” Adrian asked. I nodded.

“Indeed. Is there a cafeteria?” I asked. Adrian nodded.

“Yes, there is. Follow me.”

We began to walk. I stopped, realizing Brady wasn’t walking with us. I went over to him.

“Are you coming with us to get food?” I asked. Brady shrugged. He was looking down at a piece of paper. I soon realized it was a picture of him and his parents. I put a hand on Brady’s shoulder.

“Look, bud. I get it. You miss them. You don’t think it’s fair. Is that how you feel?” I asked. Brady nodded.

“Yeah, it is,” Brady muttered.

“How come you’ve been so nice to him?” Adrian demanded.

“He lost his parents at a young age,” I said.

“I lost mine a month ago and I didn’t see you being nice to me,” Adrian grumbled. My expression softened. I hadn’t realized Adrian lost his parents. I patted the seat next to me.

“Come and sit with us. We can talk about it,” I said. Adrian sat down next to me.

“Look, guys. I’m sorry if I’ve been such a jerk, which I know I have. I’m not doing it to be mean or scare you. I’m doing it to protect you and prepare you for after I die,” I said. Adrian looked up at me.

“So…All that yelling at us. That was to protect us?” Adrian asked. I nodded. Adrian smiled, then hugged me. I hugged him back.

“Thank you,” Adrian said.

“You’re welcome. Now that that’s done, who’s hungry?” I asked. We stood up. Adrian led us to the cafeteria. We walked past all sorts of rooms. Some rooms that we passed by were some computer rooms, break rooms, entertainment rooms, even bedrooms.

“Wow. You made all of this?” I asked in surprise. I was impressed. Adrian nodded.

“Yep. Took a bit of time to figure out a design, but once I figured it out, I got to work,” Adrian said.

The hallways curved as we walked. Finally, after a long walk, we made it to the cafeteria. The doors were automatic. We stepped inside. It looked like a normal cafeteria. Tables and chairs filled the room. Plates, silverware and cups were lined up along the tables. There was a soda machine. However, there was no sign of food.

“Uhh…Where’s the food?” Brady asked.

“Oh, sorry. I forgot to tell you. So, you sit down. As you can see, there’s an empty plate. To get food, just say what you want. For example, I want bacon strips,” Adrian said. Bacon strips appeared on his plate.

“Same goes for the drink. I want blood for my drink,” Adrian requested. His cup filled with a dark red liquid. Brady and I clapped with approval. Adrian took a bow.

“Very impressive,” I said.

“Thank you. Now, let’s eat. I feel like there’s some things we need to discuss,” Adrian said.

I ordered steak for my food and octopus slime for my drink. Brady ordered chicken nuggets and water.

We ate in silence for a bit. I wiped my mouth and cleared my throat.

“So, Adrian. You said you feel like there’s things we need to discuss?” I asked. Adrian nodded.

“Yeah. I feel like I need to share how I feel about this quest, or mission, or whatever you want to call it,” Adrian said.

“Okay. How are you feeling?” I asked.

“Scared.”

Adrian took a sip of his blood. The cup was almost empty, but it refilled itself.

“Why are you scared?” I asked.

“Well, to be honest, I don’t know. I guess I’m scared to get hurt,” Adrian said. Brady raised his hand. “Yes, Brady?”

“I’m…scared too,” Brady admitted.

“Well, why don’t you guys get some rest? I’ll be on the couch in the main room if you need me,” I said.

They nodded and went to the bedrooms while I went to the couch.

Chapter 22

Dreaming

Brady’s POV

I walked into the bedroom with Adrian and went to the nearest bed. The second my head hit the pillow, I had a dream, and it wasn’t a good one. In the dream, I was asleep. My backpack with the device in it was next to my bed. Suddenly, a dark figure slipped under the door. I didn’t know how that was possible, unless he was made of goo. The goo then transformed into a human. He had black hair, black hat and black clothes. He tiptoed over to my backpack. He opened it and took out the device. He bent down to my level.

“See you soon,” he whispered. Dream Me was still asleep. Suddenly, a shadow appeared over me, gripped my shoulders and shook me.

“Brady,” the shadow said. The dream faded and I opened my eyes to see Dominic shaking me.

“Good, you’re awake,” Dominic said. I got out of bed and opened my backpack. The device was gone.

The dream wasn’t just a dream. It was some sort of vision.

“It’s gone…” I muttered.

“What’s gone?” Dominic asked.

“The device.”

“What?” Adrian asked in surprise.

“How can it be gone?” Dominic asked.

“I had a dream. A man who can turn into goo. He took it,” I said.

“Let’s talk about this during breakfast,” Dominic said. We walked down to the cafeteria, sat down and ate. While we had our meal, we also had a meeting.

“So, Brady. Describe your dream,” Adrian said.

“Well, in the dream I was asleep. Then black goo came and slid under the door. After that, the goo transformed into a human. He was wearing all black. He tiptoed over to my backpack, knelt and took it. Then he whispered ‘See you soon’ into my ear, transformed into goo. That’s it. I could have done something to stop him, but I was too stupid. If only I had woken up. Argh, I’m so stupid!” I yelled, slamming my fist on the table in frustration. Dominic put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, it’s okay. We’ll find it,” Dominic said.

“But how? I mean, there’s a tracker–hold on!”

I rushed to my backpack and pulled out my laptop. I booted it up and loaded up a device tracking software. I clicked on the device in the list, then selected ‘track’. It loaded and we waited. A map appeared on the screen. It had two dots: one saying where we are and the other saying where the device was located. I sighed in frustration.

“What? Where is it?” Dominic asked.

“It’s in the galaxy ForeGarb,” I said.

“That’s dangerous. Nobody has ever been there,” Dominic said.

“To make it worse, it’s in another dimension.”

“Wait what? How is that even possible?” Adrian asked.

“They must have some sort of way to open wormholes,” Dominic said.

“Dang it. They have an advantage because we have no way to do that,” I said.

“What should we do?” Adrian asked.

“Let’s give Max and his team a call. We can ask if they can help us,” Dominic said.

Chapter 23

The Request

Max’s POV

We had just woken up from a nap in the living room. We woke up from the voice call app ringing. I sat up and looked at the clock. It was 11;30 at night. I groaned, as I was tired.

“What-? Who in the-?” I muttered, half asleep.

“Dominic,” Ash said.

“Answer it,” Wendy said. Ash answered it. Dominic appeared on the screen. I sighed with annoyance.

“What do you want? Why are you calling?” I demanded.

“Well, you sure seem annoyed,” Dominic muttered.

“You’re calling at 11:30 at night! Of course, I’m annoyed!” I complained. Ash stepped in front of me.

“Sorry about him. He’s tired. Anyway, what’s up?” Ash asked.

“I need your help,” Dominic said.

“With what?” I asked as I sat up.

“You know-. You don’t know. Okay, so I made a device that was going to take your powers and transfer them to me,” Dominic said.

“Well, gee. Thanks a lot,” I said sarcastically. I’m pretty sure Dominic ignored me because he continued.

“Okay, so you have a device. What do you need help with and why?” Jason asked.

“I lost my device-” Dominic started.

“Good!” I interrupted.

“It was taken by a man in all black who can turn into goo.” “Again, what do you need help with?” Ash asked.

“Well, this is going to sound very weird, and you may not agree-.”

“Got that right,” I muttered. Jason elbowed me.

“-But I need help getting it back,” Dominic finished. I stared at him like he was insane, which wasn’t hard.

“Whoa. Hang on a minute,” I said.

“What is it, Max?” Martha asked.

“Let me get this straight. An evil alien lord made a device to take our powers and give them to himself. Okay. Great. I understand that. His device got taken by a man that can turn into goo. I understand that, but not really with the man who can turn into goo. Next part. You want our help finding this good guy and getting your device back. That I don’t understand,” I said.

“What don’t you understand?” Dominic asked.

“I don’t understand why we should help you get your device back. Especially if it can take our powers and transfer them to yourself. I know I’m not very smart, but I honestly don’t trust you, Dominic,” I said.

“Why not?” Chloe asked.

“He wants our help finding a device that he made to take our powers. For all we know, he could convince us so much that we do trust him and help get his device back and in the end he’s like ‘Sike!’ and takes our powers,” I said in a protesting tone. Ash put a hand on my shoulder and looked at the call.

“Excuse us for a minute,” Ash said. He muted the call and looked at me.

“Okay, Max. What is your problem?”

“My problem is that I don’t know if I can trust him.”

“Why not?”

“I…don’t know. I guess I don’t know if I want my powers taken or not. I mean, don’t get me wrong, I absolutely love saving and helping people and so much more. But at the same time, I’m getting sick and tired of going out of my way, risking my life to save people. Ever since I discovered my powers, I wished I hadn’t. In fact, I still wish that. I just…want to be normal, I guess, but I don’t because I’ll miss the feelings. I guess I don’t know what I want,” I said.

“Max, I feel the same way,” Ash said.

“You do?”

Ash nodded.

“When we first got to Barthow, when you and Jake were in the base, I had a chat with Wendy and Chloe,” Ash said.

“About what?” Jason asked.

“I told them that I wasn’t sure if I was on board with this. Like Max said, I told Wendy and Chloe that I wanted to be a normal teen and not have to risk my life or worry if I’m going to die,” Ash explained.

“So, should we trust him, Max?” Wendy asked. I shrugged, then nodded.

“I guess so. If he takes our powers, so be it. Unmute us, Ash,” I said. Ash unmuted us. I took a deep breath.

“Alright, Dominic. We’ll do it,” I said.

“Awesome, thank you!” Dominic exclaimed.

“But will we come to you or will you come to us?” Jason asked.

“We’ll come to you. Look out for a giant ship.”

“Got it. How long until you’re here?”

“Well, right now we’re approaching the center of galaxies. Based on speed, I’d say about a week,” Dominic said.

“A week?” we exclaimed. Dominic nodded sadly.

“I’m afraid so, unless you decide to come to us.” “Let’s go to space!” I exclaimed.

“Okay then. So, I guess we’re coming to you,” Ash said.

“Cool. See you in the center of galaxies.”

Dominic’s POV

After they hung up, I laughed evilly.

“Foolish children! They have no idea that once I get my device back, I’ll take their powers!”

Chapter 24

Going to Space

Max’s POV

After we hung up, we went to work designing a ship. Or at least I did, since I was best with tools. First, I drew out my design: a massive ship with three thrusters, six wings, a captain’s office, hidden compartments, trapdoors, two giant turrets, a missile launcher, and armor. Under the armor was a ton of weapons that were too complex to describe. Next, I asked my belt for materials: metal, glass, fuel, etc. Third came the building of the ship, which was a lot of work. Finally came the programming. I programmed each bedroom to match each person’s desires. I made the weapons room so that when a weapon was taken, it automatically got restocked. It took all day, but I got it done. Once it was done, we loaded in and flew off. It was a long flight.

“Max, is there any food? I’m hungry,” Paul said. I stood up from the couch and nodded.

“Yep. There’s a cafeteria. Come on,” I said. I led the way past rooms: bedrooms, computer rooms, etc.

Finally, after a long walk, we made it to the cafeteria. Tables and chairs were lined up throughout the room.

Cups, silverware, and plates were on the tables.

“Welcome to the cafeteria!” I announced. My voice echoed. We walked to the table. Our shoes clicked as we walked. We sat down. Jason looked around.

“Where’s the food?” Jason asked. I realized I hadn’t told them how to get food yet.

“Okay, so. To get food, you just have to say what you want, and it’ll appear. Same goes for drinks,” I said. They gave me skeptical looks, indicating that they didn’t believe me.

“You don’t believe me, do you?” I asked. Ash shook his head.

“Not one bit,” Ash said. I pointed to the plate.

“Okay then. Try it out if you don’t believe me,” I said. Ash shrugged.

“Alright. I want ribs and Dr. Pepper,” Ash said. Ribs appeared on his plate, and his cup filled with Dr.

Pepper. Ash stared in shock.

“Told you,” I said. His shock went away.

“Impressive. Now let’s eat,” Ash said. We got our food. We ate in silence until Jason broke the silence.

“So, what’s the plan once we get there?” Jason asked.

“Get where?” Paul asked.

“The center of galaxies. What do we do once we’re there, Max?” Jason asked. I didn’t answer. My plate and cup were empty. “Max!”

“Ah! Sorry, what?” I asked.

“What’s the plan once we get to the center of galaxies?” Jason repeated. I shrugged.

“I’m honestly not sure. Normally, I would come up with a plan with Jake, but he’s not here…”

I sighed sadly and laid my head on the table. Ash rubbed my back.

“Look, bud. We know you miss him. Trust me when I say we all miss him. But we can’t let that get in the way or stop us from focusing on this quest, alright?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. You’re right,” I said as I lifted my head off the table. I stood up.

“I think I have a plan.” I said. The team looked at me.

“What’s the plan?” Martha asked.

“We’re going to the center of galaxies, right? Before I continue, is there a shorter name for that?

Because I really don’t want to keep calling it that,” I said.

“Most people call it Galaxy’s Eye,” Jason said.

“Alright. So, once we’re there, we’re going to meet Dominic there and connect his ship with ours,” I

said.

“Question. How will we connect the ships?” Paul asked.

“You can leave that to me. Once we’re connected, we’ll go and discuss plans about this man who can turn into goo, along with getting Dominic’s device back. If he really does betray us, oh well. If not, cool.” I said.

“Quick question, Max,” Harold said.

“Yeah?”

“If you’re here with us, then who’s driving the ship?” Harold asked.

“Nobody. It’s on autopilot,” I said.

“Oh. That’s actually very impressive,” Harold said.

“Thanks. Now, I’m going to set our course for Galaxy’s Eye. While I’m doing that, try not to break the ship,” I said cautiously. I ran to the main control room and booted up the main computer. Once the computer was booted up, I opened a location tracking software and typed in Galaxy’s Eye, then went back to the group.

Ash’s POV

After Max ran off, we finished our food in silence. After a bit of silence, we decided to discuss our thoughts and share ideas.

“So, who do you guys think this guy is?” I asked.

“The guy who can turn into goo?” Paul asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, so who do we think it is?”

“I don’t know. In the meantime, let’s just call him Goo Man,” Jason said. Harold didn’t say anything.

He had a serious look on his face, like he was concentrating.

“Harold?” I asked. He said nothing. Then, he snapped his fingers.

“Steven Smith!” Harold said in surprise.

“What?” Paul asked.

“Steven Smith is the man who can turn into goo.” “How do you know?” Jason asked.

Just then, Max got back.

Max’s POV

I walked over to the table in the cafeteria. Ash turned.

“Hey, Max,” Ash said. I took a seat.

“Hey. So, I set our course for Galaxy’s Eye. What did you guys do while I was gone?” I asked.

“Harold found out who the goo man was,” Jason said. My eyes widened in surprise.

“Really? Who is he?” I demanded.

“Steven Smith,” Harold said. I crossed my arms.

“How do you know?” I asked.

“I fought him once many years ago,” Harold said.

“Huh, alright,” I said. I didn’t want to argue. I yawned from being tired.

“It’s going to be a long flight until we’re there. I suggest we get some sleep,” I said.

“Lead the way,” Ash said. I led the way to the bedrooms. I felt too wide awake and didn’t want to sleep, but my body had other plans, because the second I hit the pillow, I fell asleep.

Chapter 25

The Dream

Max’s POV

I started dreaming the second I fell asleep. In the dream, I was standing next to a pit. The pit was pitch black and dark inside, so I assumed it must be the Darkness Pit. I knew for sure when I saw the sign that said, ‘Darkness Pit’. I was tempted to jump in, but I resisted the urge. However, that was before I heard the voice.

“Hello, Max,” the voice said. I shuddered when I heard it. It was Jake’s voice. I looked around, but I couldn’t see him.

“Jake? Where are you?” I called.

“I’m down in the Darkness Pit.”

I decided to jump into the Darkness Pit. When I made it down, I saw a fire in the distance, and made my way over to it. When I got there, there was a boy about my age, maybe a little older. I couldn’t make out the details. I moved closer. That’s when I realized it was Jake.

“Jake? Is that you?” I asked.

He turned to face me. When I saw his face, my heart almost stopped. He had scars and cuts all over his face. He had lines under his eyes as if he hadn’t slept. He had dyed his hair black.

“What happened to you?” I demanded.

“I opened my eyes. Ever since I died, I’ve been happy. Happier than ever,” Jake said.

“Jake, what are you talking about? What made you happy?”

“The fact that I’m dead made me happy.”

“I-. I don’t understand.”

Jake turned away.

“I’m happy here. I don’t have to worry about anything anymore.”

I shook my head.

“Jake, this isn’t you.”

“It’s not the old me. This is the new Jake.”

“Jake, something isn’t right. Something is possessing you.”

Jake stood up abruptly.

“Nothing is possessing me, okay? Now, I’m sorry, Max, but the old Jake is gone! And there’s no way to save him,” Jake snapped. He sighed and sat down.

“Just give up,” he muttered. I shook my head.

“No.”

Jake turned to face me.

“Excuse me?”

“No, I will not give up. I know the old Jake is in there somewhere. He’s scared to come out and to that I say, you can do it, Jake. I believe in you. I love you,” I said. Right after I said that a golden light glowed around Jake and surrounded him. When it faded, Jake with brown hair was standing where Jake with black hair was. I hugged him.

“I miss you so much,” I said. Tears were falling down my cheeks.

“I miss you, too,” Jake said.

“So, this is the Darkness Pit, huh?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Is there any way to get you out, like bring you back to life?” I asked.

“I know a way. But there’s a prophecy that you must do before you can help me. It involved aliens and a good man?” Jake said, sounding confused.

“We’re dealing with that right now. Long story. Anyway, is there a prophecy after? One to get you back?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Yes, there is.” “What is it?”

Suddenly, Jake’s eyes cast a green glow. Fog appeared in the pit. The fire went out.

“Approach the Oracle and ask your desire.” Jake said. It wasn’t his voice. It was the voice of Rob. I stepped forward.

“Who approaches the Oracle?”

“I do. Max Wilson.”

“State your reason to seek me.”

“I need to bring Jake back. How do I do that?” I asked.

“To save him, there is a prophecy. However, it seems you already have a quest. There is a prophecy to that which you must complete in order to unlock the prophecy to save Jake. Would you like to know it?” the Oracle asked. I nodded.

“Yes, I would.”

“Very well. Your prophecy is as follows:

The man of goo lurks within

The power stealing device is in wrong hands

The aliens aren’t as they seem

Complete the prophecy, then come to me.”

The fog cleared. The glow from Jake’s eyes faded. The fire came back to life. Jake stared at me.

“Did I just-?”

“Speak a prophecy? Yes, you did.”

“Oh. Well, then good luck.”

“Thanks.”

The dream faded. I woke up and smiled.

“I can save him. I must save him. I will save him.” I said to myself.

Chapter 26

Meeting Dominic

Max’s POV

I got out of bed and got dressed. I picked out a blue T-shirt, jeans, a black jacket, white socks, and red Converse. Once I was dressed, I went to the cafeteria where everyone else was. I guess I looked happy because Ash and everyone else looked at me.

“You seem happy,” Ash noticed. I nodded.

“I found out how to save Jake,” I said. Jason cast a confused look.

“But Max, Jake is dead,” Jason said. He had a point.

“Okay, that’s true. However, I had a dream and he was in it,” I said. I explained the whole thing: The Darkness Pit, the “New Jake”, the prophecy, etc. When I was done, Ash nodded.

“Okay, so the first line is somewhat clear since we know it’s Steven,” Ash said.

“And the second line must be about the device Dominic was talking about,” I said. I took a bite of my scrambled eggs. Jason nodded as if he was catching on.

“The third line must be about Dominic,” Jason said.

“But it said aliens, as in multiple,” Martha said.

“Who are the other aliens?” Paul asked.

“Maybe Dominic has henchmen or helpers,” Wendy said.

“That could be true,” Chloe said.

“Okay, so we have the prophecy lines covered. Max, were there any more lines?” Harold asked. I shook my head.

“No, that was it,” I said.

“What do we have to do to save him?” Jason asked.

“You mean Jake?” I asked. Jason nodded.

“Well, the Oracle said finish the prophecy then come see him,” I said. Paul rubbed his chin.

“How will you see him?” Paul asked. I shrugged and shook my head.

“I guess in my dreams. Honestly, I don’t know,” I admitted. We ate in silence for a little bit after that.

“So, the final line about the aliens is not as they seem. I feel like that’s about Dominic and his henchmen,” Wendy said.

“Okay, so what should we do? Should we trust him?” Chloe asked. I nodded.

“I have an idea. We play along with whatever they do,” I said. Martha gave me an unsure look.

“Say we do that. What if he takes our powers?” Martha asked. I shook my head and shrugged.

“Then I guess we’re powerless,” I said. Everyone stared at me, their faces in shock.

“Max, you have to be joking,” Martha said. I had a dead serious look. I shook my head.

“I’m not joking.”

“You can’t be serious,” Chloe said.

“Well, guess what? I am.”

Chloe stood up abruptly and grabbed my shirt collar.

“Listen here and listen well. We can’t just do nothing after he takes our powers!” “We won’t do anything,” I said.

“Then what? What will we do, huh?” Chloe asked. She shoved me to the floor.

“We’ll make our own device which will give us our powers back,” I said. Chloe stared at me.

“How are we going to do that, huh?” Chloe demanded. I looked at Harold.

“I bet Harold and I could team up and make it,” I said. Harold nodded.

“Indeed, we can.”

“So, what are we doing right now? Like, what’s our plan?” Wendy asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I’m not sure. The best we can do is sit and wait for Dominic’s ship,” I said.

“But what does his ship even look like?” Jason asked.

“That I don’t know,” I admitted. Just then, beeping from the control room could be heard.

“What’s that beeping?” Paul asked.

“It sounds like it’s coming from the control room,” Martha said.

“Come on. Let’s check it out,” I said.

We got out of our chairs and left the cafeteria. I led the way to the control room. The monitor was beeping. I ran over to it to see we made it to Galaxy’s Eye. I closed the software and turned to see everyone looking at me.

“Well?” Ash asked.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we have arrived at Galaxy’s Eye,” I announced. We looked out the window and admired. Now, personally I’m not one to admire or care, but this sight was awesome. However, it didn’t last long because a ship came in and blocked our view. We were just about ready to start a fight with that ship, but we soon realized it was Dominic’s ship. We had a video call request from him and answered it.

“Hey, what’s up?” I asked.

“We’re here at Galaxy’s Eye,” Dominic said.

“Cool. We are too,” I said. Another alien stepped into view.

“Dominic, how will we stay together?” the alien asked.

“Well, Brady. I was thinking we could combine our two ships and make one big ship,” Dominic said.

“I can handle that,” A voice said.

“Who was that?” Jason asked.

“Oh, that was Adrian. Adrian, come here and step into view!” Dominic called. Adrian rushed over and waved.

“Hello!” Adrian said eagerly. We waved back.

“So, Adrian, how will you combine the ships?” I asked.

“I programmed my ship to be able to combine with other ships,” Adrian said.

“Wait. Does the other ship have a choice to be combined or is it against their will?” Ash asked.

“Oh. Okay, so I’ll push a button signaling your ship. Then a button should appear in yours,” Adrian explained. He pushed a button. Soon, a button appeared in our ship. We looked at it, then back at Adrian, who nodded.

“Press it,” He said. I pressed it and the two ships combined into one. We met Dominic, Brady and Adrian in the hallway and walked into the cafeteria. Adrian gasped and his eyes filled with anger.

“You stole my idea for the cafeteria!” Adrian complained. We turned. I looked at him, offended.

“Me? Well, for your information, I did not steal your idea! It was mine first!”

“Was not!”

“Was too!”

We began to argue. Harold and Dominic broke us up from our argument.

“Guys! Quit arguing! It doesn’t matter who stole whose idea. What matters is that we find the man in goo,” Dominic said. I nodded.

“He’s right. Oh, Dominic. We know who the goo man is,” I said. Dominic’s eyes widened with surprise.

“You do?! Who is it?” Dominic demanded.

“His name is Steven Smith,” Harold said.

“That’s good information. Now we have to put him in the tracker,” Dominic said.

“Alright.”

I ran to the control room and booted up the tracking device. I inputted Steven’s name. A red dot appeared and started blinking. I clicked on the red dot, getting more information on it. It showed Steven was in the galaxy Fore garb, which was going to be a long flight, even at top speed. I ran back to the team.

“Found him. He’s in the galaxy Fore garb,” I said.

“Good to know,” Brady said.

“Alright, so now we know his location. Now what?” Jason asked.

“I’m going to set the course to Fore garb. After that, sit back and relax. It’s going to be a long flight,” I said. I ran back to the control room and set the course. As expected, it said it would take 19 hours. I went back to the group.

“Alright, the course is set. It’s going to take us 19 hours to get there, even at top speed,” I said.

“So, what do we do in the meantime?” Paul asked.

“Sit tight and just chill. This is going to be a long ride,” I said. We sat down on the couch. It seemed like several hours had passed. We had dinner and discussed our plan.

“So, what’s the plan once we’re there? At Fore garb, I mean.” Brady said.

“Look for Steven. We’ll get into teams and search planets. Who knows where he could be by now?

Galaxies are huge,” I said.

“Doesn’t it say where in Fore garb?” Dominic asked. I shook my head. I sighed as I missed Jake next to me. Ash felt this, so he sat next to me and put a hand on my shoulder.

“You miss him, don’t you?” Ash asked. I didn’t need to ask who he was talking about. I nodded.

“You know, I bet if Jake was here, and if he’s watching, I bet he’ll be really proud of you” Ash said. I looked at him.

“Really?” I asked. Ash nodded.

“But why would he be proud of me? What did I do that’s so great?” I asked. Ash looked at me with disbelief.

“Bro, don’t think like that.”

“Why not? It’s true.” I muttered. Jason shook his head.

“Dude, that is not true. You built and programmed a giant ship with no help,” Jason said. I nodded.

“I guess that’s true,” I said.

“Don’t guess that it’s true. It is true,” Paul said. A smile crept onto my face.

“Thanks guys. I feel better,” I said. Ash nodded.

“You’re welcome.”

I checked my phone. The time was 9:30 PM. I yawned.

“I’m heading to bed. It’s getting late,” I said. Ash nodded.

I trudged my way to my bedroom. I took my shirt off and changed into a pair of shorts. I laid in my bed.

The second my head hit the pillow, I went into a dream.

Chapter 27

The Dream to save Jake

Max’s POV

I dreamed that I was in the darkness Pit with Jake. His eyes were green, so he was in Oracle mode.

“Congratulations on figuring out the lines of the prophecy. You have unlocked the way to save Jake.

Would you like to know how to save him?” Oracle Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yes, I would,” I said.

“Very well. This is what you must do:

Only you shall come to the Darkness Pit

There you must face and complete a series of trials Once you have shown you are worthy, Jake will be brought back to life. See you there.” Jake’s green eyes faded into blue eyes. He smiled slightly.

“There you go. But when will you be here?” Jake asked. I shrugged and shook my head.

“Right now, we’re in space. I’m thinking during or after the alien quest I’ll come get you,” I said.

“What alien quest? Why are you guys in space?” Jake asked.

“Long story. Anyway, once we finish it, or during it, I’ll come back. Whichever you want,” I said. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“It’s not when I want you to come. Whenever you feel like you should come, then come,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Alright. Then, I guess I’ll see you when the time is right,” I said. Jake and I hugged.

“I promise I’ll bring you back,” I said.

“I’ll be right here,” Jake said. The dream faded and I woke up.

Chapter 28

Steven

Max’s POV

I got dressed in a white T-shirt, jeans, and red shoes. I headed down to the cafeteria where everyone else was and sat down. I ordered French toast, eggs and apple juice for breakfast. French toast and eggs appeared on my plate, and my cup filled with apple juice. I looked over at Dominic’s, Brady’s and Adrian’s cups and plates.

Dominic had some sort of animal leg on his plate and something black in his cup. I stared at him in disgust.

“What is that?” I demanded.

“Squid’s leg to eat and ink to drink,” Dominic said like it was normal.

“EWW!”

I looked at Brady’s plate: green chicken nuggets and a pink liquid.

“What do you have?”

“Octopus nuggets and spider slime,” Brady said. I tried not to throw up. Adrian’s looked normal.

“What about you, Adrian?” I asked.

“Pancakes and water,” Adrian replied.

“Finally, something normal from an alien,” I said.

Suddenly, beeping could be heard from the control room. We ran out of the cafeteria and into the control room. I turned on the computer and booted up the software. We were in Fore garb. Suddenly, the ship shook, and the alarm blared.

“What’s going on?” Jason asked.

“We’re getting attacked.”

“By what?”

I looked at the cameras outside. Almost immediately, they shut off. The lights flickered and the ship lost power.

“Either he’s here or he attacked us.”

Suddenly, the ship went into a downhill slope. We crashed on a planet. I groaned as I stood.

“Everyone good?” I asked. The team nodded.

We walked out of the ship.  It was completely busted on the outside. The front was torn off. I went to the back to see black goo on the thrusters. I sighed in annoyance.

“Steven busted the thrusters,” I said while walking back to the team.

“How do you know?” Jason asked.

“There’s black goo on them,” I said.

“So, that must mean he’s close by, right?” Paul asked.

“That’s correct,” a voice said. We turned to see a man in all black.

“Hello, Dominic,” The man said.

“Steven,” Dominic growled.

Chapter 29

Betrayed…Or not?

Max’s POV

Dominic and Steven faced each other.

“Do you have the device?” Dominic asked. Steven nodded. He took it out of his pocket. It was a round device with buttons on it. He was about to hand it to Dominic but moved his hand away.

“Hey! What gives?” Dominic demanded.

“You know what to do before I give this to you,” Steven said. He pointed to us. Dominic nodded.

“Ah, yes. I forgot all about the plan,” Dominic said. He walked towards us and stopped when he was a foot away. He thrusted his arms out in our direction. Missiles appeared out of nowhere and hit the ground next to us. The missiles exploded. Even though the missiles didn’t hit us, the explosion launched us into the air. We hit the sand with a THUD! Dominic walked back over to Steven and held out his hand. Steven handed him the device. Dominic pointed it at us, and I flinched. Just as I thought he was going to take our powers, he turned it to Steven and took Steven’s powers. I sat up and looked at Dominic with a confused look.

“What-? Why did you do that?” I managed to ask.

“I had to. He killed my parents,” Dominic said.

“Oh. Sorry to hear that,” Ash said. We managed to get on our feet, then looked at Steven.

“What should we do? Kill him?” Jason asked. Dominic shrugged.

“I could summon missiles and kill him.”

“Do it,” I said. Dominic shot missiles at Steven and killed him.

Chapter 30

The gold light

Max’s POV

After Steven died, we fixed up the ship. Once that was done, we flew off. While we flew, we had a meal and discussions. I told the group about my dream. When I got to the part where I had to do this, along with trials, Ash shook his head.

“No way. You’re not doing this. Not by yourself,” Ash said.

“Ash, I have to. I don’t have a choice,” I said.

“Yes, you do have a choice, which is not going alone.”

“The Oracle said I have to go alone! It said I must go alone! I have to do this!” I protested.

“Why do you have to do this?” Ash demanded.

“Because the Oracle said I have to do it! Plus, Jake is my boyfriend and I promised him I’ll come back for him,” I said. Ash sighed.

“There’s no way to talk you out of this, is there?” Ash asked. I shook my head. “Nope.”

Jason sat up.

“Max, you realize going alone is basically a suicide mission, right?” Jason said.

“I don’t care if I die. If I do, I die. I’m still doing this,” I insisted.

“Okay then. We’ll drop you off and wait.”

“Drop me off where?”

“The Darkness Pit, where else?” Paul asked.

“How do we even get there?” Chloe asked.

“There’s a secret entrance in California. Specifically, a hidden door,” I said. I looked out the window to see a golden light.

“What is that?” I asked aloud. Ash looked at me, confused.

“What is what?” he asked.

“The gold light,” I said.

“What gold light?”

“Bro, do you not see this?”

I pointed to the golden light. Ash shook his head.

“I don’t see anything.”

“Why can I see it, but you can’t?” I asked.

“Maybe because it’s a sign telling you where to go,” Jason said.

“So, what? Should I set a course for it?” I asked. Even as I asked that, I knew I should. Before anyone

could answer, I ran to the control room, booted up the computer and set the course to follow the golden light.

Chapter 31

My quest to save Jake

Max’s POV

It’s been two days since we began following the golden light. We’re now in California. We landed the ship. I got out and began following the light. I made my way through puddles, rocks, etc. until the light stopped. I was standing outside of a cave or some sort of entrance that would normally be very hard to find. I looked around to make sure nobody was around me and I went inside. It was dark and I couldn’t see.

“Hello?” I called. My voice echoed.

“Belt, get me some sort of light, like a flashlight,” I said softly. I felt the belt pocket and pulled out something. It felt like a flashlight. I felt a button and pressed it, turning it on. I looked around at my surroundings with the flashlight. To my left was a coat rack. To my right was a table with a book on it. Straight ahead was a door. In front of the door was a sign. The sign read, “Hellish Door. Leads to Darkness Pit.”. I walked over to the table and shined the light at the book. It was titled, “Great guide to surviving the Darkness Pit.”. I picked it up and put it in a belt pocket.

“Store this book somewhere safe,” I ordered. The book vanished in the best. I walked towards the door.

“Do I dare open it?” I asked myself. I wanted to, but I was scared. Terrified.

“This is for you, Jake,” I told myself. I opened the door and went through.

I shined my light around to see my surroundings. Nothing but pitch black stretched for who knows how long. I was wondering which way to go when I heard a voice that scared me to the core.

“Hi there, new friend!” the voice said eagerly. I screamed in surprise and whipped around, shining my flashlight in the direction of the voice. Standing there was a female who was about 6 foot 3, even though she sounded like an eight-year-old. She had pink hair with pigtails, gold earrings, pink jeans and a white shirt that said, “Life is fun!”, and she had pink light-up shoes. To me, she looked like someone who would think the world ending was fun.

“Did I startle you?” the girl asked. I nodded.

“Uh, yeah!” I snapped.

“My apologies, Max Wilson.”

“How do you know my name?” I asked, weirded out. She simply just laughed.

“Silly Max! I know, see and hear everything.”

That couldn’t be good in any way.

“So, um. Who are you?” I asked.

“Oh, silly me! I forgot to introduce myself! I’m Carly!”

Carly extended her arms out for a hug. I gave her a small hug, but she roped me into a tight hug.

“Can’t…breathe…” I managed. She let go of me so fast that I fell to the ground.

“Ow!” I groaned. Carly gasped and helped me up.

“I’m so sorry! Are you okay?!”

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“Great! Just one question,” Carly said.

“Yeah?”

“What brought you here?” Carly asked.

I explained how Jake sacrificed himself to defeat Gigantusnus, the dreams I’ve had, etc. Carly nodded while I talked. When I was done, she thought about it.

“Oh. So, you wish to go to the Darkness Pit?” Carly asked. I nodded.

“That’s right,” I said.

“Oh. In that case, I should go with you!” Carly exclaimed. I shook my head.

“No, it’s fine. Besides, I don’t want you getting hurt,” I said.

“Aw, you care if I get hurt. That’s so sweet! But I’m still coming,” Carly said.

“But-.”

“I’m coming with you!” Carly yelled with anger.

“Okay, you can come with me,” I decided.

“Yay!” Carly said cheerfully. We walked for a bit.

“So, uh. Where is the Darkness Pit exactly?” I asked.

“Follow me!” Carly squealed. She ran ahead. I ran in the direction she went. I accidentally ran into her as she stopped. She was standing in front of a pit. The same pit from my dreams. I soon realized it was the Darkness Pit.

“We’re here!”

I looked down.

“So, we just jump…?” I asked nervously. Carly nodded.

“Yep! Come on!”

Carly held out her hand. I took it and we jumped into the Darkness Pit. When we fell to the bottom, my legs exploded with pain. I yelled in pain.

“Oh my god! Are you okay?” Carly asked in a panicked voice. She had a worried look on her face.

“I think my legs are broken,” I said.

“Oh no! Here, let me help.”

“It’s okay. I have a belt to help,” I said. Carly laughed.

“How can a silly belt help?” Carly asked.

“Like this. Belt, get me first aid supplies to fix a broken leg,” I ordered. The belt obeyed.

“Oh, I see. However, you don’t need that belt to fix your leg,” Carly said.

“Why not?”

“Because I can help your leg.”

“How?”

“Like this.”

Carly hovered her hands over my legs. Almost instantly, they were better. I stared at Carly in awe.

“Whoa! How’d you do that?” I asked in amazement.

“Silly boy. I’m a goddess,” Carly said. I shook my head.

“No, you’re not. Well, maybe you are. I can’t tell anymore,” I said. Carly laughed.

“If I wasn’t a goddess, how can I fly?” Carly asked.

“You’re not flying,” I pointed out.

“Look again.”

I blinked and looked at her. She was hovering above the ground. How had I not noticed?

“But-. You weren’t flying before…?” I managed.

“Not everything can be seen by normal people,” Carly said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“The Border.”

“What border?”

“The Border makes it, so people believe what they want to see.” “Oh. So, you really are a goddess?” I asked. Carly nodded.

“Yes, that’s correct/”

“Oh, cool. Can I still call you Carly?” I asked.

“You can. However, I do have a goddess name, but I’ll save that for later because we have to save Jake,” Carly said.

“Right.”

“So, you say you had a dream being here in the Darkness Pit?” Carly asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, that’s right. Why?” I asked.

“Where did you see Jake in your dream?”

“Near a fire,” I said. We walked for a bit until we saw an orange light in the distance. I ran over, tripping over rocks or roots. I wasn’t sure since it was too dark to tell.

“Jake!” I yelled as I ran to the fire. Jake looked up.

“Max?” Jake called. I continued running until I made it to the fire. Jake smiled.

“Is it really you?” Jake asked. I nodded. We hugged. Carly coughed. She had been so quiet that I forgot she was standing there.

“I hate to break up the reunion, but I believe if you want to free Jake, you must face trials here in the Darkness Pit,” Carly said.

“Like what?” I asked. We looked at Jake, waiting for him to go into Oracle mode. He just shook his head.

“Sorry, guys. I don’t feel Oracle mode coming,” Jake said.

“So, what do we do? Wait for it?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“I guess so, but I’m not sure,” Jake admitted.

“While we’re here, want to hear about the team’s adventures in space?” I asked. Jake nodded. I explained about the aliens, the ship, Steven, etc. Jake nodded as he listened.

“Do you feel Oracle mode coming?” I asked after I finished. Jake nodded.

“Slightly,” Jake said.

Right after he said that, his eyes glowed green.

“Hello, Max. I see you have made it here. I assume you are here to free and bring Jake back to life? Is that correct?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yes, that is correct,” I said.

“I also assume you are here to face and complete the trials?” Jake asked. I nodded again.

“That is also correct, yes.”

“Very well. Here is your first trial: Face the three-headed cyclops and defeat him in battle,” Jake said. I nodded.

“I can do that,” I said with confidence.

“Without your powers or your belt,” Jake said.

“Aw what? Why?” I complained.

“You must prove you are smart enough, strong enough and worthy enough to free Jake.”

“Alright, I guess.”

“Do you wish to forfeit?”

I shook my head.

“No, I’ll do it,” I said.

“Excellent. Here comes the three-headed cyclops. Good luck and don’t die.”

“Thanks for the advice,” I muttered. Suddenly, the ground shook. A low growl could be heard. The cyclopes came smashing through the wall. I stared at the giant three-headed cyclopes. It was about 9 feet tall, wearing robes and sandals. I gulped. I had a slight feeling of fear in me. But I couldn’t let that bring me down. I faced the cyclopes.

“Before I do this, do I get anything to help me fight this cyclops?” I asked.

“Okay. You can have these,” Jake said.

“Have what?” I asked.

“Reach into your belt.”

I was tempted to, but I didn’t know if this was a test. I shook my head.

“No,” I said.

“Excuse me?”

“I will not be reaching into my belt,” I said.

“Oh? And why not?” Jake asked with curiosity.

“I can do this without my belt or powers,” I said with confidence.

“I thought just a bit ago you were complaining. Why have you changed your mind?”

“You said I couldn’t use my belt or my powers. When you told me to reach into my belt, I figured it was part of the trial. To see if I could resist the temptation,” I said. Jake nodded.

“Indeed, you are correct. That was part of the trial. However, you still must defeat the cyclops,” Jake said. He was still in Oracle mode. I nodded with confidence.

“Alright. I can do this, belt or not,” I said. Jake shrugged.

“Okay. Oh, and you can’t use anything to make you faster, smarter or stronger,” Jake said.

“Got it. I got this,” I said. I waved my arms in the air and ran to the cyclops.

“Hey ugly! Come and get me you ugly three-headed freak!” I called. The cyclops turned and roared in anger. I ran to a wall, hoping he would follow. The cyclops followed and backed me up into a corner. The cyclops laughed and suddenly talked.

“Foolish child. You can’t beat me!” the cyclops bellowed.

The cyclops charged at me. My mind froze, but my instincts kicked in. I jumped to the left, barely missing the cyclops. He hit the wall and was dazed for a second, but he shook it off. Suddenly, I got an idea, but I would have to run a lot. I ran into another corner, waving my arms a lot. He followed, and again, he ran into the wall. I decided I would keep running until he was either out of breath or dazed more, or even better, knocked out. I continued running. He continued hitting walls and getting dazed. Shortly after three more times of being dazed and out of breath, he collapsed to the ground. The ground shook when he did. A golden light appeared around his body and surrounded him, causing him to vanish. Jake nodded with approval.

“Very good. You have cleared your first trial,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yep,” I said.

“For your second trial, there are a series or puzzles and riddles you must solve,” Jake said.

“Okay. Hit me with it.”

“As you wish. Now, are you ready?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Bring it on. I am so ready,” I said.

“Okay. Here is your first riddle:

I am black

I am endless

I am where souls are

What am I?”

I thought about it. Then I realized it must have been the Darkness Pit. It made sense. The Darkness Pit was black. It was endless. Jake’s soul was here.

“The Darkness Pit,” I answered. Jake nodded.

“Correct. Are you ready for the next riddle?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“I am.”

“Very well. Here is your second riddle:

I run but have no legs

I have a bed but never sleep

I am found in peaceful places

What am I?”

“A river,” I said confidently.

“Correct. That was fast.”

“I’ve heard it before.”

“I see. Are you ready for your third and final riddle?”

I nodded.

“Bring it on.”

“Alright then. Here is your third and final riddle:

I seem to second guess

And hope for the best

That everything will go away

When it’s a bad day

My luck thinks it’s here to stay

But soon it goes away What is it?”

That one was a little hard and I had to think about it. I started to form an answer, then threw it away.

That’s when I realized: the answer was doubt. Whenever someone had doubts, they second guessed.

“It’s doubt,” I said. Jake rubbed his chin.

“Why do you think that?” Jake asked.

“Well, people who doubt themselves usually have second guesses as well,” I said. Jake said nothing. For a split second, I thought I got it wrong. Jake nodded slowly.

“Congratulations. You have finished your second trial.”

I sighed with relief.

“Thank god,” I muttered.

“Are you ready for your third trial?”

I nodded.

“Bring it on.”

“For your third trial, you must face yourself.” “Wait…What do you mean?” I asked.

“I will create an exact duplicate of you. You must defeat it. But be warned: he is exactly like you. Because he is you.”

I nodded with confidence.

“Okay. I got this,” I said. A duplicate of myself appeared.

“Let the third trial begin!” Jake announced.

I whipped out my sword. So did the duplicate. We circled each other, waiting for one of us to strike. Finally, I charged and swung my sword. My duplicate countered me. He stroked and I dodged it. We went back and forth, striking and swinging, along with blocking and countering.

“Why are you even trying? You won’t get anywhere! Jake can’t be saved, and you know it.” My duplicate said. That made me stop. My duplicate cut my leg. I shook my head.

“He can be saved. He will be saved.”

My duplicate stopped.

“Huh?”

“I’m not giving up! I’m going to save him, even if I die trying!” Just then, my duplicate’s body glowed gold. When the light faded, he was gone.

“Congratulations on clearing your third trial,” Jake said.

“Thanks.”

“For your fourth trial, these will be responses. I’ll be asking you a series of ‘what would you do?’ questions. Your job is to answer them,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Alright. I’m ready,” I said.

“Very well. First question: you see people crying outside of a destroyed house. What do you do?” Jake asked.

“I would put on my belt and build them a better house,” I said.

“Next question: your team is having issues trusting one another and they’re arguing. What do you do?” Jake asked.

“I would ask what the issue is and have them resolve it,” I answered.

“Third and final question: if Jake broke up with you and provided no reason, what would you do?”

I had to think about that. Jake was such an amazing and nice guy. I had trouble picturing it. I finally managed to answer.

“I don’t know what I would do because that won’t ever happen,” I said. Jake shrugged. “Very well then. You have finished your fourth trial.”

“Awesome.”

“Indeed. For your fifth trial, your patience will be tested,” Jake said. I laughed.

“Good luck with that. It’s hard to break me,” I said.

“We’ll see about that.”

Jake started to poke me.

“How does that feel?” Jake asked, clearly amused by this. I shrugged.

“Honestly, this is fine. I have a big family, so you’ll need to try harder than that,” I said. Jake sighed.

“Well then. I guess you completed your fifth trial,” The Oracle said. He sounded annoyed, but I didn’t care. I was getting closer to saving Jake, and that’s all that mattered.

“Congratulations. You have successfully finished your trials.”

I was happy. I had saved Jake. The glow from his eyes faded, meaning he was out of Oracle mode. I hugged him.

“Thanks for saving me,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Of course, I would save you. I love you,” I said. And with that, we kissed.

“Time to go back to the group,” I said.

“Sounds like a plan. Let’s go,” Jake said.

“Uhh, one question.”

“Yeah?”

“How do we get out of the Darkness Pit?” I asked.

“I…don’t know,” Jake admitted.

“You don’t,” a voice said.

We turned in surprise, but nobody was there. Then again, it was pitch black and we couldn’t see.

“H-hello? Who’s there?” I asked nervously.

“You know who I am. You have known me since you were a little boy,” the voice said. The voice was female. I shuddered as I had a thought. It didn’t seem possible…

“G-Gigantusnus?” I managed.

“Correct,” She said. Anger rose in my body. I instructed my belt to give me a sword.

“Where are you? Come out and fight me! I’ll send you back to wherever you came from! Got it?” I demanded. Gigantusnus just laughed. Her laughter echoed throughout the Darkness Pit.

“Silly child. You can’t send me back to where I came from,” Gigantusnus said.

“Why not?” Jake demanded.

“How can you send me back to where I came from if I’m already here?” Gigantusnus asked.

“Wait what?” I asked.

“Indeed. You are in my territory. And I am going to make sure your friends come down here,” Gigantusnus said.

“Wh-What are you going to do?” I asked nervously.

“Isn’t it obvious? I’m going to go to them and kill them,” Gigantusnus snarled.

“How are you going to do that if you’re stuck down here with us?” I asked.

“I will have my henchmen rise and kill them.” “Henchmen? What henchmen?” I demanded.

“Sam Jargins. Sam! Get over here!” Gigantusnus screamed.

We heard scrambling footsteps. A boy who looked about 19 came over to us. He had blonde hair with red streaks. He wore a blue T-shirt, jeans, a black jacket and sneakers.

“I’m here, Abby,” Sam said. We looked at him, confused.

“Who’s Abby?” Jake asked.

“She sounds hot,” I blurted.

“Abby is Gigantusnus’ real name,” Sam said.

“She doesn’t seem so hot anymore,” I said, snickering.

“You idiot! Why did you tell them that?” Gigantusnus yelled with anger.

“Sorry, Abby. I mean Gigantusnus,” Sam said, quickly correcting himself.

“So, why do you need me?” Sam asked.

“I need you to shapeshift into Jake and go to their ship,” Gigantusnus instructed. Sam nodded.

“Why?” Sam asked.

“To lure them into the Darkness Pit.”

“Oh, okay. So, what do I say to them?” Sam asked.

“Anything that gets them to come here, now go!”

Sam turned into Jake then flew out of the Darkness Pit. I looked at Jake.

“Can you fly?” I asked with hope. Jake shook his head.

“No. I wish I could…” Jake said sadly.

Ash’s POV

We waited in the ship for what felt like hours. Finally, Jake came in. Max wasn’t behind.

“Hey, guys. I’m alive,” Jake said.

“Good to hear. Where’s Max?” I asked.

“Uhh…”

I raised an eyebrow.

“Where’s Max?” I repeated.

“In the Darkness Pit,” Jake said.

“What?!” I exclaimed. Jake nodded.

“Why is he still there? Didn’t you both come out?” Jason asked. Jake shrugged.

“I left him behind,” Jake said. That got me suspicious. Jake would never leave Max behind.

“You’re not the real Jake,” I said.

“Y-yes I am!”

He sounded nervous. Paul crossed his arms.

“Prove it then.” Paul said.

“What?”

“You heard him. Prove it.” Martha said.

“Uhh…Um…I’m out of here!”

A golden light appeared and surrounded his body. When it faded, he turned into a bird and flew away.

“That was a shapeshifter, right?” Wendy asked. I nodded.

“Wait…If that was a shapeshifter impersonating Jake, then that must mean Max freed Jake and brought him back to life! But where are they?” Harold asked.

“We already know. The Darkness Pit,” I said.

“How do you know?” Chloe asked.

“He told us.”

“Oh, alright. What’s the plan? What are we going to do?” Martha asked.

“There’s only one thing we can do. We have to go into the Darkness Pit,” I said. We got out of the ship.

“Dominic, Brady, Adrian. Can you guys keep an eye on the ship? Make sure nothing happens to the ship, such as getting attacked?” I asked. They nodded. We went through the entrance that Max took to get into the Darkness Pit. When we stepped inside, rocks collapsed, closing the entrance.

“Okay…I guess we’re staying here for a while,” Paul said.

We saw a door and a sign. We went through the door. We walked to the edge of a pit and looked down.

“Max? Jake? Are you down there?” I called.

“Yeah, we’re down here!” Max shouted.

“Jason, can you fly down and get them up here?” I asked. Jason shrugged.

“Honestly, I don’t know if I’m strong enough to carry them,” Jason admitted.

“Max! Can you get a grappling hook from your belt?” I called.

Max’s POV

I ordered my belt to get me a grappling hook.

“Jake, hug me,” I said.

“What?” Jake asked, looking at me weirded out.

“Just trust me.”

Jake hugged me and we used the grappling hook to get out. When we got out, the team hugged us.

“We missed you guys!” Jason exclaimed.

“We missed you guys, too. Come on. Let’s go back to the ship,” I said. We walked out of the Darkness Pit and to our ship.

Chapter 32

This went wrong

Dominic’s POV

The minute Ash and the team left to get Max and Jake, things went horribly wrong. Dark ghost-like figures surrounded the ship.

“What the-? Who are you guys?” I asked. The figures laughed.

“You know who we are, Dominic,” They said in unison.

“How do you know my name?” I demanded.

“Silly Dominic. We know everything.”

That couldn’t possibly be good.

“O-Okay…What do you want?” I asked.

“We want to know where the heroes went.”

“What heroes?” Adrian asked. The spirits all laughed.

“The eight who defeated Gigantusnus.  Where are they?” the spirits demanded.

“I’ll never tell you anything!” I said stubbornly.

“Oh really? Not even if we take the 3 of you hostage?”

I shook my head.

“Never,” I growled. The spirits swirled around until they combined into one giant spirit.

“How about now?” the giant spirit demanded. I shook my head.

“I’m still not going to talk. You can torture us, even kill us, but I will never tell you anything and that’s final!” I snapped. The spirit shrugged.

“Okay then. Have it your way.”

The spirit snapped his fingers and Brady, Adrian and I were tightly strapped into chairs inside the ship. I felt the ship take off and we blasted into space.

Max’s POV

When we got out of the Darkness Pit, the ship was gone. There was no sign of Dominic, Brady or Adrian. I turned to Ash.

“Where’s my ship?” I asked. Ash shrugged and shook his head.

“I don’t know. I told Dominic, Brady and Adrian to watch it while we were gone,” Ash said.

“You what?” I yelled. Ash raised his hands up in defense.

“Hey. In my defense, they seemed like they could be trusted,” Ash said.

“Well, look where that got you,” I snapped.

My phone rang. I got it out to see Dominic was calling and answered it.

“Hey, what’s up? Where are you and where’s my ship?” I demanded.

“Well, we’re on the ship.” Dominic said.

“Okay, great. Where’s the ship?” Jason asked.

“That’s bad news. We don’t know.”

I sighed, clearly annoyed.

“How do you not know where you are? You’re aliens! Correct me if I’m wrong, but aren’t aliens supposed to be smart?” I snapped.

“Sorry, but he just snapped his fingers and we just appeared on the ship.” “He? Who is he?” Jake asked.

“His name is Aaron Rogers, but he goes by the Dark Ghost,” Adrian said.

“Hey, Aaron. Where are you at so I can take you down and get my ship back?” I asked. Aaron laughed.

His laugh was booming.

“Nice try, boy! But I won’t be telling you anything!” Aaron snapped.

“I’ll have you know, I actually don’t need you to tell me anything,” I said.

“Oh? And why not?” Aaron asked, amused.

“Because I just remembered I have a tracker on the ship. See you soon, bye!”

I hung up.

“Belt, get me my laptop.” I ordered.

The belt obeyed and I pulled out my laptop. I booted it up and opened my tracking software, selected the ship, and hit ‘Track’. We waited. Finally, it loaded. On the screen was a green blinking dot. I clicked it to see that the ship was in Galaxy’s Eye.

“Got the location,” I announced.

“Where are they?” Martha asked.

“Galaxy’s Eye.”

The group stared at me. Their jaws dropped in shock. I looked at them, concerned.

“What?” I asked.

“We have no way to get to Galaxy’s Eye. In case you haven’t noticed, we have no ship!” Ash snapped.

He had a point.

“Okay, good point. However, we have the gods,” I said. The team looked at me, confused.

“What do you mean?” Jason asked.

“We can pray.”

“How?” Paul asked.

“Like this.”

I looked up at the sky.

“Dad, I need your help. I need a new ship. A better ship to take us to Galaxy’s Eye to get our friends.

Please. Help us save them,” I said aloud.

A golden light appeared next to us. When the light faded, a spaceship appeared. It looked at least 10 times better and bigger than the old one. The doors opened automatically, and we stepped inside. Just as I expected, this ship was bigger and better. I got to the main control room and set our course for Galaxy’s Eye, then headed to bed and started dreaming, making me regret sleeping.

Chapter 33

A future vision

Max’s POV

If I’m being honest, I hate sleeping. The reason I hate sleeping is because it results in me dreaming, which I hate. The thing is my “dreams” are never just dreams. They’re always some sort of vision of the future or something involving a prophecy. In other words, they’re things that make me scared. Anyway, I dreamed I was in a field of grass. Correction: the team and I were in a field of grass. There was a person who looked like a god but was evil. How did I know he was a god? Well, for one, he was hovering above the ground. For two, there was fire surrounding him. He was wearing golden robes and had gold eyes and long black hair. He was holding what looked like an artifact from a museum, except I noticed it seemed…powerful. Blackness was spewing out of the artifact. That couldn’t possibly be good. I managed to stand. I chucked my sword at him like a javelin. It didn’t seem to hurt him, but it startled him enough that he dropped the artifact. I snatched the artifact and hugged it for dear life. While I was hugging it, I felt a fire. It shouldn’t have hurt, but it was burning. A golden light erupted out of the artifact. The next thing I knew, I was on the ground. My clothes were smoking. Jake was kneeling next to me, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“Jake, it’s okay,” I said softly. Jake shook his head.

“No, it’s not!”

He looked at the team.

“Is there a way we can heal him? There has to be!” “There’s not,” I said. I coughed.

“I just don’t want to lose you,” Jake sobbed. I took Jake’s hand.

“Jake, know that I love you. Promise me-.”

I coughed.

“Promise you what?”

“Promise me you’ll keep fighting.”

I closed my eyes. I woke up with a start. Ash was in my room.

“We’re at Galaxy’s Eye.”

Chapter 34

Wendy teaches a spirit

Max’s POV

I got dressed and went to join the group, who were in the cafeteria. I guess I looked shaken up, because the team looked at me, concerned.

“Are you okay, Max? You look a bit shaken up,” Wendy said. I nodded.

“Yeah, I just had an interesting dream,” I said.

“What was it about?” Chloe asked.

I explained my dream. Nobody had time to react, because at that moment, the ship shook. An alarm blared, meaning we were under attack. I ran to the control room to see we were being shot at. I got the microphone so that the other ship could hear us.

“Hey, will you quit shooting at us?” I demanded.

“Why should I stop? This is so much fun!” Aaron exclaimed.

“Listen, Aaron. We mean no harm. We just want to talk,” I said calmly.

“Fine. What do you want to talk about?” Aaron asked.

“Why did you take Dominic, Adrian and Brady hostage?”

“To get revenge. Duh!”

“What did they do to you?” Ash asked.

“They blew up my planet and all the technology!” “Only because you attacked us first!” Dominic protested.

“Okay, enough! Did he apologize?” I asked.

There was silence.

“Did either of you apologize?” I demanded.

“No…” they admitted.

“Dominic, apologize please,” Wendy said.

“Aaron, I’m sorry for destroying your planet and technology,” Dominic said.

“Good. Aaron, now you apologize.”

“No. Why should I?” Aaron demanded.

“Aaron. Apologize. Now,” Wendy said sternly.

“No!”

“Okay, that’s it.”

Wendy pressed a button and out came a large turret.

“Apologize now or I WILL shoot this,” Wendy snapped.

“Okay! Dominic, I’m sorry for taking you hostage,” Aaron said. Wendy pressed a button and the turret came back into the ship.

“Okay, are we all good?” Wendy asked.

“Yes ma’am,” They both said.

“Great to hear. Aaron, untie them and come aboard our ship.” “How do we get to your ship?” Aaron asked.

“I got this,” Adrian and I said at the same time.

“Sorry. You do it. After all, you know better,” I said.

“You do it. It’s your ship, after all,” Adrian said.

“Alright. Where are you on the ship?” I asked.

“The main control room.”

“Cool. Do you see the computer that’s already logged on?”

“Yes.”

“Open up a software called ‘Connecting Things’,” I said.

“Got it. Now what?” Adrian asked.

“Click ‘Add new connection’, find ‘Max ship 2’ then connect it,” I said.

“Did it. Next?”

“A blue button should appear. Press it and we should be good.”

I guess Adrian pressed it because we combined into one ship. We met in the hallway. Aaron was a dark shadow-like figure, his face too dark to see details. We introduced ourselves.

“So, now what?” Adrian asked.

“We kill ourselves,” Jake said. We stared at him in shock. Jake would never say anything like that. I walked over to him and put a hand on his shoulder. He brushed it off.

“Jake, are you okay?” I asked calmly.

“Don’t talk to me. I’m a monster,” Jake snapped.

“What happened to you, Jake?” Ash asked.

“Nothing happened to me, alright? Just shut up and leave me alone!” Jake yelled. He got up and went to

his room.

Chapter 35

What Jake Saw

Max’s POV

I turned to the team.

“I feel like I should talk to him,” I said.

Ash nodded.

“Go ahead.”

Jake’s POV

I went into my room on the ship. I sat on my bed and buried my head into my shirt. I heard a knock at the door.

“Who is it?” I asked quietly.

“It’s Max. Can I come in?” Max asked. I opened the door. Max’s face was full of concern.

“What do you want?” I muttered.

“I just want to talk,” Max said.

“About what?” I asked.

“What’s gotten into you?” Max asked.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean you’ve been acting differently ever since I brought you back from the Darkness Pit. What happened? Did something happen before we got you?” Max asked.

“I…saw something. Something that scared me to the core. It opened this side of me,” I admitted.

“What did you see?” Max asked.

“I saw the future,” I said.

“What happened?”

I didn’t say anything. Max shook my shoulders.

“What?” Max pressed. I decided I couldn’t hide it from him.

“We were at a grassy field and we were injured. You got injured the most and then you were fighting this evil god and he…you-.”

I shook my head. I was trying not to cry. Max waited patiently.

“You died…He shot you,” I managed. I hid my face in my shirt as I cried. Max rubbed my back and hugged me.

“I know that I die in the future. I had a dream. Everything is going to be fine,” Max said.

“I know. I just don’t want to lose you,” I sobbed.

“It’s alright. You’ll be okay. Just let it all out,” Max said.

Chapter 36

A new Prophecy

Max’s POV

We must have fallen asleep because I woke up in Jake’s room. Jake and I walked out of his room to see fog in the hallways. That wasn’t normal.

“Are you seeing the fog too?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Yeah. Why?” Jake asked.

“Just making sure I’m not going crazy.”

We walked into the main lounge of the ship to see everyone was standing around Rob.

“Um, what’s happening? Why are you all around Rob?” I asked. I noticed Rob’s eyes were green, meaning he was in Oracle mode. We stood next to Jason.

“We are all here, Rob. Why have you come?” Harold asked as soon as he saw Jake and me.

“I am here to announce a new prophecy. It is the Prophecy of the Stone. It is as follows:

Heroes must answer the call

As the Stone will soon fall

Your journey begins

As you take a quest again

Start at Hero’s Land

To make a good stand

That is all I can say. Good luck.”

The fog cleared. The glow from Rob’s eyes faded. Nobody talked. I broke the silence.

“Alright then. Seems like we’ve got another crisis,” I said. The team nodded.

“Quick question. Where exactly is Hero’s Land?” Paul asked.

“On an island called the Mainlands on Earth. Max, set our course,” Harold said. I nodded.

“On it.”

I ran to the command room and set the course. After I set the course, I headed back to the group.

“Flight will take 2 hours at max speed,” I said.

“Thanks for letting us know,” Jason said. I nodded. We flew to Hero’s Land.

Chapter 37

Hero’s Land

Max’s POV

Once we got to Hero’s Land, a man in red robes greeted us.

“Hello! I haven’t seen this group before. Are you guys new?” the man asked. We glanced at each other.

“We were told by an Oracle to come here and make a stand. Sorry, who are you?” I asked. The man bowed his head.

“Forgive me! My name is Master Jacob. And you are?”

“Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Jason Paul and Martha. That’s Harold, Dominic, Brady and Adrian.

The four of them are here for some reason. We’re eight heroes,” I said. Master Jacob shook each of our hands.

“Wonderful to meet you all. Follow me for the tour,” Master Jacob said.

We followed him and went outside of a building to see a massive world spread out.

“This massive world you see spread out before you is your new home,” Master Jacob said.

“For how long?” I asked.

“For as long as it takes you to discover your powers.”

We glanced at each other.

“We already know our powers,” Jason said.

“Those are just the basics. You haven’t unlocked more advanced powers yet,” Master Jacob said.

“There’s powers we can unlock?” Ash asked. Master Jacob nodded.

“Indeed. Over time, you will unlock more powers.” “Where and when do we start training?” I asked.

“Your training is at the Dummy Land and it starts now.”

We ran over to Dummy Land.

“Now, here’s how it works even though you can kill the dummies, they can’t be removed. In other words, the dummies basically respawn.

“Like a videogame?” Paul asked.

“Exactly. Now, to begin your training, I want the eight of you to use your powers on these dummies.

Got it?” Master Jacob asked. We nodded.

I summoned fire and not knowing why, I thrusted my hands out. Fire blasted the dummy, burning it to a crisp. I stared at my hands in amazement.

“I had no idea I could do that,” I said.

“See? That’s one out of I assume many powers,” Master Jacob said.

“Oh cool!” I exclaimed.

Jake shot his hands out at the dummy, freezing it. Ash drowned his dummy. Chloe whipped out some gold. Wendy made an earthquake. Paul body-slammed a dummy. Jason summoned lightning and struck a dummy. Martha shot glitter at the dummy. We looked at each other in amazement. How did we not know about these powers before?

“So, we learned we have new powers. Now what?” I asked.

“Now you train with those powers and get stronger, along with unlocking new powers. Are you ready to take on the challenge and train to become strong?” Master Jacob asked. We nodded.

“Good. Now then, be prepared to spend a lot of time here. Days. Perhaps weeks,” Master Jacob warned.

“We understand,” Jake said.

Weeks of training flew by as we learned to unlock new powers. Finally, after many weeks of training, we met with Master Jacob in the main office. He handed us an envelope.

“Congratulations. You eight have passed the trials. You should go to Clantasia next. Meet the founder, Roger Thompson.  He will give you further instructions,” Master Jacob said. We nodded. We went to the sleeping quarters and packed up our stuff. Shortly after, we were at the docks, ready to leave. Everyone came to see us leave. We waved goodbye to them, got in a boat and sailed to Clantasia.

Chapter 38

Clantasia

Max’s POV

After what felt like days of sailing, we made it to Clantasia. We pulled up to the docks and docked the boat. We got out of the boat and our eyes widened with amazement. Clantasia was huge! There were many armories with forges and weapons. There were docking spots for boats since there were islands around us. There were lines of stores, restaurants and other places. But it was the centerpieces that was the coolest to me. The center of Clantasia had golden statues of the gods – our godly parents, along with others we didn’t recognize. At the foot of Skypshor, the king of the gods, was a man in armor. He had brown hair and green eyes.

“That must be the founder,” I noted, even though none of us knew for sure. We walked over to him.

“Hello. Are you the founder of Clantasia?” Jason asked.

“I am indeed! My name is Roger Thompson. Who are you guys? What are your names?” Roger asked.

“I’m Jason. That’s Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Paul, Martha, Harold. Dominic, Brady and Adrian,” Jason said. Roger looked at us in surprise.

“My, that’s quite a group you have there!” Roger exclaimed. We nodded.

“So, anyway. What’s a big group like you doing out here?” Roger asked.

“We’re on a quest. Oh, and here. This is a letter from Master Jacob, our trainer from Hero’s Land,” I said. I pulled the envelope out of my pocket and handed it to him. We had no idea what it said because we kept it closed. Roger read the letter to himself, nodding as he read it. When he was finished, he closed the letter and tucked the envelope into his pocket.

“So, it seems you tell the truth,” Roger said.

“Why wouldn’t we?” Jason asked.

“Oh, I’ve had many ‘heroes’ come to me in search of guidance. It turns out many of them were lying. Due to that, I hardly trust anyone. However, it appears you are telling the truth. So, I will agree to help you,”

“Help us how?” Martha asked.

“I will help you by giving you guidance on what to do next. But know this: a very dangerous journey lies ahead of you. Very dangerous indeed,” Roger warned.

“Dangerous how?” I asked.

“As you progress through your journey, you will have to split up. I can’t explain why or when. That is for you to know. You will know when the time comes. Anyway, now you are headed to Darkoth. Enjoy the quest and try not to die,” Roger said. We shook his hand.

“Thank you, Roger.”

Chapter 39

Darkstone Castle

Max’s POV

We said our goodbyes to Roger, got in our boat and sailed to Darkoth. We guessed it was the darkest island. When we got to the docks of Darkoth, I almost got pulled into the dark lake. I felt something tug at my leg. I turned around to see a man covered in black, gooey water. I screamed in surprise.

“What the heck?” I demanded.

“Beware,” the man said.

“Beware of what?” Jason asked.

“Beware of the evil god, Haredge,” the man said. Before we could ask questions, the man sunk back into the water.

“Well, that happened,” I said.

We walked onto the land and immediately tripped over roots or something. We didn’t know what it was because it was too dark to tell. After a lot of tripping, we made it to a castle. The castle was made of black stone. We looked at each other, then at the large doors.

“Are we going in?” I asked.

“I guess,” Ash said.

We walked inside. The castle was dark, but there were torches around, so we could kind of see. Lined up on the walls were flags and banners. There were many rooms, such as a bedroom, a weapons room, what looked like a torture room, etc. While exploring, we found a room with the door closed. Two voices could be heard.

One sounded angry while the other sounded scared.

“-happened to Dominic, Adrian and Brady?” the angry voice demanded.

“I swear I don’t know!” the scared voice said.

“LIAR!”

Rummaging could be heard.

“No, please! G-give me another chance!” the scared voice begged.

“It’s too late for that,” The angry voice growled. We heard what sounded like someone being killed. All was silent and we had a bad feeling why: the angry voice killed the other person. I pointed to a room and motioned for the team to follow. I closed the door quietly when we were all there.

“What’s up, max? Why are we in here?” Jason asked.

I looked at Dominic.

“Dominic,” I started. Dominic tensed up.

“Y-yes?” Dominic asked. He sounded nervous.

“Do you know who that angry man was?” I asked. Dominic shook his head.

“No, of course not,” Dominic said quickly. I gave him a skeptical look, not believing him.

“I think you’re hiding something,” I said.

“I’m not hiding anything! Wh-why would you think that?” Dominic demanded. He still sounded nervous.

“So, you don’t know him. Does he know you?” I asked. Dominic suddenly had an interest in the flags on the wall.

“Dominic!” I hissed.

“What?” Dominic demanded.

“Does the angry guy know you?” I repeated.

“Why would you think that?” Dominic asked.

“He said the name Dominic.”

“So? There are a lot of Dominic’s in the world.”

“Okay, true. However, if I remember correctly, I thought I saw a photo of you with a knife through it,” I

said.

“N-no you didn’t! Your memory is messed up!” Dominic claimed. I crossed my arms.

“Okay. Then if it wasn’t you, who was it?” I asked.

“I-I don’t know.”

“It was you, wasn’t it?”

“Maybe it was, maybe not.”

“Who was the man that asked about you? You know him, don’t you?” I demanded.

“No, I don’t!” Dominic protested.

“You better tell me who he is, or I’ll kill you!” I threatened.

I ordered my belt to get me a sword. Ash and the rest of the team held me back.

“Just tell us if you know!” Jake demanded, still holding me back.

“Okay, fine! It’s Haredge, the evil god! I…work for him,” Dominic said.

I felt like I got slapped in the face.

“You what?” I demanded.

“I work for him!”

“Why? Traitor!” I yelled.

Haredge’s POV

I heard noises from the weapons room. I walked over to it and opened the door to see eight teens, a man and Dominic, Brady and Adrian.

“Well, this is a surprise. Dominic, I thank you for bringing me these heroes,” I said.

Max’s POV

Dominic nodded.

“You’re welcome, Haredge.”

We stared at him.

“Guards!” Dominic yelled.

Two guards in armor came running up.

“Yes, Dominic?” they asked.

“Escort them to the torture chamber so they can have fun.” Dominic said. The guards chained us and

dragged us to the torture chamber.

Chapter 40

The Torture chamber

Max’s POV

The torture chamber did not look fun at all. There was a guillotine, a chainsaw, swords on a wall, a spike and many other devices of torture. We got locked into eleven different cells. Thankfully, Jake and I were next to each other. We sat back to back. I sighed.

“I can’t believe Dominic betrayed us…” I muttered.

“I know it’s hard to believe, bud, but we’ll find a way out of this,” Jake said.

“And if we don’t?” I asked.

“Trust me. We’ll find a way,” Jake said.

“I guess,” I said.

We heard rummaging from outside of our cells, but still in the room.

“Hello?” I asked. More rummaging could be heard. I stood up.

“Is someone there?” Ash asked.

“Come out whoever you are,” Jake said.

A boy about 17 years old came out. He had black hair, brown eyes and glasses. He wore a grey hoodie, jeans and black sneakers.

“Hello,” the boy said.

“Hi. What’s your name?” Jake asked calmly.

“My name is Cole Evans. What are your names?” Cole asked.

“I’m Max. That’s Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Jason, Paul, Martha, Brady, Adrian and Harold,” I said.

“Cole? What are you doing here?” Martha asked.

“It’s a long story. Should I tell you?”

“Only if you want to,” Paul said.

“Okay, I guess. I’m looking for my dad. He went missing on a quest and never came home. So, I came to this castle since I knew there was a god. I figured if anyone could help me, it’d be him. I asked him to help and he refused. When I demanded why, he hesitated, then threw me in here,” Cole explained.

“How long have you been here?” I asked.

“I think two or three weeks. Honestly, I’m not sure. I lost track.”

It broke my heart that Cole had been here so long, knowing the fact that his father was dead.

“Tell you what, Cole. Help us get out, help us on our quest and we’ll help you find your father,” I said.

Cole’s eyes widened.

“Really?” Cole asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. However, it may take us some time to find him, since we have our quest,” Jake said.

“That’s fine. I just want my dad back,” Cole said.

“Help us get out of here,” I said.

“Got it. Get me a paperclip and a screwdriver.” “Why?” I asked, clearly confused.

“I’m going to use them to get you guys out of here,” Cole said.

“How?” Jake asked.

“You’ll see.”

“Fair point. Belt, I need a paperclip and screwdriver.” I requested. As expected, I pulled out the items and gave them to Cole. He wiggled the paperclip in the lock, loosening it, then screwed the lock off. He did this for all our cells. We stared at him in amazement.

“Whoa. How’d you do that?” I asked in awe.

“Simple. All I did was loosen the lock and then screwed it off,” Cole said.

“Some things are so simple and yet they seem so complicated,” I muttered. Cole laughed and opened the door. When he opened the door, an alarm blared.

“Uh oh,” Jason said.

“That can’t be good. Come on. Let’s get out of here before either Dominic or Haredge see us and try to stop us,” I said.

Too late. We made it two feet before we got stopped by Dominic. He faced us.

“Now, why are you leaving?” Dominic asked.

“Why do you care? You’re a traitor.” I growled.

“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t act all innocent. You made us go in the torture chamber. We trusted you and what happened?

You betrayed us, that’s what. You lost our trust.”

“Oh, that. I’m sorry.”

I scoffed.

“No, you’re not.”

Dominic smirked.

“Well, it seems like you’re not as dumb as you look,” Dominic said.

Chapter 41

The fight with henchmen

Max’s POV

“The way I see it, we’re going to have to fight,” I growled. Dominic snickered and shook his head.

“Max, you can’t beat or even fight me. You want to know why? Because I’m a god. And everyone knows you can’t kill gods.”

“That’s a lie. You weren’t around for this, but we took down in Gigantusnus. Or at least, sent her to the Darkness Pit,” I said.

“And to that, I congratulate you. However, I won’t be who you’re fighting. Not yet, anyway,” Dominic said.

“Then who will we be fighting?” Jason asked.

“My henchmen,” Dominic said. Just then, Haredge boomed through the door.

“You mean my henchmen!” Haredge bellowed.

Dominic looked at him, annoyed.

“What?” Dominic asked.

“You can’t have henchmen yet.”

Dominic groaned.

“Fine.”

“Um, I hate to interrupt this, but can we fight now? I’m getting tired of listening to you talk,” I said.

“Alright then. Henchmen, rise and attack!”

Henchmen rose. They looked much stronger than Gigatusnus’ henchmen. We pulled out our weapons and charged.

Remember how we charged into battle against the henchmen? Yeah, that was a bad idea. We practically got destroyed. The henchmen shot at us, causing us to fly back and hit a wall. I made the mistake of looking at my arm. It was all bloody. I got up and charged at Haredge. I swung my sword. He countered me. Haredge hit my with the handle of his sword. He laughed.

“Born a hero, die a hero.”

Haredge stabbed me in the gut. I fell to my knees. I heard Jake scream, but it sounded far away. I blacked out.

Jake’s POV

I screamed as Max got stabbed and blacked out. I grabbed a gun and began shooting at Haredge in anger. I knew it wouldn’t kill him, but it was enough to startle him.

“What did you do to Max?” I demanded.

“Stabbed him, duh! What are you going to do about it, huh?” Haredge asked.

I flicked my hand, expecting ice to shoot out. Strangely, nothing happened.

“What the…? That’s not possible,” I muttered. Haredge laughed.

“It is possible. You see, ever since you defeated Gigantusnus, the gods have kept quiet.”

“Why?”

“Because they’re out celebrating!”

I shook my head, not believing a word.

“I bet they’re just busy,” I said. I tried to sound upbeat and confident, which was hard because I wasn’t. I heard shouting, as more henchmen were coming. I looked at Harold. He caught my eyes.

“We have to go back to base! We can’t hold them off or defeat them! Retreat!” Harold yelled.

I picked up Max and slung him over my shoulder. We teleported back to the base.

Chapter 42­

The Meeting

Haredge’s POV Once they all left, I had a meeting with my army in the throne room.

“Sir Haredge, you called a meeting? For what?” Dominic asked.

“We have much to discuss. First, those eight teenagers…There’s something special about them. Especially Max. They’re children of the gods, aren’t they?” I asked.

Dominic nodded.

“Yes, I believe they are children of the gods,” Dominic said.

“I should have known. That’s why they seem so powerful!” “What do we do about them?” Dominic asked.

“Simple: we stop them. They’re on a quest, yes?” I asked.

“Yes. The Oracle gave them a prophecy. They’re looking for a stone,” Dominic said.

I scowled with irritation and disgust.

“I was never a fan of the Oracle,” I said.

“Why not?” Dominic asked.

“I always got bad prophecies. But wait! I’ve got an idea!” I exclaimed.

“What’s your idea?” Dominic asked.

“I honestly don’t know if it’s possible, but what if we can shut down the Oracles? By that I mean shut them all down. Every single one,” I said.

Dominic nodded.

“I like it,” Dominic agreed.

“Meeting dismissed,” I said.

Chapter 37

Dreams

Max’s POV

During the time I was knocked out, I was dreaming. I dreamed about a meeting. I’ve never been a fan of meetings, but this one caught my attention. In the dream, I was in Haredge’s throne room. There were also henchmen there. I saw Dominic. I gritted my teeth and clenched my fists. Ever since Dominic had revealed he was working for Haredge, I hated him. Haredge held his hand up for silence.

“These eight teenagers…There’s something making them seem powerful. Especially Max,” Haredge said. I flinched when he said my name.

“They’re children of the gods, aren’t they?” Haredge asked.

Dominic nodded.

“Yes, I believe so,” Dominic said. I flinched yet again, not expecting him to know that.

“I should have known! That’s why they seem so powerful!” “What do we do about them?” Dominic asked.

“Simple: we stop them. Do they have a quest?” Haredge asked.

Dominic nodded.

“Yes, I believe the Oracle gave them a quest.”

Haredge scowled.

“I was never a fan of the Oracle.”

“Why not?”

“I always got bad prophecies. But wait! I’ve got an idea!” Haredge exclaimed.

“What’s your idea?” Dominic asked.

“I don’t know if it’s even possible, but what if we can shut down the Oracles? By that, I mean shut them ALL down. Every single one,” Haredge said. Dominic nodded.

“I like it,” Dominic agreed.

“Meeting dismissed,” Haredge said. Haredge’s henchmen left the room, making the only people in the room Dominic and Haredge. Haredge looked away from Dominic.

“Leave,” Haredge said. Dominic knit his eyebrows.

“What?” Dominic asked.

“Leave,” Haredge repeated.

“But-.”

“GET OUT!” Haredge screamed with anger. Dominic nodded and left, looking offended. Haredge locked the door once Dominic was gone. He walked over to his closet and opened the doors. In the dream, I was facing him, so I couldn’t see what was in the closet, but it clearly bothered him. He sighed.

“It’s all his fault. If he hadn’t killed you, I wouldn’t be this way. I love, miss and want you back, Mom,” Haredge said.

He closed the closet doors. The dream began to get blurry, as I was waking up.  A second later, I woke up at the base. I sat up, breathing heavy as I tried to process what happened. I guess I had a weird look on my face, because Jake walked over to me, looking worried.

“Hey, bud. Are you okay?” Jake asked in a calm voice. I shrugged.

“I don’t know,” I admitted.

“Bad dream?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Well, I wouldn’t say it was bad. More interesting than bad,” I said.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked.

“I think I know why Haredge is evil.”

“What? Why?”

“In my dream, Haredge and his army had a meeting. Dominic and Haredge came up with a plan to shut down all the Oracles. The meeting ended. Haredge screamed at Dominic to get out. Then after Dominic left, Haredge opened his closet door and talked to what I assumed was a picture of his mom,” I explained.

“How do you know it’s his mom?” Jake asked. I told Jake what Haredge said. Jake crossed his arms.

“Okay, so what do we do?” Jake asked.

“Let’s tell the team.” We walked downstairs to the lounge.

“Hey guys,” I said. They turned.

“Oh, hey. You’re awake,” Ash said. I nodded.

“Yeah. Listen, guys. We need to talk,” I said.

“About what?” Paul asked.

“We know why Haredge turned evil,” I said.

“Why?” Ash asked. I explained my dream and what Haredge said.

“What do we do?” Jason asked.

“We go to Haredge and ask who killed his mom.” I decided. Ash knit his eyebrows, confused.

“Why would we go to Haredge? In case you’ve forgotten, he’s evil.” Ash said.

“Yes, I know he’s evil, but I still want to help.” I said.

“And risk your life and possibly die?” Ash asked.

“I don’t care what happens to me as long as I help him.”

“Even if you die?”

“Even if I die.”

Ash sighed, clearly knowing I wasn’t going to be talked out of this.

“Okay, I guess we’re going to Haredge.” Ash decided.

Chapter 43

Haredge joins the Quest

Max’s POV

We sailed to Darkstone Castle. When we got there, a guard was at the bridge. We were about to cross the bridge, but the guard stopped us.

“Whoa. Who are you kids and what are you doing here?” the guard demanded.

“We need to speak with Haredge.” I said.

The guard shook his head.

“Sorry, kids. No can do.” The guard said. I crossed my arms.

“Why not? Is he busy planning to end the world?” I asked. The guard looked surprised.

“Well, it seems like you guys know him. Follow me. I’ll take you to him.” The guard said.

We followed the guard into the castle and went up to a closed door. The guard knocked on the door.

“Lord Haredge?” the guard asked.

“Who is it?” Haredge asked.

“The guard, Barfon.”

“Come in,” Haredge said.

We walked in. Haredge turned to see us, then grunted.

“What are they doing here?” Haredge snapped.

“They wanted to speak with you,” Barfon said.

“Leave us.”

Barfon left the room.

“What do you want?” Haredge asked.

“We just want to talk,” I said.

“About what?”

“I know why you’re evil.”

Haredge chuckled.

“No, you don’t.”

“You turned evil because someone killed your mom,” I said. Haredge looked up.

“How did you know that?” Haredge asked in surprise.

“I had a dream. But that’s not important right now. What’s important is that we find who killed your mom. So, who did it?” I asked.

“His name is Mike Darwidge,” Haredge said after silence.

“Go on,” I said.

“Mike never really liked me, or anyone related to me. Then one day he came to my house and killed my mom,” Haredge said.

“Oh, dude. I’m so sorry,” I said.

“It’s fine,” Haredge muttered. I shook my head.

“No, it’s not fine. We’re going to find Mike. Where is he?” I asked. Haredge shrugged.

“That’s what I’d like to know,” Haredge said. I stared at him.

“You don’t know?” I demanded.

Haredge shook his head.

“How can you not know?” I snapped.

“Kid, I’ve been searching for years. I haven’t found him, and I won’t find him,” Haredge grumbled.

“Well, you certainly won’t find him with that attitude,” I said.

Haredge scoffed.

“Do you think you can find him?” Haredge asked doubtfully. I shrugged.

“I bet I can set our course to where Mike last was,” I said.

“Okay. What happens after you’ve gotten the location?” Haredge asked.

“We go to that location and talk to people, hoping to get more information,” I said.

Haredge shrugged.

“I guess we can try it,” Haredge decided.

“Awesome. I’ll go get the ship,” I said.

I got out my phone and opened a self-driving app. I put in the ship’s information and hit a button to fly.

“Alright, so the ship should be here in a minute,” I said. Ash looked at me, a confused look on his face.

“What did you do?” Ash asked.

“I got an app that can fly the ship here,” I explained.

“Oh, alright. Where is it?” Ash asked.

“It should be outside,” I said.

We walked outside. Sure enough, the ship was there. We loaded into the ship and went to the control room. I booted up a tracking software.

“What did you say his name was?” I asked.

“Mike Darwidge,” Haredge answered.

I typed in his name and pressed a button to view him. Up came a man with black hair, a beard, a red hoodie and shorts.

“Is this him?” I asked. Haredge nodded.

“That’s him,” Haredge confirmed.

“Awesome.”

I clicked on a button to show his last location. A map was pulled up onto the screen, revealing a blinking red dot.

“What’s that blinking dot?” Ash asked.

“That’s where Mike was last located,” I said.

“Click it,” Jason said.

I clicked it.

“It shows he was last seen at a tech facility,” I said. Martha frowned.

“Why a tech facility? And where is it?” Martha asked. I shrugged and shook my head with confusion.

“I don’t know why he would go there. It says it’s at Harlend, a galaxy which is past Galaxy’s Eye,” I said.

“How long will it take to get there?” Paul asked. I shrugged.

“I don’t know. Maybe a day, maybe a week.”

Chapter 44

Arguments Max’s POV

Paul stared at me.

“You don’t know?” Paul demanded. I shook my head.

“I actually have no idea.”

“How can you not know? Didn’t you add a feature to know the exact date and time?” Paul yelled. Again, I shook my head.

“No. I didn’t think about that,” I said.

“Of course, you didn’t! You don’t think about anything!” Paul snapped.

I stood up. My face felt hot from anger.

“Okay, what is your problem?” I demanded.

“My problem is that for all I know, Haredge could be leading us into a trap. Not only that, but Jason and Martha are dating! He knew I liked her, so he went out of his way to date her and ruin my life!”

Jason stood up with a start and shot to his feet.

“That’s not true at all! You hate Martha! Before this whole quest thing, you told me you wanted her dead and said she was a no good, rude, heartless jerk,” Jason said. Martha walked over.

“Paul, is that true?” Martha asked. Her voice was quiet and shaky.

“N-no, it’s not!” Paul hesitated.

“Yes, it is! He’s hesitating! That’s how I know he’s lying,” Jason said.

“Okay, fine! I did say those things! But only because they were and still are true!” Paul yelled. His face was red with anger.

Martha shoved Paul and ran out of the room crying.

“Look what you did!” Jason protested.

“What did I do, huh? All I did was tell her the truth!” Paul snapped.

“What you did was hurt her!”

“Oh, nice to hear from the guy who hated her at the beginning of this year!” “I realized I was a jerk and apologized!” Jason protested.

“Okay, can we just calm down?” I asked.

 “Why should I calm down, huh?” Paul demanded.

“Dude, you started this argument.”

“How?”

“What do you mean how? You started it by yelling at me!” I yelled.

Haredge’s POV

While the eight of them were busy arguing, I took that as an opportunity. I snuck out of the control room and went into what I thought was the weapons room. I pulled out my phone and called Mike.

“Hey, Haredge. How’s it going?” Mike asked.

“Oh, it’s great. The anger scent is working like a charm. They’re arguing and get this: they actually believe that you killed my mom,” I said.

“That’s great. Where are you?” Mike asked.

“I’m in the weapons room of Max’s ship. We’re heading for Harlend,” I said.

“Excellent,” Mike said.

Max’s POV While we were arguing, I noticed Haredge was missing.

“Hey, where did Haredge go?” I asked.

The room fell silent.

“What do you mean?” Paul asked.

“He’s not in the room anymore,” I said. Just then, Haredge walked into the room.

“Where did you go?” I asked. Haredge didn’t respond.

“Haredge!”

“Huh?” Haredge asked in surprise.

“Where did you go?” I asked again.

“Oh, um…I was just wandering around the ship.”

“Why?”

“I just needed to clear my mind, that’s all,” Haredge said. I nodded.

“Oh. Okay.”

I didn’t really trust or believe him. Paul was right all along. Haredge could be leading us to a trap. We had to stay cautious and alert. I checked the screen. We had entered Dalage.

“Max, where are we?” Jason asked.

“We just entered Dalage,” I answered.

“Cool. How long until we’re at Harlend?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“I still don’t know. Sorry,” I said. I sighed with annoyance. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey. Don’t stress it, man. We’ll get there eventually,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah, that’s true,” I said.

Jake took out his phone and checked the time.

“It’s late. We should get some sleep,” Jake said.

I nodded, then went to my room. I didn’t feel tired, but I instantly fell asleep.

Chapter 45

The trap

Max’s POV

The second I fell asleep, I began to dream. I dreamed the eight of us were on Harlend. The air was cold. The smell of smoke filled the air. The planet seemed to be in ruins. Behind us was Haredge, laughing. He powered on the ship and left us.

I woke up with a start and checked my phone. It was 8:30 AM. How was that possible? It seemed like I was asleep for only a few minutes. However, that didn’t matter. I had to warn the team about my vision. I sent a text to the team, telling them to come to my room. A few minutes later, I heard a knock at my door.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“It’s us,” Jake said.

“Come in.”

The door opened and the team came in.

“We got your text. What’s up?” Ash asked.

“I’m not sure if I trust Haredge,” I admitted.

“Why do you think that?” Jason asked.

I explained my dream. Ash crossed his arms.

“So, you saw that he convinced us to get out, then he left us?” Ash asked.

I nodded.

“Okay, so what do we do?” Martha asked.

I sighed and shook my head.

“I admit, I don’t know. For now, just play it normal, but stay alert,” I said. The team nodded and we went to the cafeteria. Haredge was already there.

“Morning,” Haredge said, his mouth full of bacon.

“I’m going to check our course and see where we are,” I said.

I went to the control room and turned on the software. The course hadn’t changed. We had just left Dalage and were headed to the galaxy Ercho. I went back to the team.

“We just left Dalage and we’re heading to Ercho. That’s where Harlend is,” I announced.

“Got it. Any time update?” Jake asked.

“A few minutes,” I said.

A few minutes later, we arrived and looked out the window.

“Let’s go check it out,” I said.

Haredge stood up.

“Hey, Max. Maybe you should check it out first. You know, just to see if it’s safe,” Haredge suggested.

I had a bad feeling this was a trap, but I decided to play along and nodded. “Alright.”

Jake stood up.

“I’m coming with you,” Jake said.

I nodded.

“Let’s go,” I said.

We stepped out of the ship and onto Harlend. Just as I expected, the ship doors closed, and the ship flew off.

Ash’s POV

I stared at Haredge in shock as we left.

“What is wrong with you?” I demanded.

Haredge just looked up and smiled.

“What do you mean?” Haredge asked in an innocent tone.

“Don’t play games, Haredge. Why did you leave Max and Jake?” I snapped.

Haredge shrugged.

“What do you want me to say? I’m evil,” Haredge said.

“I’m willing to bet that Mike didn’t even kill your mom,” I said.

“Bingo, you’re right!” Haredge exclaimed.

“So, you lied about your mom dying?” Jason asked.

“I didn’t lie about her dying. She is dead,” Haredge said.

“We’re going back for them. No matter what,” Jason said with confidence. Haredge laughed.

“Oh, this is adorable! You guys think you’ll be able to go back,” Haredge said.

“What do you mean?” Paul asked.

“I’ll be taking you somewhere...special,” Haredge said.

The tone of his voice made me think it wasn’t going to be very special.

“What do you mean special? Where are we going?” Martha asked.

“Oh, I can’t say,” Haredge said.

“Why not?” Chloe demanded.

“Because that would ruin the surprise.”

The six of us glanced at each other. We wanted to fight back, but we couldn’t. We had to go along with it. It was our only hope if we wanted to save Max and Jake, assuming they were even alive.

“Fine. Let us know when we’re at wherever it is that you’re taking us,” I said, not happy about it. I got a text on my phone from Jason, saying to go to the weapons room.

“I’m going to walk around the ship and try to clear my mind,” I said. Haredge nodded.

I went to the weapons room. Jason, Paul, Martha, Wendy and Chloe were there, so I guess Jason must have sent it to everyone.

“What’s up, Jason?” I asked.

“Haredge stole some weapons,” Jason said.

“What do you mean? Didn’t max program it to have an infinite supply?” I asked.

Jason shrugged.

“That’s what I thought. I guess Haredge might have hacked onto the ship,” Jason said.

“Is that why some weapons are missing?” I asked. Jason nodded.

“Exactly.”

“Someone check the course to see where we’re going,” I said.

“On it.” Martha said.

Martha walked over to the control room.

Martha

I went to the control room and checked the course to see we were heading to Damar Dungeon. I quickly ran out of the room but being careful so that Haredge couldn’t see me.

Ash

Martha came back.

“Well? Where are we heading?” I asked.

“Damar Dungeon,” Martha said.

“What’s the plan, Ash?” Jason asked.

I paced around, trying to think.

“I don’t know, but I’ll try to think of something,” I said.

The team nodded. I felt the ship slow down.

“Come on. We should go back to Haredge before he gets suspicious,” I said.

We went back to the cafeteria, where Haredge was.

“Why’d we slow down?” I asked.

“We’re here. Welcome to Damar Castle.”

The six of us, seven counting Haredge, walked out of the ship and into the castle. When we reached the castle, there were guards. They stopped us from entering.

“Halt! Who are you?” one of the guards demanded.

“I’m Haredge,” Haredge said.

“Who?”

“Come on, man. Haredge! The evil god.” Haredge protested.

The guards shook their heads and crossed his arms.

“You’re not. You can’t be a god. They don’t exist,” one of the guards said.

“Oh? If it wasn’t a god, could I do this?” Haredge asked.

He snapped his fingers and the guards dropped to the ground. I stared in shock at the guards, then at Haredge.

“What did you do?” I asked in surprise.

“Oh, nothing. Just made them pass out,” Haredge said.

We walked through the doors. The floor was gold tiled. A man in robes and a crown walked over.

“Who are you? How did you get here?” he demanded.

“You already know me, King William,” Haredge said.

King William sighed. It was clear he and Haredge had a history.

“What do you want, Haredge?” King William demanded.

“Oh, nothing. Send these six to the dungeon,” Haredge said. King William glanced at Haredge like he was crazy.

“Haredge, these are kids,” King William said.

Haredge shrugged.

“I know. I’m an evil god. Now, take them to the dungeon or I’ll kill you!”

King William chuckled.

“No, you won’t.”

“Are you sure about that?” Haredge asked. King William nodded, crossing his arms.

“I bet my life you won’t,” King William said.

Haredge shrugged.

“Have it your way,” Haredge said.

He got out a sword from midair and stabbed King William in the heart, killing him.

Guards burst through every door.

“What did you do to our king?”

Haredge shrugged.

“Isn’t it obvious? I killed him.” “Come on. You’re going to the dungeon.”

“What? Why?” Haredge asked.

“You murdered King William, so now you’re going to the dungeon.”

“Not if I have anything to say about it!”

Haredge thrusted his arms out. Nothing happened.

“What the-? Impossible!” Haredge said in surprise.

The guard smirked.

“Not impossible,” the guard said.

“What did you do?”

“I put on an ankle bracelet which took your powers.” “What? Why?” Haredge complained.

“You killed the king. You’re going to the dungeon.” The guard took Haredge to the dungeon. The other guard faced us.

“Hello, children,” he said.

“Uh, hi. Sorry, but who are you?” Jason asked.

“Oh, forgive me. My name is Torque. What are your names?” Torque asked.

We introduced ourselves.

“It’s nice to meet you. What are you doing here?” Torque asked.

We told him about our quest for the stone, how Max and Jake were stranded on Harlend, etc.

“I do hope Max and Jake will be okay,” Torque said.

“I’m sure they will be. Besides, Max has his belt, right?” I asked. I looked at the team.

“Right?”

The team glanced at each other.

“Um, Ash?” Chloe said.

“Yeah?” I asked.

“Max doesn’t have his toolbelt.”

“Wait what?”

“He left it on the ship,” Paul said.

“Oh, boy. We have to get it to him,” I said. Panic was building up inside of me. I turned to face Torque.

“Make sure Haredge stays there,” I said.

Torque noded.

Chapter 46

The Memory Demon

Ash’s POV

We went back into the ship. I went into the control room and set the course to Harlend.

However, when I did, it said Harlend didn’t exist. I tried again. No difference.

“What the heck?” I yelled to the computer.

“Ash? Is everything okay?” Chloe asked. I shook my head.

“I can’t find Harlend. It just gives me an error,” I grumbled.

Chloe knit her eyebrows, confused.

“What is Harlend?” she asked.

“The planet in the galaxy Haxlor,” I said.

Chloe looked even more confused.

“Ash, there is no planet named Harlend. As far as I know, there’s no galaxy named Haxlor. Are you feeling okay?”

I nodded, even though I wasn’t feeling okay at all.

“Tell the rest of the team to go to the cafeteria. We need to have a meeting,” I said.

Chloe looked at me, her eyes full of concern.

“Ash, the team died. It’s just been us,” Chloe said.

My mouth felt dry.

“How long have they been dead?” I asked.

“3 years. Do you not remember?”

Just then, a white light formed. When it faded, a demon was there. He was a white demon, with long, sharp fangs.

“Who are you?” I asked.

“It’s me, Chloe,” Chloe said.

“No, not you. Can you see him?” I asked, pointing to the demon.

Chloe looked in the direction I was pointing at.

“See who?” Chloe asked.

“She can’t see me. Only you can see me,” the demon said.

“Chloe, would you mind leaving? I feel like I should be alone. You know, to gather my thoughts,” I said.

Chloe looked a bit confused, but she nodded and walked out of the room. I faced the demon.

“Who are you?” I demanded.

“You know me from History class.”

I remembered back from History: we were talking about different types of demons and one had the ability to mess with people’s minds.

“You’re the Memory Reaper,” I recalled. He nodded.

“Correct,” the Memory Reaper said.

“though, I prefer my demon name, Algar,” Algar said.

“What did you do to Chloe?” I demanded.

“What do you mean?” Algar asked in an innocent voice.

“Don’t play games with me, Algar. I know you messed with Chloe’s mind!” I said with anger.

Algar laughed.

“What makes you think that?”

“She said Harlend doesn’t exist and that the team has been dead for 3 years!” I protested.

Algar’s face lit up as if he had figured something out.

“Oh, that’s what you mean!” Algar exclaimed.

“Yeah, that’s what I mean. Now, what did you do to her?” I snapped.

Algar shrugged.

“Oh, you know. I messed with her mind.”

“Why?!”

“Because it’s so fun to watch you get torn apart.” “You disgust me,” I growled.

Algar chuckled.

“And you’re adorable.”

I clenched my fists with anger.

“Stop with the games, Algar. Fix Chloe’s mind!” I snapped.

“How do you know it’s Chloe who I’m messing with?” Algar asked.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Think about it. I could be messing with you,” Algar said.

“N-no, you can’t!” I said. I tried to sound brave, but I was nervous.

“I could be. You never know,” Algar said.

“How can you be messing with me?” I asked.

“I could be making you think that the team is alive. This could just be a dream for all you know,” Algar said.

I shook my head.

“No! You’re lying!” I protested.

“How am I lying?”

“I know the team isn’t dead,” I said.

“What makes you think that?”

“I swear they were at Damar Castle with me!”

Algar shrugged.

“Maybe they were. Or maybe…never mind.” “What? Maybe what?” I asked.

“Nothing. It doesn’t matter.”

I pinned Algar to the wall.

“Tell me now or I’ll kill you,” I threatened.

Algar put his hands up in surrender.

“Okay, okay! They may have been with you at Damar Castle,” Algar said.

“Or?” I asked.

“Or they could be at Harlend,” Algar said.

“But…I searched for Harlend on the map. It gave me no results,” I said.

“In this dimension.”

“What?”

“You’ve been searching in this dimension.”

“There are other dimensions?” I asked in surprise.

Algar nodded.

“Indeed. It is what we call the multiverse,” Algar said.

“How do I get to another dimension?” I asked.

“To get to another dimension, you must open a portal,” Algar said.

“How do I do that?”

“Use this,” Algar said, handing me a remote controller.

“How do I use it?” I asked.

“Press the power button. A portal will open. Once it is seen, request the dimension you wish to go to,” Algar explained.

“And after I say which dimension I want to go to, I just walk through the portal, right?” I asked.

Algar nodded.

I took a deep breath.

“I’m coming for you guys. I promise I’ll find you,” I said to myself.

I turned on the remote. A portal appeared.

“I need to go to whichever dimension the team is in,” I requested.

And with that, I jumped into the portal.

Chapter 47

Getting the team

Ash’s POV

When I came out of the portal, I was in the ship. At first, I thought it didn’t work.

However, that was before I looked outside the ship.

I looked outside to see Harlend. I got out of the ship and looked around to see a massive base. I went up to the entrance to be greeted by a guard.

“Hey! What are you doing, kid?” the guard demanded.

“I’m looking for seven teenagers: Max, Jake, Wendy, Chloe, Jason, Paul and Martha. Do those names ring a bell?” I asked.

The guard nodded.

“They’re in the dining hall,” the guard said.

“Got it,” I said.

I walked into the base and made my way to the dining hall. Sure enough, the team was there. I burst through the door and hugged them.

“Ash, what are you doing?” Max asked, weirded out.

“I thought I lost you guys,” I said with relief.

“What are you talking about?” Jason asked.

I explained what had happened with the demon and me.

“So, what happened with you guys?” I asked.

“A lot, but we’re tired. Exhausted. Can we tell you later?” Max asked.

I shrugged.

“I guess. Let’s go to the ship,” I said.

Chapter 48

Dreams

Max’s POV

I dreamed I was dying. I know that sounds like I’m overreacting, but I’m not. I was holding some sort of artifact and it had power. And when I say that, I mean it was a lot. It was enough to kill me. After a full minute of holding it, I collapsed to the ground. My breathing was slowing down. Jake knelt next to me, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“Max, no! Don’t leave us!” Jake sobbed.

I put a finger to his lips, which got him quiet.

“Shh. It’s okay,” I said. Jake shook his head.

“No, it’s not!” Jake protested.

“Jake, I love you. Promise me-.” I coughed.

“Promise you what?” Jake asked.

“Promise me you’ll go to the Abyss. Come back for me,” I said.

Jake nodded.

“I promise,” Jake said.

I bolted awake, breathing heavy, trying to process the dream. I heard a voice in my head.

“Soon…” the voice said.

I looked at my reflection in the mirror. My hair was a mess.

“Alright. Time to tell the team,” I said.

Chapter 44

Discussions

Max’s POV

I walked out of my room and went to the dining hall where everyone else was. I guess I looked wide-eyed because everyone glanced at me.

“Max? Are you okay?” Jake asked, his tone concerned.

I nodded.

“I’m fine, just…had an interesting dream,” I said.

“What was it about?” Ash asked.

“It’s not going to be easy to explain,” I admitted. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“Look, babe. I know it can be scary. However, the best way to face that fear is to reveal it. So, what happened?” Jake asked.

I took a deep breath, preparing myself to tell them.

“I’m going to die by holding the artifact,” I blurted, going faster by the word.

The team stared at me. Jake was the first to speak, breaking the silence.

“Maybe you should sit down,” Jake said.

“I’m not crazy!” I protested.

“I didn’t-” Jake started

“You’re basically calling me crazy!”

“Max, I didn’t mean it like that,” Jake said.

I shook my head, not believing him.

“Uh-huh. Sure, you didn’t.” I snapped.

Jake glared at me, annoyed and offended.

“Well, what do you want me to say, huh?” Jake demanded.

“Something to comfort me!”

“Why is everything always about you?”

“What do you mean?”

“You literally make everything about you! Because you only care about yourself!” Jake snapped.

“Jake, you know that’s not true,” I said.

“It is true! You’re just too stupid to realize it!” Jake yelled. He slapped his hand over his mouth.

My eyes stung. I felt like I got slapped in the face.

“Max, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it,” Jake said.

“Can it, Jake,” I snapped.

I started to walk out, but Jake stopped me.

“Max, where are you going?” Jake asked.

“Anywhere but here,” I grumbled.

I tried to walk around him, but Jake blocked me.

“What is your problem?” I demanded.

“I just feel worried for you,” Jake said.

“Yeah, that’s only why you think I’m selfish. Now move!” I snapped.

“No!” Jake protested. Frost began to form in his hands.

“It’s a fight you want? It’s a fight you’ll get.”

Chapter 45

Max VS Jake

Max’s POV

I summoned fire and thrusted my hands out at Jake. He was smart enough to summon a wall of ice around him, extinguishing my fire.

“Max, why are you doing this?” Jason demanded.

“Because Jake is calling me crazy and selfish! I bet he doesn’t even love me!” I snapped.

The fire in my hands grew bigger, as I was getting angrier. I faced Jake.

“So? Do you love me or not?” I demanded.

“Why are you asking?” Jake demanded.

“I need to know,” I said.

“Why, huh?”

“Just answer the question!” I snapped.

“No, I don’t!” Jake blurted. I extinguished my flames and stared at him. He was breathing heavy.

“You...what?” I asked in a quiet tone. Jake nodded.

“I don’t love you,” Jake said.

My eyes watered. Here was the man I’ve loved for 5 years and he was telling me that he doesn’t love me.

“Why then?” I asked.

“Why what?” Jake asked.

“Why date me for 5 years then say you don’t love me?” I demanded.

“To make you not lonely! That’s why I dated you!”

“Then why did you say you don’t love me?” I snapped.

“I was sick and tired of getting picked on for being gay!” Jake protested.

“I guess that makes sense,” I muttered.

Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know what happened to me. I do love you and I don't think you’re crazy,” Jake said. We kissed.

“Now that that’s taken care of, what do we do now?” Jason asked.

“We go find the artifact. We should go to Rob and see if there’s a prophecy,” I said.

The team nodded.

“But we’re in another dimension. How will we get back?” Paul asked. Ash held out a remote.

“We can use this,” Ash said.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’s a remote control that can open up and take us to other dimensions,” Ash explained.

“Can it take the ship?” I asked.

“I don’t know. Why does it matter?” Ash asked.

“I worked hard on it!” I complained.

“We can try. Where would the remote even go?” Ash asked.

“That’s a good question. I didn’t think about that,” I grumbled.

“I mean, we can fly around or check the control room,” Ash said.

“Good idea. Let’s check the control room,” I said.

We walked into the control room.

“Does it have HDMI?” I asked. Ash nodded.

I plugged the remote into the laptop and hooked it up. I turned on the remote. A portal opened in front of the ship.

“Say where you want to go,” Ash said.

“Take us to Mount Dorson,” I said.

We flew through the portal. When we got out of the portal, we were at Mount Dorson.

Everything looked the same.

“Come on. Let’s go get a prophecy,” I said.

Chapter 46

The new Prophecy

Max’s POV

We got out of the ship and went into the base. When we got into the base, we went to the basement. As expected, Rob was there. We walked over to him.

“Hi, Rob,” I said.

“Hello, Max. How can I assist you?” Rob asked.

“Well, I feel like there’s a new prophecy waiting for us,” I said.

Rob’s eyes glowed green, meaning he was in Oracle mode.

“That is correct, Max. There is another prophecy indeed,” Rob said.

“Tell us the prophecy,” Jason said.

“The new prophecy is as follows:

One will have death and go to the Abyss

To bring him back, go to the Pit

Spirits will take over To stop them, find a clover That is all I can say,” Rob said. The green glow in his eyes faded.

“Alright then. Let’s make it happen,” I said.

“Max, where do we start?” Martha asked.

I hadn’t thought about that. Then I remembered: Haredge.

“We go to Haredge,” I said.

“What? Why?” Jason asked.

“We need to break him out of the dungeon and tell him about the prophecy,” I said. “O-okay...But why do we need to tell him about the prophecy?” Ash asked.

“So that he knows our plans,” I said.

“What?! Max, if we do that, it’s a suicide mission!” Paul exclaimed.

“Exactly! The prophecy said one will have death and go to the Abyss,” I said.

“So?” Paul asked.

“So, if I had a vision of me dying…” I started.

“...then he’s the one who has to die,” Jake finished.

I nodded.

“Exactly.”

“What do we do, Max?” Chloe asked.

“We break a god out of jail,” I said.

Chapter 47

The plan goes Wrong

Max’s POV

As the chapter name says, our plan to get Haredge out of the dungeon went wrong. Very wrong. It started off fine. We boarded the ship and plugged the remote into the laptop. That’s where things took a turn. Nothing happened.

“Ash, why isn’t anything happening?” I asked.

Ash shrugged.

“I don’t know. It could be the batteries are dead,” Ash said.

“Check the batteries,” I said.

Ash opened the battery compartment. The batteries were gone.

“Ash, where are the batteries?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I swear they were in there. Unless…” Ash’s voice trailed off.

“Unless? Ash! Unless what?” I demanded.

“Unless Algar took them,” Ash said.

“Who?” I asked.

“Algar, the demon I met,” Ash explained.

“Okay, so he took them. What kind of batteries are they?” I asked. Ash shrugged.

“I have no idea.”

“You-”

I stopped myself before I could get mad.

“Okay, no worries. Belt, get me some batteries for this remote,” I said.

Nothing happened.

“Belt, what the-? NO!” I yelled in frustration.

“What’s wrong, Max?” Jake asked.

“My belt,” I said.

“What about it?” Jason asked.

“It’s gone,” I blurted in a panicked voice.

“What? How can it be gone?” Wendy asked.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Where was the last place you had it?” Chloe asked.

“In the ship before Haredge left-. Oh my god.”

I sighed with frustration and annoyance.

“What is it, Max?” Jake asked.

“Guys. My belt was still on the ship when Haredge left,” I said.

“So?” Martha asked.

“So, Haredge might have it,” I said.

“Might?” Chloe asked.

“I’m not 100% sure, but I bet he has it. Come on. Let’s go see him,” I said.

“But, Max. We can’t,” Ash said.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because the remote doesn’t have batteries, remember?” “Oh, right. I forgot…” I grumbled.

I sat down on the couch and put my head in my hands.

“Oh my god. I can’t believe this,” I muttered with annoyance. Jake sat down next to me.

“Hey, it’ll be okay. We’ll figure it out,” Jake said.

That was one thing I loved about Jake: no matter how bad the situation was, he always had a positive attitude. I nodded.

“I hope so,” I said.

“I promise you that we’ll figure this out together,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Hang on. Ash, do you know what the batteries were made of?” I asked. Ash shook his head.

“No. Why?” Ash asked.

“I was thinking we could make new batteries-Oh my god! That’s it!” I exclaimed.

“What?” Jason asked.

“We can make new batteries,” I said.

“How? None of us know wiring.” Ash said.

“I do,” I said.

Ash nodded.

“Yeah. So, I guess you’re on your own for this,” Ash said. I shrugged.

“That’s fine with me,” I said.

“How are you going to get the materials?” Jason asked.

“I have materials in the storage room,” I said,

I went into the storage room and got the supplies I needed: wires, metal, etc. After I got the supplies, I got to work on the batteries. In about an hour, I got them finished.

I went to the cafeteria, where the rest of the team was and sat down, out of breath.

“Hey,” I said.

“How are the batteries coming?” Jake asked.

“They’re done,” I said. I guess I was out of breath, because the team looked at me.

“Hey, dude. Are you okay?” Jason asked. I nodded.

‘Yeah. Just out of breath,” I said.

“Why?” Paul asked.

“Been working for an hour,” I said.

“Wow. That sounds like a while. Especially since you’re the only one who’s good with tech,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah, no kidding,” I muttered.

“So, you’re done with the batteries then?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Yep. They’re done.”

“Cool. Then let’s go to another dimension,” Ash said.

We went out of the cafeteria and went into the control room. Once in the control room, I hooked up the remote to the laptop. This time, a portal opened.

“Where do you wish to go?” a voice asked.

“Take us and the ship to the dungeon Haredge was at,” Ash said.

The portal expanded and we flew through the portal. When we got out of the portal, we were at a castle.

“Ash, where are we?” I asked.

“While you weren’t on the ship, Haredge flew us to Damar castle. He told King William to put us in the dungeon, and when King William didn’t want to, Haredge killed him and got sent to the dungeon,” Ash explained.

“Oh. Lead the way,” I said.

We walked up to the gate, where a guard was.

“Halt! Who goes there?” the guard demanded.

I glanced at Ash.

“Relax, man. I got this,” Ash whispered.

Ash faced the guard.

“It’s me, Ash,” Ash said.

“Who are the others?” the guard asked, pointing to us.

“They’re my team. They're with me,” Ash said.

“Oh, okay. What can I do for you guys?” the guard asked.

“Lead us to the dungeon. We need to see Haredge,” Ash said.

“You can’t see him,” the guard said.

His tone made it clear he was nervous.

I crossed my arms.

“Why not?” I asked.

The guard seemed interested in his shirt buttons.

“Hey!”

“Huh?”

“Why can’t we see Haredge?” I asked.

“I don’t want to say.”

I gripped the guard’s shoulders.

“Just tell us or I’m going to kill you,” I growled.

The guard put his hands up in surrender.

“Okay! You can’t see Haredge because he’s dead,” the guard blurted, going faster by the word.

We looked at him like he was joking, but his expression was dead serious.

“Show us,” I said

“What?”

“Show us he’s dead,” Jason said.

“Why?”

“Then we’ll know if we believe you,” I said.

“Follow me.”

We walked to the dungeon and went to a cell. Inside the cell was Haredge and he was dead indeed.

“What happened?” I asked.

“Nobody’s really sure. Some said an alien or something killed him.”

I looked around the cell for any clues that could help us. My belt was around Haredge’s waist. I picked it up. It was covered in slime.

“Oh my god,” I said.

“What is it, Max?” Jake asked.

“Dominic. He killed Haredge.”

The guard laughed.

“What are you laughing at?” I demanded.

“You foolish children! How could you not realize?” the guard asked.

“Realize what?” I asked.

The guard started to spaz out. A golden light covered the guard’s body.

“Uhh, you okay there, buddy?” I asked.

“Oh, yes. I’m fine, but you shouldn’t be worried about me. You should be worried about yourselves.”

“What are you talking about? Why should we worry?” I asked.

“Because I’m Dominic!” the guard snarled.

The light faded and Dominic was there.

“You killed Haredge?” Jason demanded.

Dominic laughed.

“Stupid children! There is and never was a Haredge.” “What are you talking about?” I demanded.

“You see, Haredge was just an illusion. A prototype I developed.”

To prove his point, Dominic tapped his watch. Haredge flickered and vanished.

We stared at Dominic.

“Oh my god. You really are evil,” Paul said.

Dominic nodded.

“And now to take your powers,” Dominic said.

He pulled out an orb and pointed it at us, then pressed a button and took our powers. I tried to summon fire. Nothing happened. Our powers were really gone. Dominic shoved us in a cell and locked the door. I was thinking about asking my belt for something to help. Dominic was smart, because he took my belt.

“Oh, no you don’t. I know you were going to try using it. And to make sure you can’t ever use it again, I’m going to destroy it,” Dominic said.

To prove his point, Dominic slammed the belt onto the ground, then shot it with his blaster. The belt was now destroyed.

“NO!” I screamed.

Dominic laughed.

“Yes! Try to get out now, stupid humans!”

Dominic walked away. Part of me was tempted to bash my head against the wall and kill myself. The other part of me knew that wasn’t a good idea. I sighed and sat down.

“What are we going to do, Max?” Ash asked.

I shrugged.

“Nothing, I guess,” I muttered.

Ash stared at me in disbelief.

“Max, we have to do something. We can’t not do anything!” Ash protested.

I stood up in anger.

“Well, what can we do, huh? Have you not noticed we’re in a prison?” I demanded.

“I know we’re in a prison! There has to be something we can do!” “Well, there isn’t!” I snapped.

I sighed sadly.

“Don’t you get it? It’s over. We lose,” I muttered.

“I guess so,” Ash muttered.

Just then, a portal opened up and out came Uncle Mark.

“Uncle Mark?” I asked in surprise.

“What are you doing here?” Ash asked.

“I came to warn you.”

Chapter 48

The Warning

Max’s POV

I cast Uncle Mark a confused look.

“What do you mean? Warn us about what?” I asked.

“Something big is coming,” Uncle Mark said.

“What is it?” Jake asked.

“I can’t explain here. Max, use fire to burn down the door,” Uncle Mark said.

“Yeah, that’s a problem. I can’t,” I said.

“Why not?”

“Dominic took our powers,” I grumbled.

“I see. Well, I’ll open up a portal to get us out,” Uncle Mark said.

He opened up a portal and requested to go to a base of some sort. We went through the portal and were at a base.

“Where are we, Uncle Mark?” I asked.

“My base. Now, we have some things to discuss,” Uncle Mark said.

“Alright. Hey, is there a cafeteria? I'm hungry,” I said.

“Yes, there is. Follow me.”

We followed Uncle Mark to the cafeteria. We sat down and ate. I wiped my mouth.

“So, Uncle Mark. You said we need to talk?” I asked.

Uncle Mark nodded.

“Yes. We must talk about what is coming,” Uncle Mark said.

“Yeah, what’s that about? What’s coming? Uncle Mark, what’s going on?” I asked.

“Calm down, Max. Do you remember in the mirror, I was in chains and talking to someone?” Uncle Mark asked. I nodded.

“Yeah,” I said.

“Who were you talking to?” Jake asked.

“I was talking to a giant named Hectals,” Uncle Mark said.

“Why? Like, why were you in chains?” I asked.

“It’s a long story, but I woke up in his cave in chains. Hectals asked me if I knew anything about power or energy sources,” Uncle Mark said.

“And you said no,” I remembered.

Uncle Mark nodded.

“Exactly.”

“The reason you said no...It was to protect us, wasn’t it?” I asked.

“That’s right.”

“So, Uncle Mark. What’s coming? What are we facing?” I asked.

“Giants,” Uncle Mark said.

Half of me hoped he was joking. But the other half knew that he was dead serious and our lives were about to get a lot more complicated.

“What do we do? How are we going to win this time? Especially without our powers?” I asked.

“If I’m being honest, I’m not sure. Maybe we can’t win this time.”

I looked at Uncle Mark like he was crazy.

“We must try. We can’t just say we can’t win.”

“What can we do? You guys are powerless,” Uncle Mark said.

“So?” I asked.

“So, I don’t want you guys getting hurt.”

“We’ll be fine without our powers!” I said.

“I realize that. I’m just trying to protect you guys,” Uncle Mark said.

“Maybe we don’t want or need to be protected!” I snapped.

“Why not?” Uncle Mark demanded.

“Think about it. We’re 17 years old. We’re not little kids anymore. I think we’re able to take care of ourselves,” I said.

An alarm blared.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“Hectals is attacking,” Uncle Mark said.

“Wait. Let us help you” I insisted.

Uncle Mark sighed.

“You know what? Fine. But if you get hurt, don’t say I didn’t warn you,” Uncle Mark

said.

“Alright. Trust us. We’ll be fine,” I said.

Chapter 49

The fight with a giant

Max’s POV

Remember when I told Uncle Mark we’d be fine? Yeah, I was wrong. Very wrong. We teleported ourselves to where Hectals was attacking.

“Hey!” I shouted.

That got his attention.

“Eat flames!”

I thrusted my arms out. Nothing happened. Then I remembered: Dominic had taken our powers. I was about to ask my belt for something, but I remembered it was destroyed.

“Uhh, never mind,” I said.

Hectals laughed.

“What, are you supposed to be heroes?” Hectals asked.

“I mean, yeah, but our powers are gone,” I said.

“Well, that sucks for you guys,” Hectals said.

“Yeah, no kidding,” I muttered.

“Anyway, time to destroy you.”

Hectals thrusted his hands out.

“Get down!” I yelled.

The team got down on their backs. Luckily, they didn’t get hit. I wasn’t so lucky. When Hectals thrusted his hands out, it summoned five bombs. I got hit by all five. I fell to my knees from exhaustion and pain.

“Max!” Uncle Mark yelled.

The team rushed over to help me. In the distance, Hectals summoned fire and it was headed straight for us. I tried to tell the team to look out, but my voice didn’t work. We got hit by the fire. I glanced at the team. They were injured and all bloody. I managed to stand, though when I did, I almost passed out.

“Max...What are you doing…?” Uncle Mark croaked.

“I’m going to fight,” I said.

“Why…? It’s too risky. You could die…” Jake said weakly.

“I don’t care if I die! I’m going to fight to protect you,” I said.

“But-.”

“You can’t change my mind,” I snapped.

I charged at Hectals. Yeah, that was a dumb idea. Hectals fired missiles at me. I got hit, fell back and slammed onto the ground. I didn’t care. I got up and charged again. Hectals pulled out a sword and stabbed me in the gut. I fell to my knees and collapsed in the dirt. Just then, I saw Jake run at Hectals. The next thing I knew, Jake was on the ground next to me, bleeding.

“Jake...What? Why?” I managed.

Jake put a finger to my lips.

“We’re not leaving each other again,” Jake said.

I nodded.

“As long as we’re together,” I agreed.

Those were our last words before Jake and I closed our eyes and drifted away.

Ash’s POV

Max and Jake closed their eyes. Suddenly, their bodies cast a golden glow. When the golden glow faded, their bodies weren’t there. All that was there was a scroll.

“There’s a scroll,” I said.

“Read it,” Jason said.

“Alright.”

I unrolled the scroll and read it aloud:

“The sacrifice of the prophecy has been fit

See you in the Darkness Pit

That is, if your friends can survive the Abyss.”

I stuttered the last line, as I was nervous. When I was finished, I glanced at the team with a nervous look in my eyes.

“So, what do we do?” Paul asked.

I shook my head.

“We don’t do anything,” I said.

The team gave each other confused looks.

“What do you mean?” Chloe asked.

“I mean, there is no ‘we’ right now.”

The team looked at me, even more confused.

“Okay, now I’m even more confused,” Paul said.

“I’m saying we as a group shouldn’t and can’t do anything.” “Why not?” Martha asked.

“Because we’re too large of a group,” I said.

“So then, what now?” Jason asked.

“I’m going to the Darkness Pit,” I said.

“To get Max and Jake back?” Paul asked. I nodded.

“Exactly.”

Chloe shook her head.

“No, you’re not,” Chloe said. I gave Chloe a confused look.

“What?” I asked.

“You heard me.”

“Why am I not going?”

“You are. Just not alone,” Chloe said.

“Wait what? What are you talking about?” I asked.

Chloe put a hand on my shoulder.

“I’m coming with you,” Chloe said. I shook my head.

“No, you’re not,” I said.

Chloe put her hands on her hips.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me.”

“And just why can’t I go with you?” Chloe asked in a stern tone.

“Because it’s too dangerous for you to come with me.” “That makes no sense!” Chloe protested.

“Of course it does. It makes total sense,” I said.

Chloe sighed with annoyance.

“You said it’s too dangerous for me to go with you, right?” Chloe asked.

I nodded.

“That’s right,” I said.

“If you think it’s too dangerous for me to go with you, don’t you think it’s dangerous to go alone?”

She had a point. I honestly agreed with her, but I couldn’t let her know.

“No, it’s not dangerous for me to go alone,” I said.

“Why is that?”

“Why is what?”

“Why isn’t it dangerous for you to go alone?”

“Because I’ll be fine.”

“Oh really? Are you sure about that?”

I nodded.

“Yeah, I’m sure,” I said.

“What if monsters attack? What will you do?” Chloe asked.

“Simple. I’ll defend myself.”

“What if they take your weapons and outnumber you?” “I’ll do my best to fight,” I said.

“What if you get hurt?” Chloe asked.

“I’ll use a first-aid kit,” I said.

“What if you don’t have a first-aid kit?”

“I…”

My voice trailed off. I had no idea.

“I don’t know,” I admitted.

Chloe smirked at me.

“That’s what I thought,” Chloe said.

I sighed.

“Do you really want to go with me?” I asked.

“Yep, I do,” Chloe said.

“There’s no way I can talk you out of this, is there?” I asked with hope.

Chloe shook her head.

“Nope.”

I was left with no choice. I shrugged.

“Alright then. Let’s go get them,” I said.

“Good luck, you two,” Jason said.

“Thanks,” I said,

Chloe and I said our goodbyes then went to Harold.

“Hey, Harold,” Chloe said.

Harold turned around to face us.

“Well, if it isn’t Ash and Chloe. Do you need something?” Harold asked.

“We need your help,” I said.

“Oh? With what?” Harold asked.

“We need a ride to the Darkness Pit,” Chloe said.

Harold looked at us like we were crazy, but our expressions were dead serious.

“Are you guys serious?”

We nodded.

“Yes, we are. So, can you help us get to the Darkness Pit?” I asked.

Harold thought about it, then shrugged.

“Alright, I’ll help. Get on the teleport pads.”

We got on the teleport pads and teleported. When the light faded, we were standing outside of a cave. There was a sign outside of the cave. The sign read, “Welcome to the Darkness Pit.”

I glanced at Chloe, who glanced at me.

“Ready to head in?” Chloe asked.

I shrugged.

“Not really,” I admitted.

Chloe kissed me on the cheek.

“Hey. Whatever happens, I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

I nodded.

“I know. It’s just…”

My voice trailed off.

“What is it?” Chloe asked.

“N-nothing.”

I admit I was scared to tell her I was scared we wouldn’t save Max and Jake.

“You can tell me. I won’t judge,” Chloe said.

“I’m scared that we won’t be able to save Max and Jake,” I admitted.

Chloe put a hand on my shoulder.

“I feel that way, too,” Chloe said.

That surprised me.

“Are you being serious?” I asked.

I expected her to say no. To my surprise, she nodded.

“Yeah,” Chloe said.

Her tone was shaky and quiet. I took her hand.

“We’ll find them. We have to. Like you said, whatever happens, it’ll be fine,” I said.

Chloe nodded, though she looked unsure.

“I-I guess…”

“Look, Chloe. I get that you’re scared. Believe me when I say that I’m terrified. We may be scared and doubting ourselves on the outside, but on the inside, we’re brave and strong enough to know that we can do this. We will do this,” I said.

“Do you really think so?” Chloe asked.

I smiled and nodded.

“I know so.”

Chloe jumped up and hugged me.

“Thanks, Ash. I feel a lot better,” Chloe said.

“That’s good to hear. Are you ready to go into the cave and see what’s ahead?” I asked.

Chloe nodded and took my hand.

“Yeah, I’m ready,” Chloe said.

We walked into the cave. After we got in, the entrance collapsed.

“What happened?” Chloe asked.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Hello there, children,” a voice said.

The voice was a raspy female. We whipped around in the direction of the voice to see a woman with red eyes, wearing an apron, and...no pants, as where her legs should have been...there was a long black tail. I looked up to her head...which was the head of a snake.

“Who-? What are you?” Chloe demanded.

“I’m a sssnake. And my name is IronShadow,” IronShadow said.

“Nice to meet you, IronShadow. I’m Ash, and this is Chloe,” I said.

“It’sss nice to meet you children,” IronShadow said.

Chloe glared at IronShadow.

“What do you want?” Chloe demanded.

IronShadow casted Chloe a confused glance.

“What are you talking about?” IronShadow asked.

Chloe crossed her arms.

“I mean something about you...I don’t know. It just doesn’t feel right,” Chloe said.

“What are you sssaying?” IronShadow asked.

“I’m saying I don’t trust you.”

“What? Why don’t you trussst me?”

“Yeah, Chloe. Why don’t you trust her?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I guess I’m having trust issues,” Chloe admitted.

“How come?” I asked.

` “Remember Dominic?” Chloe asked.

I nodded.

“Yeah. What about him? Why are you asking?” I asked.

“Remember how we trusted him and he ended up betraying us?” Chloe asked.

“Yeah. So?”

“So, because of that, I’ve had a hard time trusting people.” “Oh. I see,” I said.

IronShadow’s tail swept back and forth.

“Don’t worry, Chloe. You can trussst me.”

Chloe crossed her arms.

“Yeah, sorry. I don’t trust you,” Chloe said.

IronShadow hung her head down in sadness.

“Sssuch a shame that you don’t trussst me.”

“Why should or would I ever trust you? For all I know, you could convince us so much that we do trust you, and the next thing we know, you betray us. So, again. Why should or would I ever trust you?” Chloe asked.

“You should trussst me. I can help sssave Max and Jake,” IronShadow said.

I stared at her.

“How do you know that?” I asked.

“Sssilly boy. I sssee and know all.”

I looked at IronShadow with disgust.

“You know, I’m starting to think Chloe is right about the fact we shouldn’t trust you,” I said.

“Why do you think that?” IronShadow asked.

“We’ve had bad experiences with people who see and know all,” Chloe said.

“Ssstill, I can help.”

I glanced at Chloe. Her face said it all: play along. I looked back at IronShadow.

“Okay, we trust you. But only because we want to save Max and Jake,” I said.

“Excellent. The Darknesss Pit liesss beyond thisss door,” IronShadow said.

She opened the door and vanished into the darkness. I glanced at Chloe. She could tell I was nervous. She put a hand on my shoulder.

“It’ll be okay. She said the Darkness Pit lies beyond this door, right?” Chloe asked.

I nodded.

“Yeah, so?”

“So, if the Darkness Pit really is beyond the door, it should be quick for us to get there.”

“Right. It’s just beyond the door. What’s the worst that could happen?” I asked.

Chloe and I took hands and went into the darkness.

Chapter 50

Life in the Abyss

Max’s POV

When Jake and I died, we dissolved into the Abyss. I expected our bodies to gently float down. Yeah, no. We fell from the sky and slammed onto the cold, hard ground. We groaned in pain. I sat up and looked around. Based on all the rocks around us, I assumed we were in a cave of some sort.

“Jake, are you okay?” I asked. Jake sat up.

“Yeah, I’m good. How about you?” Jake asked.

“I’m okay,” I said.

“Cool. What should we do now?” Jake asked.

“Hmm…”

I scanned our surroundings. Nothing but rocks and an exit from the cave.

“There’s an exit. Let’s go,” I said.

We stood up, brushed ourselves off and walked in the direction of the exit. The exit looked like it was only a few feet away. Yeah, not really. That must have been an illusion or something because the exit was much farther than a few feet away.

If I thought the wind from Mount Dorson was cold, then I was in no way prepared for the cave’s breezes. I had to summon fire to keep myself from freezing. And if I thought the breezes were bad, then I was in for a surprise. The puddles were way worse. Whenever I stepped in a puddle, a shock went through my body, and it wasn’t a very good shock. The shock was freezing, and it hurt too. The worst part about the cold? Everytime a breeze happened, my flame extinguished, leaving me cold and miserable. However, despite the fact that I was freezing, we had to keep moving. After about 20 minutes of walking and freezing, we made it out of the cave.

“Finally. We made it,” I panted, out of energy.

“Yeah, we did,” Jake said.

“So, what are we doing now?” I asked. Jake shrugged and thought about it.

“Want to set up a camp?” he asked after some silence. I nodded.

“Yeah, sure,” I said.

We got to work on setting up our camp. A few minutes later, Jake and I were huddling around the fire, eating. I looked at Jake.

“Hey, Jake?”

Jake looked at me.

“Yeah, Max?”

“Do you think they’re looking for us right now?” I asked.

“I’m sure they are,” Jake said.

“Do you think they’ll find us?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“Well, either they find us or we find them,” Jake said.

“How will we find them?” I asked.

“Remember what you said? You said we’ll see them in the Darkness Pit,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah, I remember. So?” I asked.

“So, to find them, we have to go to the Darkness Pit.”

“Okay. How will we get to the Darkness Pit?”

“Hmm…”

Jake looked around. He fixed his eyes on a black door. He looked at me and pointed to the door.

“See that door?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. What abut it?” I asked.

“I bet it leads to the Darkness Pit,” Jake said.

“Are you sure?” I asked. Jake shook his head.

“No, I’m actually not,” he admitted.

“Then what makes you think that door leads to the Darkness Pit?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“To be honest, I don’t know. However, when I looked at the door, I had this…weird feeling,” Jake said.

“What feeling?”

“I-no, never mind.”

“What were you about to say?” I pressed.

“Just drop it, Max. It doesn’t matter,” Jake said.

“Why won’t you just tell me?” I demanded.

“Because I can’t get myself to say it!” Jake blurted. I stared at him.

“What did you say?” I asked.

“I can’t get myself to say it,” Jake said. His tone was quiet and shaky. He took long, shaky deep breaths. Tears dripped down his face. I wrapped an arm around him.

“Why can’t you get yourself to say it?” I asked in a calm and gentle tone.

“I’m…scared.”

“What are you scared of?”

“I’m scared you’ll think I’m going to sound crazy,” Jake admitted. I hugged him.

“Jake, listen to me.”

Jake turned to face me.

“What?” Jake mumbled.

“I don’t care how crazy it sounds. That won’t change the fact that you are and always will be the love of my life. You can tell me, and you don’t have to be afraid because I won’t judge you,” I said.

Jake took a deep breath, preparing himself to tell me.

“When I looked at the door, I sensed spirits,” Jake blurted, going faster by the word. I stared at him, looking concerned.

“Wait what? You sensed…spirits…?” I asked.

“You know what? Never mind. Just forget it. I knew it sounded crazy,” Jake grumbled. I put a hand on Jake’s shoulder.

“It doesn’t sound crazy. In fact, I believe you. I’m just confused on how you can sense spirits.”

“I’m the son of the ice and spirit god, remember?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I remember. It’s crazy how much has happened this year,” I said. Jake nodded in agreement.

“Yep, it’s crazy.”

We stared at the fire in silence for a few minutes.

“We should get some sleep,” I said. Jake looked at me with a cautious look in his eyes.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

I gave Jake a confused look.

“Why not?” I asked.

“I remember reading about if you slept in the Abyss for too long, your mind and body literally get destroyed,” Jake said.

“O-oh…”

“Yeah, it’s bad.”

“So, what will we do?”

Jake thought about it.

“We could cover for each other.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Like one of us sleeps while the other is on lookout.”

“What will they be on lookout for?”’

“Monsters, along with how the other is looking.”

“Oh, okay,” I said. I yawned from exhaustion.

“You seem tired. Do you want to sleep first?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I’ll go for it.”

“Sounds good.”

I positioned myself so I was comfortable, then laid my head on the rocky ground. The instant my head hit the ground, I started dreaming.

In the dream, I was in a dark room. There was a table and chairs neatly arranged, but nobody was sitting there. On the left side of the room, there were racks of weapons, from knives and swords to bows and staff, etc. On the right side of the room, I saw a boy and a girl with their arms in chains. I wondered who they were. I willed the dream to zoom in on them. When I saw who they were, my heart sank in sadness. It was Ash and Chloe, and they looked awful.

Chloe had a cut along her cheeks, arms and legs. Other than that, she was fine. She was conscious, so that was good. Ash wasn’t so lucky. He was unconscious, had a black eye, a bloody nose, a ripped shirt, cuts all over his body, oh I can go on.

Chloe was glaring at something. I willed the dream to turn so I could see what she was looking at. When I saw what Chloe was looking at, my immediate thought was “Eww!”. Chloe was looking at a snake lady. The snake lady slithered over and rubbed her tail through Chloe’s face. Chloe continued to glare.

“Why are you doing this to us?” Chloe demanded.

“Becaussse I’m evil, duh!” the snake said.

“We trusted you!” Chloe protested.

“Indeed, you did. That wasss your sssilly missstake.”

The snake’s tail went from slimy and slithering to the tip of what looked like a spear. Chloe’s eyes widened with fear. At first, I didn’t understand why, but when I looked closer, I saw why: at the tip of the snake’s tail, there was a bottle filled with green liquid: poison.

“IronShadow, you don’t have to do this!” Chloe pleaded.

“And why isss that?” IronShadow hissed.

“Because you can change.”

IronShadow shook her head.

“It’sss too late for me to change.”

And with that, IronShadow stabbed Chloe with the poison. Chloe screamed in pain for a bit, then went silent. Her head lowered to her chest.

IronShadow faced me in the dream, slithered over to me and shook me. However, it seemed so…real. The dream faded, but the shaking continued. My eyes shot open to see Jake. I took long, shaky breaths, trying to process the dream. My heart was pounding. I guess I looked scared or something, because Jake gave me a concerned look.

“Are you okay?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I just had an…interesting dream, that’s all,” I said.

“What was it about?” Jake asked.

I explained my dream: how Ash and Chloe were in chains, all beat up, the snake lady, etc. When I was finished, Jake nodded while thinking.

“Come on. Let’s go,” Jake said, looking determined. I gave him a confused look.

“Go…where?” I asked, clearly confused.

“We have to go to the Darkness Pit and see if they’re there,” Jake said. I shrugged.

“Okay. Let’s do it,” I said, not having any better ideas. Jake started to walk, but I caught his arm.

“Hang on.”

“What?” Jake asked, looking confused.

“Don’t you need sleep?” I asked. Jake shook his head.

“Nah, I’ll be fine,” Jake said.

We continued on. We walked over to the door Jake heard the spirits from.

“This the door?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Yep, this is it,” Jake said. He moved his hand towards the handle. Jake tightly gripped the handle, then let go and jerked his hand back.

“What are you doing? Aren’t you going to open it?” I asked, looking confused. Jake shook his head, clearly scared.

“No,” Jake said.

“Why not?” I asked, giving him a concerned look.

“I’m…scared,” Jake admitted.

“Why are you scared?” I asked.

“I’m scared because what if I’m wrong? What if this door leads to a trap and not the Darkness Pit? Then what?” Jake asked. I didn’t have an answer, so I shrugged.

“I’m not too sure, but maybe the best we can do is try. Let’s just open the door and see what happens. If we’re wrong and it turns out to be a trap, so what? We’ll find a way to get out of the trap,” I said. Jake shook his head.

“No way. It’s too risky,” Jake said.

“Jake, trust me,” I said. Jake looked at me, weirded out.

“What?”

“Do you trust me?” I asked. Jake glanced at me with an uncertain look in his eyes.

“I guess?” Jake said. It sounded more like a question than an answer. I raised an eyebrow.

“Do you?” I asked. Jake hesitated, but nodded. He took a deep breath.

“Yes. I trust you.”

“Great. Then let’s go.”

I opened the door and we stepped inside.

Chapter 51

The trick

Chloe’s POV

Ash and I followed IronShadow through the door and into the dark room. Yeah, that was a bad idea. We looked around. There was nothing but pitch black.

“Ash? How are you doing?” I asked.

“I’m good. You?” Ash asked.

“I’m also good. Where are you?”

“I don’t know,” Ash said. His voice sounded far away.

I walked around the darkness in silence. Suddenly, a loud CLANG! could be heard, followed by a thud.

“Ow!” Ash groaned. I ran around in the darkness, trying to find Ash. I bumped into something. No. Not something. Someone.

“Ow! Hey, watch where you’re going!” Ash snapped. Or at least I thought it was him.

“Ash? Is that you?” I asked.

“Yeah. Chloe?” Ash asked.

“Yep, it’s me,” I said.

“Cool. Hey, IronShadow! Can you turn on some lights?” Ash asked. No answer.

“Hello? IronShadow?” Ash called. Again, no answer.

“Ugh, where is she?” I demanded.

“I’m right here,” IronShadow said.

Ash and I whipped around in the direction of her voice. I felt something drop over me, like a curtain or something, but it was tight. I struggled against it and felt pain, as if she had whacked me.

“Ssstop ssstruggling! You’ll only make it worssse.”

“Make what worse?” I demanded. IronShadow chuckled.

“Oh, you’ll find out sssoon enough,” IronShadow said. I decided to keep quiet.

She continued to walk with us. A few minutes later, light became visible and I could clearly see I was in a sack of some sort. Ash and I hit the floor in our sacks. I’m guessing because of that, she dropped us.

“Okay. You guysss can open your sssacksss and come on out,” IronShadow said. Ash and I stepped out of our sacks to see we were in a dungeon of some sort.

“Where are we?” Ash asked.

“You’re in my dungeon prissson,” IronShadow said as she chuckled. I clenched my fists.

“This has got to be a joke,” I growled.

“No, it’sss not. Now, get in thossse chainsss ssso I can trap you here.”

“Are you crazy? We’re not going to let you trap us. We’re certainly not getting into those chains,” I snapped.

“Oh, I think you will be getting into thossse chainsss,” IronShadow said.

“What makes you think that?” I crossed my arms. IronShadow snapped her fingers and we were in chains.

“Becaussse you’re already in them. Guardsss!” IronShadow snapped. Two spirits flew into the room.

“Alright, you two. I’ll be asssking you sssome quessstionsss,” IronShadow said as she paced back and forth.

“Yeah, no. We’re not going to answer anything,” I said while chuckling. Ash nodded in agreement.

“Yeah. You can’t make us talk,” Ash said.

“Oh really? What if I do thisss?’

IronShadow’s tail turned into a blade. She whipped around and cut Ash’s cheek. Ash yelled in pain.

“Ash!”

“I’m okay. It’s going to take a lot more than a cut on the cheek to make me talk,” Ash said.

“Oh? In that cassse, let’sss sssee how you do posssesssed. Ssspirit, go into him,” IronShadow commanded.

The spirit flew into Ash. Ash screamed in pain, and his physical look began to change. He got a black eye, cuts all over him, a bloody nose, oh I can go on.

“Okay, stop!” I yelled.

“Ssso, you’ll anssswer my quessstionsss then, Chloe?”

“Yes, just leave him alone!” I pleaded.

“Fine. Ssspirit, come back.”

The spirit flew out of Ash’s body. Ash passed out.

“Here isss your quessstion. Are you aware Max and Jake are here and trying to sssave you?”

I shook my head.

“No,” I said.

“Wrong anssswer!” IronShadow hissed angrily. Her tail went from a blade to an injector with green liquid: poison. Before I could protest, she injected me and I passed out.

Chapter 52

Tricked

Max’s POV

Okay, so I learned something: Never trust evil spirits. We walked into a room filled with spirits who were partying. When they saw us, they stopped and went dead silent.

“Uh…hi,” I started. The spirits said nothing.

“We need help going to the Darkness Pit so we can go see Ash ad Chloe, our friends,” I continued.

“Can any of you help us?” Jake asked. Just then, a spirit burst into the room and flew over to us.

“I can get you there,” the spirit said. Jake and I glanced at the spirit. We didn’t have a better plan, so we shrugged.

“Okay, then. Lead the way,” I said.

“Excellent. Follow me,” the spirit said. We followed the spirit into a dark room. We felt something go over our bodies. A few minutes later, we got whatever it was thrown off. A split second later, we were in chains.

“Ssso nice of you to join usss,” IronShadow said.

“You-you’re from my dream,” I said.

“Yesss, I am. Now, guardsss! Come with me. We mussst have dissscusssionsss,” she said. IronShadow and the spirits walked off. After they were gone, we all looked at each other.

“Guys, if this is the end, I just want to say, I love you,” I said.

Chapter 53

Goodbye

Jason’s POV

It’s been a week since Max and Jake died, which means it’s been a week since Ash and Chloe went to go bring them back. It’s been crazy. Max got stabbed and Jake just lost it, so he possessed Hectals and stabbed him, killing himself. They haven’t returned yet, and things are chill, so we’re going to sign off.

Max’s POV

After we said our goodbyes, a blue light appeared and a portal opened. A person came out. He looked like me, but more buff.

“Do you need help?” he asked. We nodded. He snapped his fingers and the chains vanished. We gave him thankful looks.

“You can thank me later. Come on. Let’s go,” he said.

“Where?” I asked. He smiled.

“Somewhere in the perfect life. To meet your children.”

The team went through the portal. I thought about what he said, smiled and went through the portal.

Chapter 54

Going through the Portal

Max’s POV

After we went through the portal, we weren’t in the dungeon anymore. We were standing outside of our mansion in L.A.

“Wait, who even are you?” I asked.

“I’m you from another dimension,” he said.

“Oh cool. So, uh. What should we call you?” Jake asked. He had to think about it.

“How about Max 2?”

“Sounds good. So, uh, Max 2? I have a question,” I said.

“Yeah, what’s up?” Max 2 asked.

“You said we had…children, right?” I asked. Max 2 nodded.

“That’s right. Why?” he asked.

“Who did I have kids with?” I asked.

“You had kids with Wendy,” Max 2 said.

“Why didn’t Jake and I have kids?” I asked.

“You guys broke up after a fight,” Max 2 said.

“Why did we have a fight?” Jake asked.

“You guys had a fight because you caught Jake kissing Emma.”

Jake and I stared at each other in shock and silence. Ash broke the silence.

“Wait what? Are you being serious?” Ash asked. Max 2 nodded and Ash got kind of annoyed. He stepped over to Jake. His face showed no emotion, but it was clear he was angry.

“What is wrong with you?” Ash demanded as he shoved Jake with anger. Jake looked at Ash with  a confused look on his face.

“I didn’t do anything,” Jake said. His tone made it clear he was confused. Ash laughed, and it sounded like an annoyed laugh.

“Not yet, you haven’t,” Ash said.

“What are you talking about?” Jake asked, clearly starting to get annoyed.

“Like you don’t know,” Ash snapped.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Jake protested. Ash sighed, annoyed.

“I’m talking about you kissing Emma!” Ash snapped.

“That wasn’t me!” Jake protested.

“That wasn’t you now, no,” Ash said. Jake groaned and sighed with annoyance.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked. His tone made it clear he was annoyed.

“I mean in the future, you’re going to kiss Emma,” Ash said.

“I’m not going to kiss her! Besides, that was me in another dimension,” Jake said.

“That doesn’t mean that you’re not going to kiss her in this dimension,” Ash pointed out.

“Dude, I literally just said that I’m not going to kiss her. Did you not pay attention?” Jake asked.

“That’s not important right now,” Ash decided.

“Then what is important right now?” Jake demanded.

“What’s important is you say you won’t kiss Emma now, but that doesn’t mean you won’t kiss her later.”

“Ash, listen to me,” Jake said. Ash shrugged and crossed his arms.

“Okay, I’m listening. What do you want?” Ash asked.

“I want you to know that I promise I won’t kiss Emma. Besides, we’re over each other,” Jake said. After he said that, his phone dinged multiple times, meaning he was being texted.

“Who’s texting you?” I asked. Either Jake was ignoring me or he didn’t hear me because he didn’t respond.

“Jake!” I said as I shook him.

“Huh?” Jake asked.

“Who’s texting you?” I repeated.

“Oh, um. N-nobody,” Jake said. Yeah, he was nervous. I could tell by the tone of his voice and the way he was acting. He was sweating and rapidly tapping his foot. I sighed.

“Okay, Jake. You can stop lying and being nervous,” I said.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked, giving me  a confused look.

“You’re sweating,” I pointed out.

“Uh, yeah. Because it’s hot. Duh,” Jake said, laughing nervously. I shook my head.

“No, it’s not. It’s cold. Besides, it’s night and the sun is gone,” I said.

“Okay. So?” Jake asked.

“So, who’s texting you?” I demanded.

“Why do you think someone is texting me?” Jake asked, looking like he was confused when he wasn’t.

“Your phone dinged multiple times,” I said.

“Y-yeah, it did,” Jake stammered.

“Why?” I asked.

“Why what?”

“Why did your phone ding multiple times?” I asked.

“I got notifications,” Jake said.

“You know you get notifications when your phone vibrates,” I said, crossing my arms.

“I changed it,” Jake said quickly. I raised an eyebrow, not believing him.

“Yeah, no you didn’t.”

“How did you know?” Jake asked.

“Dude, I’m not stupid.”

“I never said you were.”

“Who’s texting you?” I asked.

“N-nobody! Look, it doesn’t matter, okay?”

“Why won’t you just tell us who’s testing you?” Ash demanded.

“Because she told me not to!” Jake blurted. We stared at him in shock and silence. Chloe broke the silence.

“Wait, what did you say?” Chloe asked.

“I can’t say because she doesn’t want me to,” Jake said.

“She?” Ash asked. Jake nodded. Tears dripped down his face.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“I can’t say,” Jake said.

“Why not?” I demanded.

“Because then she’ll find out and kill my family!” Jake yelled.

“Wait, but…we’re in the future,” Chloe said.

“So?” Jake asked.

“So, if we’re in the future, how would she know?” Ash asked.

“She put a tracker with a built-in microphone on my neck,” Jake said.

“Oh. Can we get it off?” Chloe asked. Jake nodded and looked at me.

“I need you to kiss me,” Jake said. I looked at him, weirded out.

“Uhh, why?” I asked.

“If you and I kiss, the tracker will come off,” Jake said. I shook my head.

“No. I can’t kiss you. I won’t,” I said. Jake looked at me, confused.

“Why not?” Jake asked.

“If I kiss you, won’t this person find out? And I know you’re not supposed to say, but who is it?” I asked.

“It’s Emma. And yes, if you kiss me, she’ll find out. But I don’t care if she knows or not,” Jake said.

“Why don’t you care?” I asked.

“Because she’s not the one I love. You are,” Jake said, smiling.

“I love you, Jake,” I said.

“I love you too, Max,” Jake said.  We leaned in and kissed.

Chapter 55

The Wedding

Max’s POV

After Jake and I kissed, we looked at Max 2.

“So, I think it’s time for us to get back home,” Jake said. Max 2 nodded.

He opened up the portal. Ash and Chloe walked in. Jake looked at me.

“Hey. Sorry about earlier,” Jake said. I shook my head.

“It’s fine. If you and Emma want to text or whatever, I won’t get in your way,” I said.

“Cool. You ready to go home?” Jake asked, offering his hand. I nodded.

“Let’s go,” I said. I took his hand and we went through the portal to see the rest of the team chilling. Jake and I walked over.

“Max, sit on the grass,” Jake said. I sat on the grass.

“Now that I have everyone’s attention, I have something very important to do,” Jake said.

“What is it?” Jason asked.

Jake didn’t say anything. He smiled and got on one knee. Jake reached into his back pocket and pulled out a ring,  I covered my hand over my mouth.

“Max Wilson, will you marry me?” Jake asked. Words couldn’t form. I nodded.

“Yes,” I said. Jake slipped the ring onto my finger and we kissed.

“This calls for a celebration. Brownies?” Paul asked.

The team nodded and everyone but Jake and I went inside.

“Are you okay?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I’m good. Great actually,” I said. Jake smiled.

“That’s good to hear.”

“I have a question,” I said.

“Yeah?”

“Remember Max 2 saying I had kids with Wendy in the future?” I asked.

“Yeah. Why?” Jake asked.

“I think the future was wrong,” I said.

“Why do you say that?” Jake asked.

“Well, no that we’re married, that got me thinking about being dads,” I said.

“Dads?”

I nodded.

“Yeah, you know. You and me. What I’m trying to say is…”

“You want to have children together?” Jake guessed. I nodded.

“Yeah, I do. I wanted to ask you a while ago, but I didn’t know how you’d react,” I said. Jake smiled.

“Nothing would make me happier. Come on. Let’s go inside,” Jake said, Jake walked inside.

I took one last glance outside. I thought about the happy family we would be. A grin crept up my face and I walked inside.

Chapter 56

The Dream

Max’s POV:

I don’t mean to sound like a wimp or a baby, but when I was dreaming, I freaked out, and what I saw was absolutely terrifying. The dream took place in a space station or spaceship. A door opened. I thought it was Dominic, and I cursed under my breath. Apparently, it was not Dominic. It was a normal-looking man who came out from the opened door. He was wearing a spacesuit, and had light brown hair and bright green eyes. He was followed by a young boy, who I guessed was his son. The man walked over to the computer, checked the screen, scowling as he muttered to himself. The young boy cheerfully ran over to the man.

“Is it time yet, dad?” the boy asked. His tone was eager. His dad shook his head.

“No. Not yet, Roger,” his dad said. Roger groaned, making it clear he was impatient.

“How much longer?” he asked in an impatient tone. His dad put a hand on Roger’s shoulder.

“Soon. Perhaps very soon, but I do not know when the time is coming,” his dad said. Roger bounced up and down in excitement. Just then, the lights flickered on and off. The computer shut off on its own. The spaceship came crashing out of the sky, and down to Earth. The lights shut off. After the ship crashed, Roger got out, and luckily was fine, just knocked out. His dad wasn’t so lucky. He got knocked out, then dragged out by a person in a hood. When Roger woke up, his dad was gone, and there was a note.

“Dear, Roger. I have your father, Chase. If you ever want to see him again, well, good luck finding him. Signed, Unknown,” Roger read aloud. His voice faded when he finished. Roger lowered the note and sighed, showing sadness in his tone.

“First mom dies, and now this,” Roger muttered. My heart sank at the fact that Roger had lost his mom and might lose his dad. It didn’t seem fair he had this happen to him. The dream changed, and I was looking at Roger’s father, Chase. He was chained to  a stone floor, surrounded by lava. Suddenly, a shadow appeared and shook me.

“Max,” the shadow said. The dream faded, but the shaking continued. I opened my eyes to see Jake was shaking me. When Jake saw that I was awake, he stopped shaking me.

“Oh, good. You’re awake,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yep, I am.”

“That’s good. We need to hold a team meeting.”

I looked at Jake, confused.

“Why?”

“We just do. There’s…something from last night that’s been bugging me,” Jake said.

“Was it a dream?” I asked. Jake hesitated, but nodded.

“What was it about?”

“I can’t explain. All I know is something is coming, and it’s bigger than the other quests combined. To sum it up, this may be one of, if not the biggest quest we have to face,” Jake said. His tone made it clear he was nervous.

“Jake, just tell me what happened,” I pressed. Jake shook his head.

“I’ll tell you at the meeting.”

“But-.”

“Max, please! Just trust me, okay?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Okay. I trust you,” I said. Jake smiled.

“I knew you’d understand. Come on. Let’s go set up a meeting.”

“Let’s do it.”

Jake and I went to gather the team to hold the meeting.

Chapter 57

The Meeting

Max’s POV

We had the team gather in the living room.

“So, what’s this meeting about?” Ash asked. I looked at Jake and nodded.

“I um…” Jake started. He hesitated, then looked at me. I nodded, encouraging him to continue.

“I had a dream. It wasn’t a good one,” Jake said. Ash crossed his arms.

“What was it about?” Ash asked. Jake shook his head.

“I can’t explain, but I know something big is coming, and it may be our biggest quest yet,” Jake said. Nobody spoke for some time. After a minute of silence, Jason spoke.

“What makes this our biggest quest?” Jason asked. Jake hesitated to speak. He took a deep breath to calm down.

“I’m not 100% sure, but I know it involves us traveling.”

“Traveling where?” Martha asked. Jake shook his head and shrugged.

“I’m not sure honestly, but I know we’ll need to split up,” Jake said.

“Why would we need to split up?” Paul asked. Jake slammed his fist on the table.

“I don’t know!” Jake yelled in frustration. I put a hand on Jake’s shoulder.

“Babe, relax. It’ll be okay,” I said calmly. Jake looked at me like I was insane.

“How will it be okay, huh? Honestly, Max. How will or can it be okay? Especially considering that we have no information about any of what we’re facing?” Jake snapped.

“We’ll figure this out and find a way to stop whatever’s coming,” I said.

“Okay. And what if we can’t or don’t figure it out? What then?” Jake demanded.

“I’m not sure, but I know we’ll find a way.”

Jake paced back and forth.

“And just how will we figure this out? What are we even figuring out?” Jake asked.

“I…honestly have no idea,” I admitted.

“Exactly! So, we might as well give up,” Jake said. His tone was quiet. His voice was shaky and soft. I, along with the team, stared at Jake in disbelief and shock. That wasn’t like him. Jake would never want to give up. Something was definitely wrong.

“Jake, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“N-nothing is wrong! Why are you asking?”

“You said we might as well give up,” I said, crossing my arms. Jake nodded.

“Yeah, I did say that. So?”

“That’s not like you. Not at all,” Jason said.

“What are you talking about? What do you mean?” Jake demanded.

“We’re saying we think something has happened to you,” Ash said. Jake scowled.

“Nothing has happened to me, okay? Just…just leave me alone!” Jake yelled

“Yeah, something happened to you. We’re going to figure out what,” I said.

“I said leave me alone!” Jake yelled. Before we could do or say anything, Jake stormed out of the living room and went into his room, slamming the door.

I looked at the team, concerned, then I looked at Jake’s bedroom door. I wanted to help, but I wasn’t sure how.

“Should we go to his room?” I asked. The team nodded.

We got up from the table and went upstairs outside of Jake’s bedroom door. I knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” Jake demanded.

“It’s us,” Jason said. Jake sighed and opened the door.

“What?” Jake muttered.

“We just want to tell you that we’re here for you. Whatever it is you have to say, we’re willing to listen. Even if it sounds crazy, we’ll believe you. No matter what,” I said calmly.

“Fine. Want to know what I’m so stressed about?” Jake asked. We nodded.

Jake took a deep breath, hesitating to talk.

“I had a bad dream. And when I say bad, I don’t mean like just us dying.”

We glanced at each other, then back at Jake, our faces full of concern.

“What do you mean, if it’s not that?” Jason asked.

“I mean it’s worse than that,” Jake said.

“How?” I asked.

“I saw…” Jake’s voice faded. We continued to look at him with concern.

“What did you see?” I asked.

“I saw…no, never mind. This is crazy,” Jake said, shaking his head. I put a hand on his shoulder, nodding, encouraging him to speak.

“Dude, it’s okay. Even if it sounds crazy, we’re here for you,” Paul said. Jake sighed, then looked at us.

“Promise you won’t make fun of me?” Jake asked. We nodded. Jake took a deep breath, getting ready to talk.

“I saw Max and I were fighting,” Jake said after some silence.

“And?” Wendy asked.

“And I guess I got so fed up that I…” Jake’s voice faded.

“What did you do?” Chloe asked. Jake shook his head, holding back tears.

“I killed him,” Jake managed. He was trying his best not to cry, but he couldn’t hold it in. He broke down crying.

I hugged him and rubbed his back, calming him down. I glanced at the team.

“Hey, uh. Could you let us be alone for a bit?” I asked. The team nodded and left the room, closing the door behind them. Jake looked at me.

“Why did you have them leave? Are you going to yell at me in private?” Jake asked. I shook my head.

“No, of course not,” I said. Jake coughed.

“Oh, right. You’re going to either kill me or break up with me,” Jake muttered.

“What? Jake, no.”

“Just admit it. You hate me.”

“Jake, I don’t hate you, and you know that,” I said.

“Yeah? Then why did you have the team leave?” Jake asked.

“I wanted to talk to you, that’s all.”

“About what? How bad of a boyfriend I am?” Jake muttered.

“Jake, no. That’s not it at all,” I said. Jake sighed.

“Okay. Then, if it isn’t that, what is it?” Jake asked.

“I wanted to say you’re a great man, and I will always love you,” I said.

“Even if my dream of killing you actually happens?”

I nodded.

“How can you stand loving me knowing we’ll fight and you’ll die?”

“Jake, listen to me. I will always love you, no matter what happens.”

“Even if I kill you?” Jake asked.

“Even if you kill me,” I agreed. Jake stood up from the bed and sighed, pacing around the room.

“What are we even going to do?” Jake asked. He asked that in a panicked voice, making it clear he was nervous, scared and panicked all in one. I shook my head.

“Right now, I don’t know, but I promise you we’ll figure this out,” I said. Jake looked at me.

“You mean together?” he asked. I nodded in agreement.

“Together,” I agreed.

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Jake smiled slightly.

“Can I ask you something?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Babe, of course. What is it?” I asked.

“Can you get the rest of the team here? There’s something I have to tell them, including you,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah, I’ll go get them,” I said. I walked into the living room, where they normally were. They weren’t there. I walked over to their rooms and knocked on each door. No answer. I opened the doors. They weren’t in their rooms. I walked outside. They weren’t there. I went back inside to tell Jake.

“Jake, where’s the team? They’re not here,” I called.

I heard nothing. I knocked on Jake’s door. No answer. I opened his door. He wasn’t in his room. I ran outside of the mansion and looked down, expecting to see the city. It was gone. There was just an empty field of grass. I turned around to go inside. The mansion was gone. I looked around. Mount Dorson was starting to crumble. Soon, the grass I was standing on started to die. It went from bright green to black. I felt the ground shake and tremble. The next thing I knew, I was falling into darkness. There was nothing around me but darkness. It was pitch black in every direction.

“Hello?” I called. My voice echoed.

“Hello, Max,” a voice boomed. The voice was a deep male voice, and it echoed in my mind. Even after a minute, it still could be heard. I tried to talk. I moved my lips, but no sound came out.

“Who-who are you?” I finally managed. The voice laughed, and it wasn’t very nice laughter. It sounded mean, like a bully. The laughter stopped, but it echoed faintly.

“Stupid child! You know me,” the voice said. I tried to think about this voice and where I’ve heard it from, but I couldn’t think of anything.

“I do?” I asked.

“You don’t remember, do you?” the voice asked. I shook my head.

“Not at all,” I admitted. The voice sighed, making it clear he was annoyed with me.

“Do you want me to help you figure it out?” the voice asked. I shook my head.

“No, I can figure this out on my own,” I insisted.

“Okay, I need help,” I said after two seconds.

“Allow me to share memories with you in them,” the voice said. I nodded.

“Sounds good,” I said.

After I said that, visions, along with floods of memories came to me. That was the good news. The bad news was that they had Dominic in them.

“Dominic?!” I asked in surprise.

“Mhm. Glad you figured it out,” Dominic said. I clenched my fists with anger so tight that my knuckles turned white.

“What do you want?” I demanded.

“Oh, it’s not me that wants anything,” Dominic said. My expression went from anger to confusion.

“What do you mean?” I asked. Dominic chuckled. I glared at him, an annoyed look on my face.

“What are you chuckling at?” I demanded.

“Nothing. Just…planning and thinking about what’s to come,” Dominic said. My expression went from annoyed to confused. I knit my eyebrows and tilted my head in confusion.

“What are you talking about? What’s to come?” I asked. Dominic shimmered into view and shook his head, chuckling.

“You’ll find out soon,” Dominic said.

“Find what out soon? What’s going on? When is soon?” I demanded. Dominic laughed.

“Soon…” Dominic said. His voice echoed in my head.

Dominic vanished. I felt someone shake me, and I gripped their shoulders and slammed them into a wall, pinning them.

“You better tell me what’s to come and when it is,” I snapped.

“Max, what are you talking about?” a voice asked.

“Nice try! You can’t fool me. I know you’re planning something, and I’m going to find out what it is, Dominic,” I snapped.

“What? Dude, it’s Jason,” Jason said. My eyes snapped back into the real world, to see I was pinning Jason against the wall. I let go of him.

“How…how are you here?” I asked. The team gave me confused looks.

“What do you mean?” Paul asked.

“I-,” My voice faded. I wanted to tell them, but I was scared to tell them, as I wasn’t sure how they would react. Jake nudged me a little.

“Max? You what? What happened?” Jake asked.

“N-nothing. It doesn’t matter,” I managed. Jake raised an eyebrow.

“Max,” he started. I looked at him.

“Hm?”

“Tell the truth. Is something bothering you?” Jake asked. I knew there was no point in hiding this or keeping it a secret. I hesitated to act, but I nodded, as something was indeed bothering me.

“Yes, something is,” I admitted.

“What is it?” Jason asked.

“I guess I, like, daydreamed or spaced out a little or something,” I said.

“What do you mean?” Ash asked. I explained it: the team being gone, the city and the mansion vanishing, me falling into darkness, what Dominic said, etc. When I was done, the team stared at me. Nobody spoke. I sighed.

“I knew this would sound crazy,” I said.

Jake put a hand on my shoulder. He broke the silence.

“It’s not crazy. You want to hear crazy? I’ve been hearing Gigantusnus’ voice in my head,” Jake said.

“You have?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Yeah, I have.”

“What has she been saying?” Ash asked.

“I’ll tell you later. Let’s just get some sleep. It’s getting late.”

We headed off to our rooms and fell asleep.

Chapter 58

The Dream

Max’s POV

I dreamed I was in darkness again, and so was Dominic. I sighed.

“What do you want?” I demanded. Dominic cast me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Don’t act all innocent. I know you’re causing me to dream about you,” I snapped. Dominic looked even more confused.

“Max, what are you talking about?” Dominic demanded. I stared at him in disgust.

“You know what I’m talking about. You caused me to pin Jason to the wall!” I protested. Dominic shook his head.

“That wasn’t me.”

“Uh huh. Sure, it wasn’t.”

“No, I’m serious!” Dominic protested. My expression softened a little.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“I swear that it wasn’t me that made you pin him to the wall,” Dominic said. I gave Dominic a confused look.

“Well, if it wasn’t you that caused me to pin Jason to the wall, then who was it?” I asked. Dominic shook his head, making it clear he was just as confused as I was, if not more confused.

“I don’t know,” Dominic admitted.

“So, what should I do? I literally feel like this voice is taking over me,” I said. Dominic put a hand on my shoulder.

“Maybe you should take some time away from the team. Clear your mind. Maybe go on a solo quest to find yourself,” Dominic suggested. I gave him a confused look.

“What do you mean ‘find me’?” I asked.

“Well, I mean just go on a quest to clear your mind. You could perhaps discover your purpose,” Dominic said. I had a strange feeling he was suggesting I go on a solo quest to get rid of me. However, at the same time, I had a feeling he was right. I did need to clear my mind. I nodded.

“You’re right,” I said. Dominic smiled.

“I know I am. So, what are you going to do, Max?” Dominic asked.

“I’m going to tell the team I’m leaving for some time,” I said. Dominic nodded.

“That’s good to hear. I’ll see you soon,” Dominic said. Before I could ask what he meant, the dream faded and I woke up, my heart pounding. I could still hear Dominic’s voice in my head.

“See you soon,” Dominic had said.

I got out of bed and rubbed my eyes, trying to think. I looked in the mirror at my reflection. My hair was a mess, but that didn’t matter right now. I nodded to myself.

“Okay. Time to tell the team,” I said to myself.

Chapter 59

Telling the team

Max’s POV

I got dressed and went to the living room where the team was, watching TV. They didn’t notice me until I cleared my throat. When I cleared my throat, they looked over at me in silence. Jason broke the silence.

“Hey, dude. What’s up?”

“I have to tell you guys something…important,” I said.

“What is it?” Martha asked.

“Well, it’s not going to be easy to explain,” I admitted. Ash put a hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, it’s okay. We’ve literally been to Hell and back. For god’s sake, Max, you’ve died and came back to life. So, I’m sure whatever it is, you’ll be okay. We’ll be okay with it,” Ash assured. He had a point. I nodded.

“I’m going to leave for a bit of time,” I blurted. Ash knit his eyebrows.

“What?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. I’ll be leaving.”

“Why?” Ash asked.

“I just…need to clear my mind, find myself and my purpose,” I said.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked. I hesitated. I didn’t want to tell the team about my dream with Dominic, but I knew I couldn’t keep it from them. After all, they were my friends. They deserved to know. I decided I had to tell them.

“I had a dream last night,” I started.

“About what?” Wendy asked.

“Well, I was in the darkness. Dominic was there with me, too. He told me I should go on a solo quest to clear my mind and find myself and my purpose,” I explained. The team stared at me in shock and silence.

“So, Dominic suggested you should go on this solo quest?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yep. That’s right,” I said. Jake shook his head.

“I don’t think you should go on this solo quest to clear your mind and all that junk,” Jake said. I gave him a confused glance.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Well, think about it. Dominic suggested that you should do it,” Jake said.

“So?” I asked.

“So, I feel like because Dominic suggested this, I have a feeling he’s trying to get rid of you,” Jake said. I nodded.

“I guess that’s why he said he’ll see me soon,” I admitted.

“See? I think that because he said that, he’s trying to lure you into a trap.”

“Even if he is, I’m still going,” I said. Jake shook his head.

“No,” Jake said.

“No what?” I asked.

“You’re not going.”

“Why not?”

“Not alone,”

I gave Jake a confused look.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You’re not going alone,” Jake said.

“And just why not?” I demanded.

“It’s too dangerous,” Jake said. I shook my head.

“I don’t care how dangerous it is. I’m still going,” I insisted.

“No, you’re not.”

“Why not?” I demanded.

“I just don’t want you to get hurt because I love you,” Jake said.

“Well, I appreciate that you don’t want me getting hurt. But seriously, I’m going,” I said.

“I’m not going to let you go out and possibly get yourself in danger,” Jake said.

“Well, what are you going to do?” I asked.

“I’m going to stop you,” Jake said.

“How are you going to do that?”

“Simple: I’ll use my powers,” Jake said. I shook my head, chuckling.

“You can’t,” I said.

“Why not?” Jake asked.

“Don’t you remember? Dominic took our powers,” I recalled. Jake shook his head and chuckled.

“What are you chuckling at?” I demanded.

“Oh, nothing. It’s just that…oh, never mind,” Jake said.

“What is it?” I asked.

“You won’t like it,” Jake said.

“Just tell me!” I snapped.

“I got my powers back,” Jake said after silence. I shook my head.

“No, you didn’t.”

“Oh, I did.”

“Prove it,” I said. Jake shrugged.

“Okay, I will,” Jake said. He closed his eyes and focused. A few seconds later, frost began to form on his fingers. I stared at him in shock.

“What? Jake…? How…?” I managed. Jake chuckled.

“There’s a perfectly good reason for this,” Jake said.

“Oh yeah? What is it?” I demanded.

“It’s actually a very simple explanation.”

“Just tell us!” Jason snapped.

“I work for Dominic,” Jake said, his voice booming. We stared at Jake in shock.

“You…what?” I managed. Jake nodded.

“I work for Dominic. Don’t you hear good?” Jake demanded.

“Why?” I snapped.

“Why what?” Jake asked.

“Why are you working for Dominic?” I demanded. Jake shrugged.

“Honestly, Max. The real question is why not work for Dominic? Like, seriously, why are you not working for him?” Jake asked. I shook my head.

“Because he’s evil,” I said. Jake chuckled.

“Oh, Max. You just don’t understand why he did the things he did,” Jake said.

“And you do?” I demanded.

“I’m not saying I do, but I’m not saying I don’t either,” Jake said. I glared at Jake, a look of disgust in my eyes.

“You disgust me,” I snapped. Jake gave me a look of fake hurt.

“I thought you loved me,” Jake said in a fake hurt tone.

“I did, at least before I found out you work for Dominic!” I snapped.

“I’m only working for him because…never mind,” Jake’s voice faded.

“What is it?” I asked.

“What is what?” Jake asked.

“What is the reason you’re working for Dominic?” I asked. Jake shook his head, hesitating.

“N-no reason,” Jake managed. He sounded nervous.

“What is it?” I demanded.

“It doesn’t matter, Max. Just drop it,” Jake snapped.

“Just say it!” I snapped.

“I’m working for him because he’s forcing me to,” Jake blurted, going faster by the word. I stared at Jake in shock.

“What did you just say?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“I’m working for him because he’s forcing me to,” Jake mumbled, tears dripping from his eyes onto his shirt.

“How is he forcing you to work for him?” I asked.

“He said if I didn’t work for him, he would…” Jake’s voice faded.

“He would what? Jake, what would he do?” I asked, urging him to tell me. Jake sighed.

“It’s not important,” Jake said.

“Yes, it is,” I said.

“Why? Why is it important, huh?” Jake demanded.

“I just want to know, that’s all.”

Jake shook his head.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Just tell me what he would do if you didn’t work for him!” I snapped.

“Okay. Are you sure you want to know?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. I’m sure.”

Jake inhaled nervously, getting prepared to tell us.

“Dominic said that if I didn’t work for him, he would…” Jake’s voice faded. He held back tears. I waited patiently.

“He would kill you,” Jake managed. The pressure was too much for him, I guess, because he broke down sobbing. I glanced at the team, silently asking if I should comfort Jake. They nodded. I wrapped my arms around Jake, hugging him. I looked at the team.

“Can you guys let us be alone for a bit?” I asked. They nodded and left the room.

“Jake,” I started. Jake looked at me.

“What?” he mumbled.

I don’t care what you do. I will always love you. Why? Because you are and always will be the love of my life,” I said.

“Even if I’m working for Dominic?” Jake asked.

“Even if you’re working for Dominic,” I agreed.

“What are we going to do about this?” Jake asked. I gave him a confused look.

“What do you mean?”

“Like, what are we going to do about me working for Dominic when I don’t want to?” Jake asked. I shrugged, not having an answer.

“I guess you could just, like, play along with it, or something. I don’t really know,” I admitted. Jake sighed sadly. I noticed and gave him a concerned look.

“You okay?” I asked. Jake shook his head.

“No, not really,” Jake mumbled.

“What’s wrong?”

“I just don’t want to lose you,” Jake sobbed. I hugged him.

“Shh. It’ll all be okay,” I said in a calm tone. Jake nodded.

“You’re right. So, what are you going to do about the solo quest?” Jake asked.

“Well, I’m still going on it,” I said. Jake nodded again.

“Yeah. Well, I hope it works out for you. Good luck, babe,” Jake said. I smiled.

“Thanks. And just so you know, I won’t be gone forever. I’ll be back. I just don’t know when yet,” I admitted.

“I’ll miss you,” Jake said.

“I’ll miss you, too,” I said.

“You want to go tell the team goodbye?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yep. Let’s have my final meeting.”

Chapter 60

My Final Meeting

Max’s POV

Jake and I went to everyone’s room to say there was a meeting in the living room. Once everyone was there, I got ready to say it.

“Max has something to say,” Jake said.

“What’s up?” Ash asked. I took a deep breath, getting ready to say it.

“This may be my final meeting with you all,” I said. The team stared.

“What do you mean?” Jason asked.

“Jake and I talked, and we agreed I would go on my solo quest,” I said.

“What are you saying?” Martha asked.

“I’m leaving.”

“You mean for a trip, right?” Wendy asked. I shook my head.

“I wish I could say I was, but I’m not.”

“Max…Don’t leave. You can’t leave! Who will lead us?” Ash asked. I walked over to Ash and handed him a coin. The coin Uncle Mark gave me when I was a child. The one that boosted powers.

“I trust you’ll lead the team to victory,” I said. Ash stared in shock at the coin, then at me. He shook his head.

“I can’t.”

I gave him a confused look.

“Why not?”

“I don’t trust myself to lead the team,” Ash admitted. I put a hand on his shoulder.

“Try your hardest. Even if you may fail, don’t give up. Do the best job you can. Push yourself past your limits. Please. Do it for me.”

Ash nodded. He took a deep breath.

“Okay. I’ll do it for you,” Ash said. I grinned.

“Thank you,” I said. Ash nodded.

“Of course.”

Ash’s POV

Max faced the team.

“I won’t be gone forever. Just until I’ve discovered my purpose. It may be some time before I return, but I promise you I’ll return eventually,” Max said.

“We’ll be waiting,” Paul said.

Max took one last glance at the team. A grin crept up his face, and he walked out.

Chapter 61

Life Without Max

Ash’s POV

This is going to make me sound like a little kid, but I know it’s time to say it. I miss Max. I miss him so much. It’s been a week since he left, which means it’s been a week since he put his trust in me to lead the team to victory. The strange thing is, there hasn’t been any battles in quite some time. I guess that’s because the villains favored Max. Ever since Max left, it’s been weird. Suddenly, I feel like I have to be more responsible for the team and how they act. Anyway, I guess it’s time I stop blabbering on about this and start telling you what’s been going on so far.

I was in the recording studio, putting the finishing touches on the lyrics for a new song I wrote.

“Hey, Max. What do you think of these lyrics?” I asked. No answer. I looked over at where Max usually sat. He wasn’t there. I was starting to wonder where he went, but then I remembered: he had left for his solo quest. I felt my eyes water. I was trying my hardest not to cry, but the pressure was too much, I guess, because I broke down sobbing. I heard footsteps along the hallway, but they stopped at the door of the recording studio. Someone knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” I asked quietly.

“It’s Chloe,” Chloe said. My heart skipped a beat. I had a huge crush on Chloe, and I was never sure if she felt the same way. And to have her check on me? Wow. This was great.

I wiped my eyes and opened the door. Chloe had dark brown eyes and dark brown hair, and was wearing a pink hoodie, jeans and sneakers. I have dark brown hair and blue eyes, and was wearing a dark green hoodie, jeans and sneakers.

“Hey, Chloe. What’s up?” I asked. I guess my eyes were still watering, because Chloe gave me a concerned look.

“Ash, what’s wrong?” Chloe asked in a concerned and calm tone. I gave her a confused look.

“What do you mean?” I asked in a confused tone. Even when I asked that, I knew exactly what she was talking about. She was wondering why I was crying.

“Your eyes are watering. Were you crying?”

I shook my head and laughed nervously.

“Me? Cry? No way. Why would I cry? There’s no reason to cry,” I managed. Chloe put a hand on my shoulder, giving me a calm look and an assuring expression that told me I should tell her what was wrong. I sighed sadly.

“It’s Max,” I mumbled as I sat down on the floor.

“You miss him, don’t you?” Chloe asked calmly.

“I…yeah, I miss him,” I admitted. Chloe sat down next to me and took my hand, giving me a calming expression that told me everything was going to be okay, no matter what. She put a hand on my shoulder.

“Look, Ash. I know it’s hard to believe he’s gone. I get that it won’t feel the same without Max here. But we have to keep staying positive and think that he left for a good reason, which was to find his purpose,” Chloe said in an assuring tone. She had a point. I nodded.

“Yeah. You’re right. Besides, I don’t think I’m the only one mourning over Max leaving,” I said. Chloe knit her eyebrows, making it clear she was confused.

“What do you mean?”

“Look at Jake.”

I pointed to Jake, who was practicing a riff on the guitar, minding his own business.

“What about him? He seems fine to me,” Chloe noticed. I shook my head.

“He may look fine, but look at his eyes. Do you see how sad he looks in his eyes? He may be calm on the outside, but on the inside, he could be really upset.”

Chloe nodded.

“Yeah, I guess you’re right,” Chloe agreed. I nodded.

“I know I am.”

“So, what should we do? Should we talk to him or?”

I nodded.

“Yeah, I think we should talk to him. Ya know, just to check on him.”

Chloe and I walked over to Jake, who didn’t notice us at first, until I coughed. He looked up from his guitar.

After we talked with him, the three of us decided to go to check on Jason to see how he was doing. After we talked with Jason, we went to check in on Wendy. After we talked to Wendy, we went to check in on Paul. After we check in with Paul, we went to check in on Martha. I had to think about the question Jake had asked me. I wasn’t sure what we were going to do. I started to think about it. Luckily, I didn’t have to think about it for very long because the alarm went off. We ran to the control room. Harold was already there, looking at the monitor.

Jake’s POV

Ever since Max left to go on his solo quest, everything has felt…different. I feel more alone, along with scared and frustrated more. Without Max here, I don’t know what I’ll do. I feel like I’ll just lose my mind. But I have to keep thinking positive. I have dark brown hair and light blue eyes, and was wearing a light blue hoodie, jeans and sneakers. I was in the recording studio, practicing a riff on the guitar when Ash coughed. I looked up to see he was with Chloe.

“Hey, guys. What’s up?” I asked.

“Jake, how are you feeling?” Ash asked. I shrugged.

“I’m feeling fine. Why?”

“How do you feel about…about Max?” Chloe managed to ask. I shrugged again and sighed.

“Honestly, I don’t know. Like, I miss him, but I feel fine right now. I feel pretty calm right now on the outside, but on the inside, I just want to break down and cry,” I admitted. Chloe put a hand on my shoulder.

“Jake, it’s okay to not know how to feel. It’s okay to cry. We’re all grieving in our own ways,” Chloe said calmly. She had a point. I nodded.

“Yeah, I know. I’m just trying my best to not think about the fact that he’s gone too much,” I said. Chloe and Ash nodded in agreement.

“Yeah, we get that. Do you want to come with us to see how the others are doing?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Let’s go,” I said.

Jason’s POV

I was in my room, just watching TV and chilling when someone knocked on my door. I have dirty blonde hair and sea green eyes, and was wearing a blue short sleeved button up shirt, jeans and sneakers.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“It’s Jake, Ash and Chloe,” Chloe said. I opened the door.

“Hey guys. What’s up?”

“Nothing much. We just wanted to check in and see how the team is doing about Max being gone for his solo quest,” Ash said. I nodded.

“Oh. Okay.”

“So, how are you doing about Max being gone?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I’m not sure. I haven’t really been thinking about it that much, but I do miss him. He was so cool and calm,” I said. The three of them nodded.

“Yeah, we get that, man. Everyone is really trying to keep it together,” Jake said. I nodded.

“So, we’re going to go check on the others. Want to come with us?” Chloe asked. I shrugged, since I didn’t have anything better to do.

“I don’t have anything better to do, so sure.”

Wendy’s POV

If I’m being honest, life without Max feels great. It sounds much more quieter than it did in the past when he was around. I’m not saying that to be rude, but it’s true. When he was around, there would always be so much noise, but now that he’s not here, it’s dead silent. I have blonde hair and blue eyes, and I’m wearing a purple hoodie, jeans and sneakers.

I was in my room reading when someone knocked on my door.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“Ash, Chloe, Jake and Jason,” Jake said.

“Come in.”

They opened the door and walked inside.

“Hey, Wendy,” Chloe said.

“Hey. So, what’s up?” I asked.

“Eh, nothing much. We’re just checking on the team to see how everybody is doing about Max being gone,” Jason said. I nodded.

“All right.”

“So, how are you feeling about this?” Ash asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, this is great to me.”

“How is it great?” Chloe asked.

“Well, think about it. When Max was around, there was always noise. Now, with him not here, there’s finally some peace and quiet,” I said. They looked at each other, then back at me and nodded.

“I guess that’s true,” Ash said. I nodded.

“I know it’s true.”

“Well, okay then. We’re going to check i on everyone else. Want to join us?” Chloe asked. I nodded.

“Sure. I don’t have anything better to do.”

Paul’s POV

Ever since Max left for his solo quest, I don’t know how to feel. I have mixed feelings and emotions, all in one about this. For one, I feel kind of down and sad about it, because I’ve never had to deal with anything like this before. Another feeling I have is anger. I’m actually pretty angry at Max for abandoning the team for his solo quest to find himself and his purpose. In my opinion, I feel like that’s just a bunch of crap he made up to get himself away from the team.

I have dark brown eyes and dark brown hair, and I’m wearing a dark grey hoodie, jeans and sneakers. I was in my room playing Call Of Duty when someone knocked at my door.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“It’s Ash, Jake, Wendy, Chloe and Jason,” Jason said. I opened the door to let them in.

“So, what’s up guys?”

They shrugged.

“Nothing much. We’ve just been going around checking on everyone. You know, making sure they’re okay and how they’re feeling about the fact that Max is gone,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah, I see.”

“So, how are you feeling about this?” Wendy asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I have mixed feelings and emotions about this. I’m a little pissed off at him for just abandoning us, but at the same time, I’m sad he’s gone, but also I’m happy for him. I honestly don’t know how to feel,” I admitted. The group nodded.

“Yeah. Dude, we get that. It’s perfectly fine to have mixed feelings about this,” Jason said. I nodded.

“I guess that’s true,” I said. The team nodded.

“So, we’re going to check on Martha. Do you want to tag along with us?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Sure, guys. I’ll tag along,” I decided.

Martha’s POV

Ever since Max left, I don’t know how to feel. I don’t know if I should feel angry with him or sad about it or happy for him. I just don’t know. I have light brown hair and sea green eyes and I’m wearing a pink shirt with jeans and sneakers. I was in my room reading a book when I heard a knock at my door.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“It’s Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Jason and Paul,” Jason said. I stood up from my bed and opened the door to see they were indeed there.

“Hey, guys. What’s up?” I asked.

“Hey, babe. We’re just checking on you to see how you feel about…you know, Max leaving,” Jason said. I nodded.

“Yeah. Honestly, I’m not sure what or how to feel about this. I don’t know if I should feel sad or happy or angry or what. I’m just so stressed out by thinking about the fact he’s not here to lead us,” I admitted. I felt a tear drip down from my cheek to my shirt. Jason hugged me, which made me feel a lot better.

“Hey, Martha. It’s okay to not know how to feel. If you need to cry or do something to let it out, then do whatever it is you need to do to let it out. Even if you’re embarrassed about crying in front of me, I will always be there for you, no matter what,” Jason said. I nodded and wiped my eyes.

“Yeah, I guess that’s true. Thanks for making me feel better,” I said as I hugged Jason. He nodded.

“Of course,” Jason said.

Chapter 62

A New Threat

“What’s the issue? Why did the alarm go off?” I asked. Harold didn’t respond. He didn’t move either.

“Harold? Harold, answer!”

I went over to face him so that I could confront him. That’s when I found out why he didn’t respond. There was a knife in his chest. I lowered Harold onto the floor.

“Harold, what happened?” I asked in a concerned voice. Harold coughed.

“Drake,” Harold said in a weak tone. We glanced at each other.

“What about him?” Jason asked.

“He’s here. Go…warn Max,” Harold managed. Those were his last words before he closed his eyes. We stared at him in shock as he died. Chloe covered her hand over her mouth and choked back a sob. Martha glanced at Jason, trying hard not to cry, but the pressure was too much for her. Martha hugged Jason and broke down crying. I hugged Chloe and let her cry on me. I had tears in my eyes. Some tears dripped down, but my face showed no emotion. I walked around, glaring at everything. I pulled out my sword. The team glanced at me, confused.

“Ash, what are you doing?” Chloe asked.

“I’m going to find Drake and fight him,” I said.

“Oh, are you sure about that?” a voice boomed. I glanced around in the direction that I had heard the voice, but nobody was there except the team.

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure,” I said.

“Ash, who are you talking to?” Jason asked. I looked at Jason like he was crazy.

“Do you not here the voice?” I asked. Jason glanced at me, a confused look on his face.

“What voice?” Jason asked in a confused tone.

“Only you can hear me, Ash,” the voice said. I clenched my fists around my sword.

“Where are you, Drake? Come out and fight!” I shouted.

The voice erupted into laughter.

“Stupid boy! I’m not Drake!” the voice snapped. That confused me.

“Then…who are you?” I asked in a confused tone.¬ The laughter continued, growing louder by the second.

“How could you not know who I am? Are you stupid?” the voice demanded. I shook my head.

“No, I’m not. Just…remind me who you are,” I said, trying to sound calmer than I was on the inside. The voice sighed, annoyed with me.

“Fine. I’m going to turn visible and you’re going to recognize me, okay?” the voice asked. I nodded.

“All right. That sounds good,” I agreed. A golden light appeared and stretched out until it was the size of a human. No. Not a human. An alien. I gasped in shock.

“Dominic?” I asked in surprise.

“That’s right, Ash!” Dominic sneered. I clenched my fists so hard they turned white. I glared at him, a look of annoyance and disgust on my face.

“What do you want, Dominic? Why are you here and why did you kill Harold?” I demanded. Dominic chuckled.

“Oh, yeah. I killed him because he wasn’t listening to me when I was trying to say something.”

“What were you trying to tell him?” Paul asked.

“I was going to tell him that I needed your guys’ help.”

“What do you need our help with?” Jake asked.

“So, you know how Max is going on a solo quest and he said I suggested that he should do it?” Dominic asked. We nodded.

“Yeah, why?” Wendy asked.

“Well, that wasn’t me who told him that.”

“What?” I asked in surprise. Dominic nodded, looking just as, if not more confused as we were.

“I know it’s confusing,” Dominic agreed.

“Wait a minute. If it wasn’t you, then who was it? Max said it was you who told him,” I said, remembering what Max had said. Dominic shook his head.

“It wasn’t me. It was a shapeshifter, The Chameleon, whose real name is Sam Smith,” Dominic said. We glanced at each other, then back at him.

“Who is this guy?” I asked. Dominic shrugged.

“I don’t know, but he somehow shapeshifted into me and convinced Max to go on his solo quest. Not only that, but he said he would see him soon.”

“What does he mean he’ll see him soon?” Paul asked. Dominic shrugged.

“I don’t know, but it sounds bad,” Dominic admitted. I stared at him and the team.

“Well, don’t just stand there. Come on! We have to go save him!” I said in a panicked voice. The team glanced at each other nervously. Chloe walked up to me and put a hand on my shoulder.

“Ash, we can’t,” Chloe said.

“Why not?” I asked in a demanding tone.

“Max wanted to go on a quest alone to find himself. Hence why it’s a solo quest,” Chloe reminded me.

“So?” I demanded.

“So, we can’t go help him if it’s a quest for him to do alone,” Jake said. He didn’t sound happy about it.

“But can we at least warn him? Let’s at least call him,” I insisted. The team glanced at each other, but I figured they had no other options, because they decided to call Max.

Max’s POV

I was in the middle of my solo quest when my phone rang. I fished it out of my pocket to see Jake was calling me.

“Hey, Jake. What’s up?” I asked.

“Bad news, babe,” Jake said. He sounded panicked, and his tone made it sound like the news was urgent.

“Bad news? Jake, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“I’ll let Ash tell you.”

“Hey, Max. It’s Ash,” Ash said.

“Hey bro. So, what’s up? What’s the bad news?” I asked.

“Remember how you said Dominic suggested that you should go on your solo quest?” Ash asked.

“Yeah, I remember. Why?” I asked.

“That wasn’t really him.”

“What? Ash, what are you talking about?”

“I mean what you thought was Dominic was a shapeshifter knows as The Chameleon whose real name is Sam Smith,” Ash said.

“O-okay…So, why are you telling me this?” I asked, confusion in my tone.

“I’m telling you this to warn you.”

“Warn me of what? Ash, what’s going on?” I demanded.

“Remember how he said he’ll see you soon?” Ash asked.

“Yes, I remember. Why?” I asked.

“Well, Dominic is sensing you’re being led into a trap,” Ash blurted.

“Well, that would explain the dark castle ahead of me, along with all these skeleton bones around the path I’m on,” I said, noticing them as I went along.

“What? Max, where are you?” Jason demanded through the phone.

“I have no idea, but a voice told me to come here,” I admitted.

“A voice? Max, what did it sound like?” Ash asked.

“It sounded like Dominic’s voice,” I said.

“That must be The Chameleon. Max, get out of there now!” Ash yelled.

“Okay, I’ll leave,” I said.

I turned to leave, but something held me back. I couldn’t go back in the direction that I had come from. I was trapped going to the castle.

“Uhh, guys? We have a problem,” I said.

“What is it?” Jake asked.

“I…um…” My voice faded, as I hesitated to tell them

“You what? Max, what is it?” Jason demanded.

“I can’t leave,” I admitted.

“What?” the group demanded.

“I don’t know why. It’s like there’s a force pushing me into the castle against my will and I can’t escape or do anything about it,” I said. The team said nothing in response.

“Uhh, are you guys there? Hello?” I asked.

“Sorry, yes, Max. We’re here. Why?” Dominic asked.

“Wait…Dominic?” I asked in surprise.

“That’s right,” Dominic said.

“What are you doing?” I demanded.

“What do you mean?” Dominic asked. His tone made it clear he was confused.

“I mean what are you doing on the phone with the team?” I asked.

“I’m here to help,” Dominic said.

“Uhh, how?” I asked in a concerned voice. My tone made it clear I was weirded out and confused, along with demanding.

“It’s a long story. Anyway, uhm…Something happen to Harold,” Dominic said.

“What happened to Harold?” I demanded in a panicked voice.

“He um,” Dominic’s voice faded.

“Just tell me!” I snapped.

“He died,” Dominic blurted.

“What? How? Did you do it, Dominic?” I asked suspiciously.

“What? No, why are you asking?” Dominic asked.

“Well, you’re evil, so I thought it might have been you who killed Harold,” I said. Dominic sighed, making it clear he was fed up with me.

“Dude, just because I was evil doesn’t mean I killed Harold,” Dominic said. He had a point. I sighed.

“Okay, maybe you’re right. Maybe it wasn’t you. But if you didn’t do it, then who did?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Dominic admitted.

“Well, gee that helps,” I muttered.

“Hey, I don’t have to help you,” Dominic said in a sassy tone.

“I never asked for your help to begin with!” I snapped.

“Guys, calm down!” Jake said in a stern tone over the phone.

“Sorry,” I said.

“It’s okay. Max, where are you?” Jake asked. I looked around my surroundings. I was still being pushed into the castle.

“I’m getting being pushed into the castle,” I said.

“That’s not good. Can you leave?” Jason asked.

“No, I can’t. Dude, we already went over this,” I said.

“Oh, my bad. So, what will we do? Should we help you?” Jason asked.

“No. I don’t want help. I’ll do this myself. Just don’t worry about me and fight any other threats,” I said.

“But-,” Ash started.

“That’s an order,” I snapped. I hung up.

Ash’s POV

Max hung up. I glanced at the team with a panicked look on my face, as I was unsure what to do at this point, especially with the fact that Max didn’t want our help.

“So, what are we going to do? Max said he didn’t want our help,” Paul said. I shrugged.

“I don’t know what we’ll do. I guess we’ll just wait until we have a threat to fight,” I said.

“But Ash. This is a threat if Max is going into a trap,” Jason said. I nodded.

“I know, but he specifically told us not to help him. He said that was an order,” I reminded him. His shoulders slumped.

“Oh yeah. I forgot,” Jason grumbled. Jason sighed and sat down on the couch, sighing while putting his hands in his head. Martha looked at him with a confused expression on her face.

“Jason, what’s wrong?” Martha asked calmly. Jason sighed with annoyance.

“I just want to help Max so bad, but I can’t,” Jason said.

“Why can’t you?” Paul asked.

“Didn’t you hear Max? He ordered us not to help him,” Jason reminded him.

“So?” Paul asked.

“So, I can’t just defy his orders,” Jason said.

“Why not?” Jake asked.

“Because that’s not who I am. I’m the kind of person to follow orders and listen to people, not the kind of person to disobey orders and not listen to people,” Jason said. Paul was silent for a second, then put a hand on Jason’s shoulder.

“Then maybe it’s time to become that person,” Paul said. Jason stared at Paul in shock and shook his head.

“I-no. I can’t,” Jason said. Paul clapped Jason on the back.

“Aw, c’mon, bro. Sure you can. You just need a little help,” Paul said.

“What do you mean? What kind of help?” Jason asked. His tone made it clear he was weirded out and somewhat suspicious of Paul.

“Ya know, help from your best friend,” Paul said.

“How are you going to help me?” Jason asked. His tone made it clear he was doubtful that Paul could do anything to help him become the person to not listen to people and their orders, specifically Max’s orders.

“Well, first we have to teach you to be more aggressive,” Paul said. Jason glanced at Paul, confused and weirded out, along with slightly concerned for Paul.

“What?” Jason asked in a confused and weirded out tone. Paul nodded.

“You heard me. You need to be more aggressive,” Paul said.

“Why do I have to be more aggressive?”

“You need to be more aggressive so you can be able to stand up to Max and tell him that you didn’t want to follow his orders and you wanted to help,” Paul said. Jason stared at Paul in shock and was silent for a minute before he shook his head.

“No. I can’t do that,” Jason admitted.

“Why not?” Paul asked, a confused tone in his voice.

“Because I…I don’t know. I just can’t get myself to disobey Max and his orders,” Jason admitted.

“See? That’s why we need to fix that. We need to make you be able to do that,” Paul insisted.

“But why though? Why do I have to be able to not listen to Max’s orders?” Jason asked.

“Do you want Max to get captured and possibly die?” Paul asked. Jason shook his head.

“No,” Jason said.

“Exactly. So, I say we go and help Max, even if he doesn’t need or want our help,” Paul said. Jason nodded. A grin crept up his face.

“You’re right.”

Paul looked at Jason in surprise.

“I am?” Paul asked in surprise. Jason nodded.

“Yep. I’m not going to stand around while Max possibly gets himself killed. I’m going to help him, whether he wants me to or not. Are you guys coming with me?” Jason asked. We stared at him in shock and surprise.

“I mean, you don’t have to come if you don’t want to. I could do this myself, but it’d be nice if you came to help,” Jason said. Paul walked over to Jason.

“I’m going with you. If you’re going to go help Max from getting killed, I feel like I have to go with you,” Paul said. Jason nodded.

“All right then. Anyone else?” Jason asked. Martha walked over to Jason and Paul.

“I’m going too. After all, I am your girlfriend. You’re going to want me along,” Martha said. Jason and Paul nodded, though Paul didn’t look very happy about it.

“So we got three of us.”

Jason looked at the rest of us.

“Well? Are you guys coming or what?” Jason asked. Jake, Wendy, Chloe and I glanced at each other, nervous and weirded out, wondering which of us would step up first. Jake walked over to Jason, Paul and Martha.

“I’m coming too. You’re insane if you think I’m not going to save my boyfriend,” Jake said. I walked over to them and stood next to Jake.

“I guess I’ll be going as well. After all, he is my brother. And like Jake said, you’re insane if you think I’m not going to save my brother,” I said. We looked over to Wendy and Chloe.

“That leaves us down to Wendy and Chloe,” Jason said.

“Well? Are you guys going with us, or am I going to be the only girl?” Martha asked. Wendy shook her head and chuckled, then walked up to us, followed by Chloe.

“Are you insane, Martha? Why would we let you be the only girl going? Besides, if you were the only girl going, then that would mean we wouldn’t be able to have a girls’ side quest while the boys are risking their lives,” Wendy said. Chloe nodded.

“Not only that, but I need to go for Ash since he’s my boyfriend, along with he may need moral support in case he starts to doubt himself,” Chloe said. We nodded.

“Well, I guess we’re on our way to go save Max. What do we do, Ash?” Jason asked.

“Let’s go save Max,” I said.

Chapter 63

Saving Max

Ash’s POV

We went out of the base and walked a few feet until we realized we didn’t know where we were going.

“Does anyone know where we’re going?” I asked. The team shook their heads. Just then, a golden light appeared and Dominic emerged from the golden light.

“Dominic?” Jason asked in surprise. Dominic nodded.

“That’s my name.”

“Where have you been?” I demanded.

“I’ve been spying on Max,” Dominic said.

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“How have you been spying on him?” I asked in surprise. Dominic shrugged.

“Eh, you know. I teleported to where he was,” Dominic said.

“Where is he?” Jason asked.

“He’s at the Red Castle,” Dominic said.

“Where’s that?” Jake asked.

“It’s a long way from here, I’ll tell you that. However, I can teleport us there if we want to get there quickly,” Dominic said. We nodded.

“Teleport us there,” I said. Dominic nodded. He opened up a portal and we went through it. When we got through the portal, we were standing at the gate to a big, red castle. The gates were guarded by three guards.

“How are we going to get into the castle if the entrance is guarded?” I asked. Dominic chuckled, slightly smiling.

“I’ll handle it.”

Before I could ask what he meant, Dominic snapped his fingers and the guards dropped to the ground like a sack of potatoes. I glanced at the passed out guards, then at Dominic in surprise and shock, wondering what had happened.

“What did you do?” I asked in surprise and shock. Dominic chuckled.

“Oh, I just made them pass out. Now come on. We want to save Max, don’t we?” Dominic asked. He had a point. I nodded.

“Yes, I do.”

“Then let’s go,” Dominic said.

I decided not to argue. We walked through the castle’s entrance gates to see a massive inside before our eyes. There were many halls, many doors, just many…everything. I wanted to go around and gawk at everything, but Dominic knew what I was wanting to do and he gripped my shoulder.

“Hey. We can’t go wandering around,” Dominic said like he was a parent.

“Why not?” I complained. I didn’t care that I sounded like a little kid.

“Because we have to save Max. Speaking of him, he’s calling me,” Dominic said. He opened out his phone and answered it.

“Hey, Max. What’s up?” Dominic asked.

“What are you guys up to?” Max asked.

“We’re saving you. Or at least, attempting to. Your brother is seeming to get sucked into the castle’s architecture and he wants to go wander around and look at everything,” Dominic said.

“Uh oh,” Max muttered. It wasn’t very quiet mutter, as Dominic heard it.

“Uh oh? Max, what is it? What’s wrong?”

“Yeah, so Ash wants to go wander around and look at everything you said?” Max asked. Dominic nodded, even though Max couldn’t see him.

“That’s right. Why?”

“That’s the magic. It causes people to get sucked into the castle and makes them not want to leave,” Max explained.

“Well, what can we do about it?” Dominic asked.

“I don’t know. Just…try to keep him from walking off,” Max said.

Too late. Before Max could finish saying that, I was already gone and looking at everything.

 Dominic sighed.

Max’s POV

“Dominic? Why are you sighing? What happened?” I demanded.

“Ash ran off to go look around at everything,” Dominic grumbled.

“What? Okay, this is fine. Just get to me and we’ll worry about him later,” I said.

“Got it. Um, one question,” Dominic said.

“Yeah, what’s up?” I asked.

“Where exactly are you?”

“The dungeon downstairs,” I said.

“I have a feeling we’ll be there shortly,” Dominic said.

“What? Why??” I asked.

“Well, because we got captured and are being led there right now by an angry king,” Dominic replied in a casual voice. I sighed, annoyed.

“Okay, fine. I guess I’ll see you in a little bit,” I said.

“Bye,” Dominic said. I hung up.

A few minutes after I hung up, I heard footsteps heading down the stairs. I turned to see the group was there. I stared at them in shock and surprise, along with confusion.

“What did you do? How did you manage to get King Shawn upset?” I demanded. Dominic chuckled nervously.

“Funny story, it’s all Ash’s fault,” Dominic said.

“What? Oh, that is not all true! We wouldn’t have gotten captured if you hadn’t slapped the prince,” Ash snapped. I was trying not to laugh.

“Dude, you slapped Prince George?” I asked while chuckling. Dominic shrugged.

“I wouldn’t have had to if somebody didn’t scream to give them their boyfriend back,” Dominic snapped, glaring at Jake. I chuckled.

“Wow. You guys are worse than I am at school,” I said, chuckling. Everyone glared at me. I laughed nervously.

“Whoops. Wrong thing to say, I guess,” I said. Jason sighed sadly. I noticed and gave him a concerned look.

“Jason, why the sad sigh?” I asked in a concerned tone.

“I disobeyed your order. I’m sorry. I guess you hate me now, huh?” Jason said. I stared at him in shock and surprise, and shook my head.

“Dude, no. I don’t hate you. Why would I hate you?” I asked. My tone was full of confusion and concern.

“Because I didn’t listen when you ordered us to not help you. That’s why,” Jason said. He sniffed. At first, I thought he had allergies, but then I realized he was crying. I put a hand on his shoulder.

“Dude, it’s okay,” I said. Jason looked up at me, blinking tears out of his eyes.

“Are you sure? I mean, I didn’t listen to you,” Jason said sadly. I nodded.

“I’m sure. To be honest, I secretly wanted you guys to disobey me to come and help me,” I admitted. The team stared at me in shock.

“Really?” Jason asked. I nodded.

“Yep, really. That way we could all be trapped together,” I said. Jake patted me on the shoulder.

“That’s really sweet of you, Max,” Jake said. I nodded.

“I know it is. That’s why I said it,” I said.

“So, what are we doing now?” Ash asked. I shrugged, as I hadn’t thought about that at all.

“Honestly, I don’t know. I guess try and find a way out,” I said.

“How are we going to do that?” Paul asked. I sighed and shrugged.

“I don’t know, but I’m sure we can find a way. Hopefully,” I admitted.

“What do you mean ‘hopefully’?” Jason asked.

“I mean hopefully we’ll find a way out of this dungeon. There seems to be lots of tunnels and passages down here. Maybe one of them leads out,” I said with hope in my voice.

“But, Max, we’re in a cell. How will we get out?” Ash asked.

“Leave that to me,” a voice said. We looked around, but nobody was there.

“Hello? Who’s there?” I asked.

“You remember me, right?” the voice asked. It sounded so familiar, but I couldn’t wrap my head around to recognize it. Rummaging through things could be heard, then footsteps. I saw a shadow walk towards us and a boy emerged from the shadow. A grin broke onto my face. Cole had returned.

“Cole?” I asked in surprise. Cole nodded.

“I knew you’d remember me,” Cole said.

“What? Cole, how are you here? Where have you been?” I asked. Cole shrugged.

“Oh, I’ve been searching for my father.”

“Any luck yet?” Jake asked. Cole shook his head sadly.

“Nope. Not yet,” Cole admitted.

“Aw, Cole. I’m sorry man. Tell you what. After we get out of here, we’ll put all of our attention into helping you find your father,” I said. Cole’s eyes lit up with excitement.

“Really?” Cole asked in surprise. I nodded.

“Yep. I promise,” I agreed.

“I’d hug you, but you’re trapped,” Cole said. I nodded.

“Yep, we are trapped. Hey, think you can get us out of here like you did a while ago?” I asked with hope. Cole nodded, a grin on his face.

“Oh, I can do better,” Cole said.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked.

“Watch.”

We watched as Cole closed his eyes and focused. Suddenly, the lock popped off of the cell door.

“What? Cole, you’re magic?” I asked in surprise. Cole nodded.

“Yeah, I sure am.”

“Cole, how? When? Where?” I asked. I had so many questions in my brain I was pretty sure I would blow up and my thoughts would emerge.

“Relax, I’ll tell you later,” Cole said. After he said that, an alarm blared.

“But first, we’ve got to get you guys out of here,” Cole said. Cole chanted a quick spell and a portal opened. We stared in shock.

“Come on! Into the portal!” Cole said. We were too shocked to move, so he shoved us into the portal. When we were through the portal, we were at the base. We sat down on the couch. I crossed my arms.

“Cole, you’ve got some explaining to do,” I said. Cole looked at me with a confused look on his face.

“What do you mean? What do I have to explain?” Cole asked in a confused tone.

“When did you get magic? Were you always magic? Have you always been magic? What is this?” I demanded.

“I’ll explain in the next chapter,” Cole said.

Chapter 64

How I became Magic

Cole’s POV

My name is Cole Evans. I’m 17 years old, and I have dark brown hair and dark brown eyes, and I’m wearing a grey hoodie, jeans, sneakers and have glasses. Anyway, enough about me. It’s time I tell you guys how I got magic.

I summoned a portal and shoved the team through the portal, taking us to the base. Max raised an eyebrow.

“Well? Are you going to explain how you have magic?” Max asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I am.”

The team waited. I took a deep breath, preparing to tell them how I had magic.

“I’ve had magic in me all along, which is how I managed to pop the lock off so fast,” I said. The team glanced at each other, then at me, confused and concerned looks on their faces. I sighed.

“I knew it sounded crazy. Never mind,” I grumbled. Max put a hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, it’s not crazy. In fact, we believe you. Especially me,” Max said. I smiled.

“Thanks, Max.”

Max nodded.

“Of course, man. Now come on. We’ve got searching to do,” Max said. I gave him a confused look.

“Searching?” I asked. Max nodded.

“What are we searching for?” I asked in a confused tone. Max grinned.

“We’re going to search for your father,” Max said. My eyes widened.

“Really?” I asked eagerly. Max nodded.

“Yep. Now, come on. Let’s get searching,” Max said. I nodded.

“Yeah. Come on, guys. Is there a way we can, like, fly around or something?” I asked. Max nodded.

“Yeah. We have a ship, so we can use that to fly around,” Max said.

“All right. Let’s get in the ship and get searching for my dad,” I said.

Chapter 65

The search for Cole’s Father

Max’s POV

After we loaded into the ship, we went to the cafeteria to discuss any plans we had in terms of finding Cole’s father.

“All right, so what’s our plan?” Paul asked.

“We type in Cole’s father’s name into the computer and hope we can locate him,” I said. Paul stared at me in shock and surprise.

“Is it really that easy?” Paul asked in surprise. I nodded.

“Yeah, it is. I guess we didn’t think of that before,” I admitted.

“Well, what are we sitting around for? Let’s get going,” Jason said. I nodded. We got up and went to the control room. Once in the control room, I turned on the laptop and booted up a tracking software.

“All right, Cole. Put your father’s name in the computer,” I said. Cole entered the name Brycen Evans into the computer. Up came a picture of a muscular man with brown hair and sea green eyes.

“Is this him?” I asked. Cole nodded.

“Yep, that’s my dad,” Cole said.

“All right, cool,” I said.

“So, we’ve entered his dad’s name. Now what?” Jason asked.

“Now we search for him on the map,” I said.

“How do we do that?” Paul asked.

“It’s quite simple, to be honest: all we do is click on the search button then wait a few seconds. After a few seconds, it should show us where he is,” I explained.

“Sounds good. Let’s do it,” Jake said. I hit the search button and we waited a few seconds. After a few seconds of waiting, a map pulled up and showed he was in Maghearth.

“What’s he doing in Maghearth?” I asked in surprise. Cole gasped.

“He’s been captured. He’s in the Fiery Castle!” Cole exclaimed.

“He’s in the what?” I asked in a confused and surprised tone.

“The Fiery Castle is a castle that is on Maghearth,” Cole said.

“I never saw a castle on Maghearth,” I said.

“He keeps it hidden,” Cole said.

“He?” I asked. Cole nodded.

“Yep,” Cole said.

“Who is he?” I asked.

“I…I can’t say.”

“Why not?”

“Names have power, you know. I can’t just go around saying names for no reason,” Cole explained. He had a point.

“Okay, good point.”

“So, what do we do now?” Paul asked. The team looked at me, expecting an answer.

“Let’s go to the Fiery Castle,” I said. Cole opened up a portal and we walked through it, getting teleported to Maghearth. Once at Maghearth, we ran across the bridge and into the town. While running, I hit…something. I don’t know what I hit, as there was nothing there.

“Ow!” I groaned. Whatever I bumped into had enough force to knock me down to the ground. I stumbled back and fell onto the ground. The team helped me up.

“Max, are you okay?” Jake asked. His tone was concerned. I nodded.

“Yeah, I’m okay. What was that?” I asked as I brushed myself off.

“That would be the Fiery Castle, I believe,” Cole said.

“Well, where the heck is it?” I demanded as I looked around the planet.

“It should be in front of us,” Cole said. There was nothing in front of us.

“But there’s nothing in front of us,” I said. My tone made it clear I was confused.

“That’s because there’s an invisibility cloak over the castle,” Cole said. I stared at him, confused and shocked.

“Wait what?” I asked in surprise. My tone was full of confusion. Cole nodded. I glanced at the team; my face full of confusion. They were just as, if not more, confused as I was. Cole was the only one who looked calm and not confused.

“Yep.”

“Wait, if there’s an invisibility cloak over it, how will we get in?” Jason asked.

“Simple: we go through the cloak and the castle will be there. Now, come on guys. We’ve got to save my father,” Cole said. We glanced at each other and shifted uncomfortably. Cole sighed.

“Are you guys coming or not?” Cole asked. We glanced at him, a nervous look in our eyes, but we had to be strong for his sake. I took a deep breath and stepped forward to him.

“I’m going with you, Cole,” I decided. Cole shrugged.

“All right. Sounds good. Anyone else?”

The team was still nervous, but I guess they decided they should be strong for Cole’s sake, so they stepped forward.

“I guess we’re all going,” I said. Cole nodded.

“All right. Then let’s do it,” Cole said. We walked into the invisible cloak, where the castle was standing.

Chapter 66

The Fiery Castle

Max’s POV

This is going to make me sound like a nerd, but when I saw the Fiery Castle up close, I was blown away by how big it was and how well-built it was as well. There was a lava moat and no bridge, but across the moat was a lever to pull out the bridge. The team looked at me, waiting for me to do something. I looked at the lava, then at the team. Jake nodded, encouraging me to go into the lava. I felt like I didn’t have a choice. Cole’s father was in there, and if we were going to save him, then I needed to swim into the lava to get the bridge. I jumped headfirst into the lava an swam to the other side of the moat. When I got there, I waved to the team to let them know I had made it across.

“Max! Pull the lever!” Ash called from across the moat. I found the lever, which was next to me, and I pulled it. When I pulled it, a bridge came out from the moat. The team went across the bridge. Once we were all on the other side of the moat, we opened the doors to the castle and stepped inside of the Fiery Castle. I caught my breath, as I was amazed. I wanted to go run around and check out everything, but I guess Ash learned his lesson at the Red Castle, because he caught my arm.

“No, Max. We’re not going to go exploring,” Ash said sternly.

“Aww! Why not?” I complained. I didn’t care that I sounded like a little kid.

“Because we have to find Cole’s father and help him. How about this: after we find and help Cole’s father, we can explore all you want, okay?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, that sounds good,” I said.

We looked around our surroundings to see if we could find any clues as to where Cole’s father was, or where he was being kept, if he was captured at all.

I tried to think. If I were being captured, where would I be held hostage? That’s when I remembered: the basement. I started looking around the castle to see if I could find any sort of clues as to a basement or stairs that led downstairs.

“Max, what are you doing?” Ash asked.

“I’m searching for a basement or any sort of stairs that lead downstairs,” I said.

“Why?” Jason asked.

“Because when I was captured, I was being held hostage downstairs in a dungeon,” I said as I continued to search.

“But Max, how do we know he’s not being held hostage upstairs?” Cole asked. He had a point. I shrugged, as I didn’t have an answer.

“I…don’t know. That’s actually a really good point,” I admitted.

“So, then what should we do?” Jake asked.

The team looked at me, expecting guidance or some sort of answer.

“I guess we can just look around or check any places as to where Cole’s dad might be. I honestly don’t know,” I admitted.

“So, what do we do now?” Paul asked. I shrugged.

“I guess just look around the castle for any clues as to where Cole’s dad might be,” I said. We started to look around for clues as to a downstairs or an upstairs floor. After what felt like hours of searching, I found an elevator.

“Hey, guys! There’s an elevator!” I exclaimed.

“Why didn’t you tell us that before?” Jason demanded.

“It wasn’t here before. Or at least I don’t think it was. I just noticed it right now,” I admitted. Jason grunted like he was happy I had an excuse about it.

“Why the grunt?” I demanded.

“Eh, no reason. It’s just that I find it odd that you didn’t notice the elevator until now,” Jason said in a snappy tone.

“Okay, what is your problem?” I asked. Jason gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” Jason asked in a confused tone.

“I mean why did you ask that in a snappy tone? It seems like you’re mad at me,” I noticed. Jason shrugged.

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe I am mad at you,” Jason snapped.

“Why are you mad at me? What did I do?” I demanded.

“We have been searching for hours and you just now tell us about an elevator!” Jason shouted in an angry tone.

“Because I just noticed it!” I protested.

“Well maybe if you actually looked and used your brain you would have noticed earlier!” Jason snapped.

“How do you expect me to notice it if it wasn’t there?” I demanded in a yell.

“Wait what?” Jason asked. I nodded.

“It wasn’t there before. It just appeared,” I said. Jason gave me a skeptical look.

“Uh huh. Sure it wasn’t,” Jason snapped.

“He’s telling the truth,” Cole said. Jason crossed his arms.

“Oh really? How is he telling the truth? What is his proof?” Jason asked.

“The elevator shows up randomly,” Cole said. Jason raised an eyebrow, showing he didn’t believe Cole.

“How could it show up randomly? There has to be some sort of reason or logic behind this,” Jason insisted. Cole shrugged.

“The elevator only shows up when he wants it to,” Cole said.

“He?” Jason asked. Cole nodded.

“Who is he?”

“I can’t say.”

“Why not?” Jason demanded.

“Dude, did you not pay attention when I said names have power and that I can’t just go around saying them?” Cole demanded.

“That’s not important,” Jason decided.

“What?” Cole asked in a confused tone.

“I said that’s not important,” Jason repeated.

“Then what is important?” Cole demanded.

“What’s important is finding out who this guy is and why the elevator randomly appeared,” Jason said. Cole shrugged.

“Okay then. Whatever you say,” Cole mumbled.

“So, who is this guy?” Jason asked.

“Dude, I’ve literally told you three times now. I can’t say who he is!” Cole shouted.

“Why won’t you just tell me? Oh, wait. I know why. You’re scared,” Jason said.

“I’m not scared,” Cole said quietly. Jason put a hand to his ear, making it look like he couldn’t hear Cole.

“Oh, is someone talking? All I hear is a scared little kid,” Jason said.

“You know what? I don’t care anymore. His name is Emperor Troy Sloan!” Cole yelled. His voice echoed throughout the castle. A loud BOOM shook the building. The elevator dinged and the doors opened. We looked at the elevator. Nobody was inside.

“What should we do?” Jason asked.

“Isn’t it obvious? We have to go into the elevator,” Cole said. Jason shook his head, a scared expression on his face.

“N-no way. We’re not doing that,” Jason stammered. Cole glanced from the elevator to Jason, looking amused.

“Why not? Are you scared?” Cole asked in an imitation of Jason. Jason shook his head. He hesitated to speak.

“N-no. Of course not,” Jason said after a moment of silence. He sounded nervous. Cole raised an eyebrow.

“Really? Because it sure sounds like you’re scared,” Cole noticed. Martha went over to Jason, glaring at Cole.

“Guys, that’s enough,” Martha said sternly. She put a hand on Jason’s shoulder.

“Babe,” Martha started. Jason looked at her, tears in his eyes.

“What?” Jason muttered.

“Tell the truth. Are you scared?” Martha asked in a concerned voice. Jason hesitated. After some hesitation, he finally nodded.

“I-yes, I am scared,” Jason admitted.

“Why are you scared? What are you scared about?” Martha asked in a calming voice.

“I’m scared we’ll get lured into a trap and get hurt. I’m worried one of us might die or get seriously injured,” Jake blurted, going faster by the word. Cole put a hand on Jason’s shoulder.

“Dude, why didn’t you just say?” Cole asked.

“I was worried you would make fun of me,” Jason admitted.

“Aw, dude. It’s all right to feel scared. Honestly, I was scared to say Troy’s name, but now that I’ve said it, I’m not scared anymore. And if you’re scared we might get hurt, well, you don’t have to go into the elevator with us. It’s okay if you don’t want to,” Cole said. Jason shook his head.

“No, I’ll go, I guess…”

“Jason, listen to me. You don’t have to go if you don’t want to,” Cole insisted. Jason took a deep breath and nodded.

“You’re right. Besides, I should probably keep watch,” Jason said.

“Why?”

“In case some bad guys come out here and want to fight you guys.”

“Like who? Who would be able to come down here?” Cole asked.

After he asked that, golden lights appeared. When they faded, demons with sharp claws and massive bat wings were there.

“Apparently these guys would be able to come down here,” Jason said.

“We’ll fight them,” Jake said. Jason shook his head.

“No. You guys should go. Get Cole’s father,” Jason insisted.

“What about you?” Paul asked.

“I’ll hold them off. Now go,” Jason said. Martha shook her head.

“Babe, no. You can’t fight them by yourself. You could die trying,” Martha said. Jason shrugged and sighed.

“Well, then I guess I’ll die,” Jason said. Martha took Jason’s hand, shaking her head. Tears streamed down her face.

“No, Jason. Please. Don’t do this!” Martha pleaded.

“Babe, I have t-.”

Jason’s sentence got cut off because he got slashed in the back.

“Jason!” Martha screamed.

“I’m okay. Go,” Jason croaked. Paul stood by Jason.

“I’m fighting with you,” Paul said. Jason shook his head.

“Paul, no. Don’t,” Jason said weakly.

“Why not?” Paul demanded.

“You could die,” Jason said.

“I don’t care if I die. You’ve been my best friend for three years. I’m not leaving your side,” Paul insisted.

“Paul…Don’t worry about me. Go save Cole’s father,” Jason instructed. He managed to stand, wincing in pain. We stared in shock at Jason, as we weren’t wanting to leave him.

“Go!” Jason snapped.

Before we could protest, Jason shoved us in the elevator and pushed the button, closing the door.

Jason’s POV

I shoved the team into the elevator and faced the demon creatures. I raised my sword. The demons stared at me, waiting for me to make my move. I shook my head.

“You guys first,” I told the demons. That was a big mistake. The demons possessed me and grabbed my sword, pointing it at my heart. I tried to restrain them from stabbing me, but they were too powerful and ended up stabbing me in the heart. I yelled in pain. My tone softened. My breath slowed down. Red spots appeared in my vision. I was dying.

Max’s POV

Martha heard Jason yell in pain and tried to claw open the doors. We held her back.

“Why are you holding me back? Let me go!” Martha demanded.

“Martha, you can’t go back,” I said.

“Why not?” Martha demanded. Just then, my phone rang. I­ answered it.

“Hello?” I asked.

“Max, it’s Jason,” Jason said.

“Jason, are you okay?” I asked in concern.

“I don’t think so. Max, I’m dying. Tell Martha…Tell her I love her,” Jason said. I choked back a sob.

“Okay. I-I will,” I managed.

“Thank you,” Jason said. Those were his last words before he hung up. I stared at the team in shock.

“What happened? Is Jason okay?” Martha asked. I shook my head.

“He’s…” my voice faded.

“He’s what? Max, what happened?” Martha demanded. I hesitated to tell them what happened. I was trying to hold my emotions in, but it was hard.

“He’s gone,” I said. I broke down crying. If I thought I was crying bad, Martha had it way worse. She broke down on the floor bawling. I wrapped Martha into a hug.

“Martha, I am so sorry,” I said. Martha shook her head and wiped her eyes.

“It’s okay, Max. You did all you could,” Martha said. I nodded.

“Yeah. I did try, didn’t I?” I asked in a quiet voice, sniffing and allowing tears to fall. The team glanced at me, concerned looks on their faces.

“Max, why the sad face? Why the tears?” Jake asked in a calm voice. I sighed.

“It’s all my fault Jason died,” I muttered.

“Dude how is it your fault?” Paul asked.

“I should have convinced him to go with us and save Cole’s father, but I didn’t, and now he’s dead,” I said, sniffing. Paul shook his head.

“That doesn’t mean it’s your fault,” Paul said. I gave him a skeptical look.

Oh yeah? How is that not my fault?” I asked.

“Well, it was his choice. You didn’t really have a say in his choice. That’s how it wasn’t your fault,” Paul said in an assuring tone. I admit that made me feel a little better, but not by much. I nodded.

“I guess that’s true. How else was it not my fault?” I asked in a quiet tone. Paul had to think about that for a second.

‘”Well, why do you think it is your fault?” Paul asked in a calm voice.

“I didn’t step into help him in the fight,” I said. Paul nodded.

“That may be true, but just know I think Jason didn’t want your help.”

I sighed.

“That’s great to know,” I said with sarcasm. Paul sighed. It was clear he was trying to help me and to make me feel better, and I was willing to bet I wasn’t making this easy. I sighed with sadness from thinking about the thought. Paul noticed and looked at me in concern.

“Dude, why the sad sigh?” Paul asked. I shrugged.

“I feel like I’m making this hard for you,” I admitted. Paul gave me a confused look.

“Making what harder?” Paul asked in a confused tone.

“You’re trying so hard to cheer me up, while all I’m doing is arguing and making up excuses as to how his death was my fault,” I said in a sad tone.

“Eh, it’s no big deal,” Paul said. I stared at Paul like he was crazy.

“How can it’s no big deal? He died! For god’s sake, Paul, it is a big deal! I just keep making everything worse!” I snapped. The pressure was too much. I broke down sobbing. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, bud. Why are you crying?” Jake asked in a calm voice.

“Because I realize all I do is make everything in life worse. I make life miserable for everyone,” I said while sniffing. Jake shook his head.

“Max, you know that’s not true. You’re just being hard on yourself,” Jake said. I gave him a skeptical look, showing I didn’t believe him.

“How is it not true? Think about it, Jake. Every time I don’t get what I want, I break down and complain like a stupid little kid. Because that’s what I am. I’m just a stupid little kid who makes life hard for everyone,” I muttered. Jake took my hand and made me look at him.

“Max, please. Stop being so hard on yourself. That isn’t true and you know it. Besides, if it were true, what would you have done when you wanted to ask me out but you were nervous?” Jake asked.

“I would have not done it because I was too nervous and the nervousness would get the best of me,” I said. Jake nodded.

“Exactly. Now, what did you do about that nervousness later on?” Jake asked.

“I overcame it and got the courage to ask you out.”

Jake nodded again.

“So, what do you think you should do about this feeling?”

“I should overcome it and get over the fact that it wasn’t my fault Jason died,” I said. Jake grinned.

“That’s my Max.”

“So, I hate to interrupt the nice moment you guys are having, but what are we going to do now?” Paul asked. I had to think about that for a second. I had no idea what we were going to do next. I had no plan because I hadn’t even thought of that yet. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I don’t know. Maybe we can get to the top of the castle or wherever this elevator takes us and hope it leads to Cole’s father,” I said.

“And if it doesn’t lead to Cole’s father?” Chloe asked. I shrugged.

“Then I guess we’ll have ourselves a talk with Troy Sloan. I honestly have no idea,” I admitted. I sighed in annoyance at the fact that I had no plans.

“Oh my god. Why do I never have a plan for anything?” I muttered to myself. Paul put a hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, you need to stop being so hard on yourself. You always have a plan,” Paul said in a calm tone. I looked at him with a confused look.

“Oh yeah? Like what?” I asked in a demanding tone.

“Well, you had the plan to tell us about your dreams. You had a plan to keep the team together, no matter what would happen. You had a plan to save Jake when he died. Correct me if I’m wrong, but you seem to have a plan a lot of the time,” Paul said. He had a point. I nodded, thinking to myself of what the plan would be this time. I thought of possible scenarios that would happen when we reached wherever this elevator was taking us. After that, I formed ideas of what we would do, along with what happens if everything else fails. I stood up, a grin creeping up my face.

“I have a plan,” I said. Paul faced me.

“What is it?” Paul asked.

“Well, we have to think. What do we think is going to happen when we get to wherever this elevator is taking us?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“That would depend on where the elevator is taking us,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Right. Which is why we’ll need to think of any possible place this elevator could be taking us.”

“But, Max. We have no idea where it could be taking us,” Martha said. She had a point. Cole stepped over to us.

“I might know where we’re going,” Cole said.

“Where?” Wendy asked.

“Well, you know how we’re going up?” Cole asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. So?” I asked.

“So, if we’re going up, we should think about places above us,” Cole said. He had a point. I nodded.

“He’s right. Guys, we need to think about what could be above us,” I said. The team nodded.

“Okay. Well, there could be a throne room above us,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Good thinking. Maybe there’s a throne room above us,” I said. We rode the elevator in silence.

“So, what do we do if something bad happens when the elevator stops?” Paul asked. I gave Paul a confused look.

“What do you mean? Like what?” I asked.

After I asked that, the elevator doors dinged. The doors opened, revealing an army of girls with bows and arrows. One was a tall blonde girl. One was a short brown-haired girl. One was a medium-sized girl with black hair.

“Uhh, hi,” I started.

“Can it, blondie,” the tall girl snapped.

“My bad,” I said quickly.

“What are you teenagers doing here? Don’t you know he’s coming to capture us?” the brown-haired girl asked.

“He?” Paul asked.

“Troy Sloan,” Cole muttered. The girls nodded, but had a worried look in their eyes.

“Yeah. H-how do you know?” the black-haired girl asked in shock.

“He took my dad. We’re going to the top of the castle to get him,” Cole explained. The brown-haired girl cupped her hand into Cole’s. She gave him a worried look.

“So, he’s the one who stole Father?” she asked. Cole nodded. I glanced between Cole and the girl, giving them a confused look.

“Wait, hold on a minute,” I started.

“What is it, Max?” Cole asked.

“She said father?” I asked. Cole nodded.

“Yep, she did. Why?”

“Are you guys…related?” I managed to ask. Cole and the girl nodded.

“Yep, we are. Guys, this is my sister, Maria,” Cole said.

“Nice to meet you, Maria,” I said as I stuck out my hand for her to shake.

“Nice to meet you, too,” Maria said, shaking my hand.

“So, uh. What do we do now?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“I don’t know to be honest,” I admitted. I sighed and looked at the team.

“Does anyone have any ideas of what we’re going to do now?” I asked. Paul nodded.

“I’ve got an idea,” Paul said.

“Let’s hear it,” Martha said.

“Let’s go up the elevator, wherever it takes us, and get Cole’s father,” Paul suggested. I sighed in annoyance. Jake looked at me, concerned.

“What’s wrong, Max?” Jake asked in a concerned tone.

“Nothing, I just completely forgot about Cole’s father,” I admitted, looking at Cole helplessly, as I had no idea what to do next. Cole noticed, and put a hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, Max. It’s okay. I understand that you’re distracted because of Jason’s death. We all are,” Cole said. I nodded.

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. So, like Jake asked, what now?” Cole asked. I faced Paul.

“We do what Paul suggested,” I said.

“Which is?” Chloe asked.

“Go up the elevator and get Cole’s father,” Paul repeated.

“Sounds like a plan,” Wendy said. The team faced me. I nodded.

“Let’s go get Cole’s father,” I said. We closed the elevator doors and went up.

Chapter 67

Emperor Troy Sloan

Max’s POV

Remember when Paul said we would get Cole’s father? Well, we got him, but not the way we expected. We went up in the elevator. A few floors later, the elevator stopped. The elevator dinged. The team looked at me.

“I don’t think we’re at the top floor yet,” I said. Martha gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” Martha asked.

“Well, we’ve only gone up a few floors.”

“Okay. So? Maybe we are at the top floor,” Martha said. She had a point, but something didn’t feel right to me.

“Okay, that’s a good point. But something doesn’t feel right,” I said. The team gave me confused looks.

“Why not? What do you think is going to happen?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“I’m not sure, to be honest. But I feel like something bad is going to happen,” I said.

“Like what?” Paul asked. The doors opened, revealing an army of skeleton warriors. At the back of the army, behind all the skeletons, was a man in robes.

“Like that.”

Paul squinted to get a better look at the man.

“Who is that?” Paul asked. Cole looked terrified.

“Emperor Troy Sloan,” Cole muttered in a scared voice. Paul stared at Cole in surprise. He moved his lips, but no sound came out.

“What did you just say?” Paul managed after a minute of silence.

“That’s Emperor Troy Sloan,” Cole repeated.

“That’s bad, right?” Paul asked. Cole nodded.

“Very bad.”

“Oh boy,” Paul said in a weak tone.

“Guys, we don’t have to be afraid,” I said. That was easier said that done. I tried my best to sound upbeat and brave when I was terrified on the inside. Martha stared at me like I was crazy.

“What do you mean we don’t have to be afraid? Max, I’m literally terrified!” Martha snapped.

“Guys, listen to me. Don’t be scared, terrified or even afraid. Just calm down,” I said in a calm yet shaky voice. Wendy stared at me with a look of confusion on her face.

“What? Max, what do you mean? How are we supposed to calm down?” Wendy demanded.

“Just take deep breaths. Fight the fear. It’s what’s holding back our energy and courage and determination and motivation to fight. We can do this. We will get revenge on these people for Jason’s death,” I said. The team looked at me like I had lost my mind, except for Jake, who nodded and put a hand on my shoulder.

“Max is right. We have to avenge Jason. We have to fight for Jason’s honor. He wouldn’t want us to be afraid, would he?” Jake asked. The team fell silent. Martha shook her head.

“He wouldn’t want us to be afraid. He would want us to be strong and fight,” Martha said. I nodded.

“That’s right,” I said. Paul looked at me, hopelessness in his eyes.

“So, what do we do, Max?” Paul asked.

“We fight,” I said.

We pulled out our weapons and charged at the army of skeletons. That was a bad idea, because the skeletons were smart. They quickly disarmed us and pinned us to the wall. We groaned in pain. Troy giggled in amusement, as he was enjoying this so much while we were not.

“Oh, wow. I thought this would be harder, Max,” Troy said. He sighed with fake sympathy. I growled and gritted my teeth in anger.

“What do you want from us?” I demanded. Troy laughed in a mean way, like a bully who just made a kid cry.

“Oh, you should know what I want, Max,” Troy sneered. I gave Troy a confused look and shook my head with confusion.

“I don’t know what you want. Also, how do you know my name?” I demanded. Troy shook his head, chuckling.

“Oh, Max. You see, I know your name because I know everything. I have eyes everywhere,” Troy said. I gave him a look of confusion.

“How is that possible that you have eyes everywhere?” I asked.

“Simple: I have henchmen who go around watching you and report back to me.”

“That explains a lot. But what do you want?” I demanded. Troy once again chuckled.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Troy asked. I shook my head.

“Uh, no. It isn’t,” I said. Troy sighed in annoyance, as he was annoyed with me and my stupidity. He pointed to Cole.

“I want that kid dead,” Troy snapped, shaking his finger at Cole. We glanced at Cole, who had a look of confusion on his face.

“Why do you want Cole dead?” Jake asked.

“Isn’t it obvious, Jake? He said my name,” Troy snapped.

“So? Why is that such a big deal?” I demanded. Troy chuckled.

“Don’t you know, Max? Names have power, duh!” Troy sneered.

“Yes, I knew that,” I said. Troy raised an eyebrow, as if he could sense that I didn’t.

“No, you didn’t know that,” Troy said. I sighed with fake sympathy.

“You’re right. I didn’t,” I admitted. Troy chuckled.

“Yeah, I know I’m right,” Troy snapped.

“Okay, whatever. I know that you know that you’re right. Now, what do you want from us?” I demanded. Troy sighed in annoyance.

“I already told you. I want Cole dead!” Troy boomed.

“But why? Just because he said your name-,” I started.

“Shut up! Henchmen, take them to the top floor dungeon,” Troy said.

“Isn’t that where Cole’s dad is?” Jake asked. Troy sighed.

“Why would I tell you that?” Troy asked in a snappy tone. Paul shrugged.

“I don’t know. I was just hoping you’d tell us,” Paul said. Troy laughed.

“Again, why would I tell you?” Troy asked.

“To help us,” Paul said. Troy shook his head.

“You really think I would help you?” Troy asked. Paul nodded.

“Yeah. I really thought you would,” Paul admitted. Troy chuckled.

“Ha! You’re funny if you think I’ll help you. I won’t,” Troy said. For some reason, his tone sounded scared. It was almost as if he was nervous about something…

“Troy, are you nervous or scared about something?” I asked. Troy turned his gaze from Paul to me.

“What did you just say?” Troy asked.

“Are you nervous or scared about something?” I repeated. Troy hesitated, and shook his head.

“N-no, of course not! Why would you think that?” Troy demanded.

“Troy, I can tell something or someone is scaring you or making you nervous,” I said. Troy stared at me I amazement.

“How did you know?” Troy asked in a stunned tone. I shrugged.

“I knew from the tone of your voice. Now, dude. Don’t be scared. Just tell us what’s scaring you or making you nervous,” I said calmly. Troy hesitated, but took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell us what was bothering him.

“Okay, do you want to know what’s bothering me?” Troy asked. We nodded.

“Yeah,” I said. Troy took another deep breath.

“I don’t want to have Cole or his father dead,” Troy said. We gave him confused looks.

“What do you mean? If you don’t want me or my father dead, then why did you say you wanted that?” Cole asked.

“I was told to have you both dead,” Troy admitted.

“What? By whom?” Paul asked. Troy hesitated.

“His name is Lord Varkon,” Troy finally said after some silence.

“What did he do?” I asked. Troy shook his head, hesitating to tell us.

“He…No, I can’t say,” Troy said after hesitation.

“Why not?” Jake asked.

“He can hear us,” Troy said in a quiet voice. His tone made it clear he was scared. I gave Troy a confused look.

“Wait what? How can he hear us?” I asked, my tone full of confusion. Troy turned around, facing away from me, and pointed to the back of his neck.

“He put a tracker on me,” Troy said.

“Where?” I asked.

“On the back of my neck.”

“Oh. So, how do we get it off?”

Troy shrugged, then his eyes widened with surprise and eagerness.

“You can burn the tracker off,” Troy said with eager in his voice. I shook my head.

“No, I can’t,” I said. Troy’s expression softened with confusion.

“Why not?” Troy asked.

“Because Dominic took our powers,” I grumbled, glaring at Dominic, who laughed nervously.

“Oh yeah. Sorry about that. I’ll give you your powers back,” Dominic said. He reached into his pocket and pulled out nothing. I raised an eyebrow.

“So? Are we getting our powers back or what?” I asked. Dominic nodded nervously.

“Yeah, just give me a sec,” Dominic said in a rushed, panicked voice. He scrambled his hands around his pockets.

“Aw, god dang it, where is it?” Dominic muttered to himself in annoyance.

“Where’s what?” I asked. Dominic looked up.

“Huh?” Dominic asked.

“Where’s what?” I repeated. Dominic sighed, knowing he couldn’t lie his way out of this.

“Where’s the orb?” Dominic finally asked after some silence. I stared at him.

“What do you mean where’s the orb?” I asked. Dominic shrugged, and sighed in annoyance.

“I don’t know where it is,” Dominic admitted. I stared at Dominic in disbelief.

“You don’t know where the orb is?” I demanded. Dominic shook his head.

“Nope, I have no idea where the orb is,” Dominic said.

“Dude, how could you not know where the orb is? Wasn’t it in your pocket?” I asked in a demanding tone. Dominic nodded.

“Yeah, it was. Now it’s not.”

“How could it just be gone? There has to be someone who took it,” I said. Dominic shrugged.

“Maybe nobody took it,” Dominic said. I gave him a confused look.

“What do you mean?” I asked in a confused tone. Dominic sighed, clearly annoyed with me.

“I mean maybe I just forgot it somewhere,” Dominic admitted. I sighed, annoyed.

“Dude, how could you not know where your device is?” I demanded in a yelling tone. Dominic threw his hands in the air in protest.

“Well, what do you want me to do, huh?” Dominic snapped.

“I don’t know, maybe look for it!” I shouted. I was about to charge at Dominic, but Jake must have known what I was thinking because he held me back.

“Woah, Max. Calm down, bud,” Jake said calmly.

“Why should I calm down? Huh?” I demanded. Jake gave me a confused look.

“Dude, what are you even upset about?” Jake asked in a calm but confused tone. I sighed in a way that expressed the fact that I was stressed.

“Honestly, I don’t know. I guess I’m just upset that I don’t have my powers, so I can’t help get the tracker off of Troy,” I admitted. I sighed. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, Max. Listen to me,” Jake started. I looked at him.

“What?” I mumbled.

“I can freeze the tracker off of Troy,” Jake said. I gave him a confused look.

“How?” I asked.

“Don’t you remember? I have my powers still from…You know, working for Dominic,” Jake said. His tone made it clear he was ashamed.

“Do it then. Freeze the tracker off Troy,” I said. Jake nodded and walked over to Troy.

“Troy, turn around so you’re not facing me,” Jake instructed. Troy nodded and did as he was told.

“This is going to feel really cold, but it’s going to get the tracker out of you. Are you ready?” Jake asked calmly. Troy nodded.

“Do it. I’m ready,” Troy said. Jake closed his eyes and concentrated on making frost. A few seconds later, Jake’s hands turned blue from frost, and Troy’s neck became blue until we heard a CRACK from his neck, and a small frozen…thing fell from his neck. He nodded and looked back at Jake, signaling him that it was good to stop.

“Okay, you can stop. It’s gone now,” Troy said. Jake nodded and stopped his frost.

“Did it come off?” Jake asked. Troy nodded.

“Yes, it did,” Troy said.

“Cool. So, what now?” Jake asked. Troy shrugged.

“I’m not sure,” Troy admitted.

“I have an idea,” Paul said. We turned to face him.

“What’s your idea, Paul?” Martha asked.

“Well, I was thinking we could go up in the elevator and get Cole’s father, which I’ve already suggested like three times now,” Paul said. Ash nodded.

“That sounds like a good idea. Let’s do it,” Ash said. I nodded.

“All right, guys. Let’s go get Cole’s father back,” I said. We went into the elevator and pressed the button to go up.

Chapter 68

Lord Varkon

Max’s POV

We went up a few floors until the elevator stopped. Troy had a nervous look in his eyes. I glanced at Troy with a scared look in my eyes, as I was reacting to his expression.

“Troy? Is everything okay, dude?” I asked in a nervous tone. Troy hesitated, but nodded after a few seconds of hesitation.

“Y-yeah, everything is fine,” Troy said in a nervous tone. I raised an eyebrow and crossed my arms.

“Troy, something is bothering you. Dude, just tell us what’s bothering you,” I said calmly. Troy hesitated to speak and shook his head.

“N-no, I’d rather not,” Troy managed. I sighed in annoyance.

“Why not?” I asked in a demanding tone. Troy sighed sadly.

“Fine. You want to know what’s bothering me so much?” Troy asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I do,” I said in a somewhat annoyed tone.

“Okay. The reason I’m nervous is because Lord Varkon is on the floor we’re on right now,” Troy said, his tone more nervous.

“Wait what?” Wendy asked in surprise. Troy nodded. I was about to say we should go up another floor, but the doors opened. When the doors opened, we were faced with an army of spirits. At the back of the army was a man in armor. The man fixed his gaze on Troy and scowled in anger.

“Hello, Varkon,” Troy said.

“Hello, Troy,” Varkon scowled.

“What do you want? Why have you stopped us here?” Troy asked.

“You revealed you’re working for me, did you not?” Varkon asked. Troy nodded.

“I did, yes,” Troy admitted.

“And for that, you must die,” Varkon snapped.

“Wait,” Troy said quickly.

“What is it?” Varkon demanded.

“Can I ask you something before you kill me?” Troy pleaded. Varkon sighed.

“Fine. What do you want to ask?” Varkon asked in an annoyed tone.

“Let Max and his team save Cole’s father. That is my request,” Troy said. I shook my head.

“Troy, no. Don’t end your life for us,” I said. Troy turned to face me sadly.

“I have to, Max. It’s what’s right,” Troy said. He turned back to Varkon and nodded.

“I’m ready to die now,” Troy said sadly. Varkon laughed and pulled out his sword. He raised it above his head.

“Sorry not sorry, Troy,” Varkon scowled. And with that, Varkon stabbed Troy, killing him.

Chapter 69

Getting Cole’s Father

Max’s POV

After Varkon stabbed Troy, I charged at him and stabbed him, killing him. After I killed him, the elevator doors closed and we went up a few floors until the elevator dinged and the doors opened. When the doors opened, we were in a dungeon. There was a man in a cage. Cole’s eyes widened when he saw the man, and he rushed over to him.

“Dad!” Cole exclaimed.

“Cole!” his father said with an eager tone.

“I’m going to get you out of here,” Cole said in a determined voice. His father gave him a confused look.

“Cole, how are you going to get me out? The cage is locked shut,” Cole’s father said. Cole smiled.

“I can pick the lock,” Cole said. Before his dad could question, Cole used his magic and the cage door opened. His dad was too in shock to speak.

“Thank you,” he managed. Cole nodded.

“You’re welcome. Now let’s get out of here,” Cole said. He opened a portal, and we all went through the portal. When we got through the portal, we were at our mansion on Mount Dorson.

“So, what do we do now?” Jake asked. Cole shrugged.

“Well, my dad and I have a lot of catching up to do, so I guess we’ll be leaving,” Cole said. Cole and his father walked off into the distance.

Chapter 70

Farewell

Max’s POV

After Cole and his father left, I faced the team.

“So, what are we going to do now?” Jake asked. I shrugged, as I didn’t know.

“Honestly, I don’t know. But we did it, guys. We saved the world,” I said. The team nodded and we came into a group hug.

“Well, I say we celebrate,” Paul said. We nodded. Everyone went inside, but I stayed behind. Jake noticed and walked over to me.

“Hey, are you okay?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“Honestly, I don’t know. I’m happy and sad at the same time,” I admitted.

“About what?” Jake asked.

“I guess I’m happy because we saved the world, but I’m also sad because Jason is gone and now we don’t have any quests left to do,” I said. Something flew overhead and crashed somewhere far in the distance. Jake and I glanced at each other.

“What was that?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“I don’t know. But whatever it is, I’m sure it can wait another day before we go off again,” I said. Jake nodded.

“You ready to go inside?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Let’s go,” I said. Jake went inside. I took one glance outside, wondering what that was that crashed. Whatever it was, good or bad, I wasn’t going to worry about it. Not yet, anyway.

I turned my back to the sun. I thought about the fact that we had saved the world. A grin crept on my face, and I walked inside to join the team.

???’s POV

My ship crashed in a mountain. I knew I was at Mount Dorson, the home of the Gods. I scowled in disgust as I thought about them and their children, especially Max. I groaned in pain as I managed to stand. I glared at the mansion.

“I’m coming for you, Max Wilson. Soon, but not today.”

Chapter 71

Life without Jason

Max’s POV

It’s been a day since we got Cole reunited with his father. That means it’s been a day since Jason’s death. If I’m being fully honest, I don’t know how I feel. Like, yeah. I’m sad and all, but also kind of glad, I guess, since he no longer has to deal with pain or suffer anymore. I miss him so much. Everyone does, to be honest, but I bet nobody misses Jason more than Paul and Martha. I was in the mansion looking for Jason. I knocked on Jake’s bedroom door.

“Who is it?” Jake asked.

“It’s Max,” I replied. Jake opened the door. He was wearing a grey T-shirt under an unzipped light green jacket, jeans and sneakers. I was wearing a red T-shirt under a black jacket, jeans and sneakers.

“Hey, Max. What’s up?” Jake asked.

“Hey, I’m looking for Jason. I can’t seem to find him anywhere in the mansion. Have you seen him?” I asked. Jake’s expression went from normal to concerned.

“Maybe you should come into my room,” Jake suggested. I shrugged, not knowing why he offered, but I decided to follow him into his room. He closed the door and motioned for me to sit on the bed. I sat on the bed.

“So, is there a reason you wanted me to come in here?” I asked, a confused expression on my face. Jake nodded.

“Yeah. I just have to tell you something,” Jake said. I gave him a confused glance.

“What do you have to tell me?” I asked in confusion. Jake took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell me.

“The reason you haven’t seen Jason is because…” Jake’s voice faded.

“He’s dead,” I finished for him. Jake nodded.

“Yeah, he’s dead. So, wait. You know he’s dead?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. Why?”

“If you knew he was dead, why were you looking for him?” Jake asked with confusion in his tone. I sighed and shrugged.

“Honestly, I don’t know. I guess I just…” My voice faded. Jake put a hand on my shoulder, giving me a calm look.

“You miss him, don’t you?” Jake asked. I nodded. I was trying to not let tears fall, but I guess the pressure was too much, because I felt my cheeks get wet.

“Yeah. Yeah, I miss him. I miss him a lot. I don’t know how to feel. Like, I feel like I’m going to just break down crying, but I just can’t get myself to do it,” I admitted. Jake smiled slightly.

“Well, bud. It’s okay to not know how to feel. If you need to cry, then cry. Nobody here will judge you because we all miss Jason,” Jake said calmly. I nodded.

“Yeah, good point. So, um I was going to check on the team. You know, to see how they’re doing about Jason’s death and all. You want to come with?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“I guess so. I don’t have anything better to do,” Jake decided. We went over to Ash’s room and knocked on the door to check on him. Ash was wearing a dark green hoodie, sneakers, and jeans. We left Ash’s room and went to Wendy’s room. She was wearing a pink hoodie, jeans and was barefoot. We left Wendy’s room and went to Chloe’s room. Chloe was wearing a purple hoodie, sweatpants and was barefoot. We left Chloe’s room and went to Paul’s room. Paul was wearing a black hoodie, gym shorts and was barefoot. We left Paul’s room and went to Martha’s room. She was wearing a teal T-shirt, jeans, and sandals. We watched as Paul and Martha left the mansion and went off on their quest to save Jason.

Ash’s POV

I heard a knock at my door.

“Who is it?” I snapped.

“Max and Jake,” Max said. I opened the door.

“What do you guys want?” I demanded. Max and Jake glanced at each other with confused faces, then looked at me with worried looks on their faces.

“Are you okay, Ash?” Max asked in a calm and concerned tone. I shook my head, scowling in disgust.

“Do you *think* I’m okay?” I demanded angrily. Max put a hand on my shoulder but I brushed it off.

“Dude, what’s wrong?” Max asked in a calm yet annoyed tone. I sighed in annoyance, frustration and sadness all in one.

“It’s Jason,” I said.

“Do you miss him?” Jake asked calmly. I shrugged and sighed.

“I don’t know,” I admitted. Jake put a hand on my shoulder and gave me a calm look.

“Dude, it’s okay to not know how to feel,” Jake said calmly. I nodded.

“Yeah, you’re right,” I said.

“So, we were just checking in on everybody. Ya know, making sure they’re okay after Jason’s death and all. Want to come with us?” Max asked. I shrugged.

“I mean, I’ve got nothing better to do, so sure. I might as well join you guys,” I said.

Wendy’s POV

Ever since Jason died, I’ve been feeling…different. I feel like I’ve become more distant from the rest of the team, which to me isn’t a good thing. I feel like I just want to lock myself in my room and cry for the rest of my life. Just then, I heard a knock at my door.

“Who is it?” I mumbled sadly.

“It’s Max, Jake and Ash,” Jake replied. I opened my door.

“What are you guys doing here?” I asked sniffing and wiping my eyes. They looked at me, concerned.

“Wendy, are you okay? Were you crying?” Max asked in a concerned tone. I sniffed.

“Yes,” I admitted.

“Why?” Jake asked calmly.

“I miss Jason,” I sobbed. I hugged Max. He hugged back, stroking my back to calm me down.

“Hey, shh. It’s okay. We’re here for you, Wendy. Just let it out,” Max said calmly. I spent a few minutes crying on Max’s shoulder, hoping Jake wouldn’t care. Luckily, Jake didn’t care.

“So, we were just checking in on everybody. Ya know, making sure everyone is feeling okay after Jason’s death and all. Want to come to Chloe’s room with us?” Max asked. I nodded and wiped my tears, as I didn’t want her to see me like this.

“Yeah, let’s go,” I said.

Chloe’s POV

Since Jason’s death, I’ve been feeling worse than I had in my entire life. All of a sudden, I feel lost in my own thoughts. Suddenly, there was a knock at my door.

“Who is it?” I snapped in a demanding voice.

“It’s Wendy, Max, Jake and Ash,” Wendy said. I threw open my door in anger.

“What do you guys want?” I demanded angrily. Max backed away nervously.

“Yo, Chloe, are you good?” Max asked in a nervous tone.

“No, I’m not okay! Do I look like I’m *okay* to you?” I yelled, shoving Max to the ground. He glared at me, but backed away nervously. Wendy gave me a concerned and calming look.

“Chloe, what’s wrong?” Wendy asked in a calm tone. I shrugged.

“Nothing’s wrong,” I managed.

“Uh, yeah. That’s a lie. Something is wrong,” Max said.

“Shut up or I’ll kick you!” I yelled in Max’s direction. Max yelped and hid behind Jake. Wendy put a hand on my shoulder and slightly smiled. It was a calm smile, which somehow managed to calm me down.

“I just…I miss Jason,” I managed to admit.

“Hey, it’s okay. We’re here for you. If you need someone to talk to, you have us,” Max said. He sounded uncertain about that, but I didn’t blame him, since I literally shoved him to the ground. Ash cleared his throat.

“Anyway, we’ve just been going around to check on everybody and see how they’re doing since Jason died. We only have Paul and Martha next, and I have a feeling they’re going to be upset. So, want to come with us?” Ash asked. I nodded.

“Sure, I’ll come with you guys. I’d rather walk around than sit in the darkness of my room,” I said.

Paul’s POV

Ever since Jason’s death, I’ve just felt so confused about everything. I feel like I’m lost and have nowhere to go. I just feel like I have nobody to guide me, and I don’t know what to do about this at all. I was pacing my room, thinking about how to either end my life to be with him or figure out a way to get him when a knock was at my door.

“Yeah, who is it?” I asked.

“Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy and Chloe,” Ash said.

“Door’s unlocked, come in!” I called through the door.

The door opened and the five of them stepped inside. Meanwhile, I continued to pace, muttering if I either kill myself or save him. They noticed and gave me confused and concerned looks.

“Paul, are you okay?” Max asked. I glanced at him with a confused expression on my face.

“What do you mean?” I asked, confusion in my voice.

“I mean we can hear you muttering, ‘Do I kill myself or do I save him?’. Dude, why would you want to kill yourself?” Max asked in a worried voice. I sighed and sat down on my bed, putting my head in my hands.

“It’s nothing. I just…” my voice trailed off. Max raised an eyebrow, but looked concerned.

“You just what?” Max asked in a tone urging me to tell the group.

“I just really miss Jason. I want my best friend back,” I admitted. Max put a hand on my shoulder.

“Dude, then why didn’t you just say so? Suicide isn’t the answer, obviously,” Max said. I shrugged.

“Oh yeah? How is suicide not the answer when your best friend is dead and you can’t be with him ever again?” I demanded. Max had to think about that.

“Well, you do know you could go on a solo quest of your own to get Jason back, right?” Max asked. I glanced at him with confusion, then glanced at the team, expecting them to laugh. Their expressions were dead serious.

“Wait what? You mean I can just travel to the Darkness Pit to on a solo quest to bring Jason back?” I asked in confusion. Max nodded.

“Yep, that’s exactly what I’m saying,” Max said.

“Well, what am I waiting for? I gotta go save Jason!” I said, feeling determined to bring Jason back from the dead. Before I could run out the door, Max caught my arm.

“Woah there, bro. Hang on,” Max said.

“What?” I asked.

“Where are you going?” Jake asked.

“I’m going to the Darkness Pit to get my best friend back,” I said. Max shook his head.

“Nah, man. I hate to be the one to tell you this, but you can’t do this,” Max said. I stared at him like he was crazy.

“What do you mean? You just said I can travel there and bring Jason back!” I protested. Max nodded.

“I know I said that. I’m just saying maybe you shouldn’t do it right this second.”

“Why not?” I demanded.

“Because of two reasons: one, do you even know where to go? Two, we still have to check on Martha,” Max said.

“Oh. Well, first off, no. I have absolutely no idea where to go. Second, can’t you just check on Martha without me?” I asked. Max shook his head.

“Look, Paul. As much as I want you to go out there and save Jason, you can’t right now,” Max said.

“Again, why not?” I asked in a demanding, protesting voice.

“Because you said yourself, you have absolutely no idea where to go,” Max said. I shrugged.

“So?” I asked.

“So, with that being said, you would just end up getting lost or getting killed,” Max said. He had a point, but I didn’t want to admit it that he had a point. I crossed my arms.

“Just because I don’t know where to go now doesn’t mean I won’t find it. I’ll find my way there,” I said. Max chuckled.

“Oh yeah? How?” Max asked. I grabbed a knife.

“By committing suicide, duh,” I said. Max’s eyes widened with fear.

“Paul, give me the knife,” Max said in a stern tone. I shook my head.

“No,” I said.

“Why not?” Max asked.

“Why should I?” I demanded.

“I don’t want you to commit suicide or hurting yourself,” Max said in a stern yet pleading tone.

“Why not? Huh? Why shouldn’t I just kill myself already? Besides, nobody in this world even cares about me to begin with and nobody ever will!” I snapped.

“What about your family?” Max asked.

“They never liked me. The instant I was born, they thought of me like a mistake. Don’t you see? They hate me, Max. Everyone in the world hates me!” I yelled. Max put a hand on my shoulder, shaking his head.

“Dude, that is so not true. Not everybody in the world hates you,” Max said. I glared at him and brushed his hand off of my shoulder.

“Oh yeah? Who in the world cares about me? Huh?” I demanded.

“We care about you. So does Jason. Paul, listen to me,” Max said in a calm yet stern tone.

“What?” I mumbled.

“Is this what Jason would want? Would he want his best friend to kill himself?” Max asked. I shook my head.

“No, he wouldn’t want me to kill myself just to get him back,” I said.

“Exactly. What do you think he would want you to do?” Max asked. I had to think about that question, as I wasn’t sure.

“He would want me to save him. Maybe not just me, though,” I said. Max gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” Max asked.

“I mean I won’t be going to save him alone,” I said. That made Max’s expression look even more confused.

“Well, who else would be going with you?” Max asked.

“Well, you said we’re going to check on Martha next, right?” I asked. Max looked confused, but nodded.

“Yeah, why?” Max asked with confusion in his tone.

“Well, I’m thinking Martha can go with me, but we’ll have to ask her. Come on. Let’s go check on her,” I said.

Martha’s POV

Ever since Jason’s death, I feel so...alone. It’s honestly such a weird feeling, because in the past, I hated his guts, but now that we’re dating, I can’t stand to be by myself without him for a certain amount of time. I was in my room, crying my eyes out when someone knocked on my door.

“Who is it?” I asked while sobbing.

“Max, Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe and Paul,” Paul replied.

“Come in. The door is already open,” I said. The door opened and the six of them stepped inside and walked over to me. Paul put a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, Martha, are you okay?” Paul asked calmly. I stared at him like he was nuts.

“Paul, in case you don’t know, my boyfriend is *dead*! Do you think I’m okay after that?” I demanded. Paul put his hands up in defense.

“I know he’s gone. He’s not just your boyfriend. He’s also my best friend,” Paul said. I nodded, sniffing.

“Yeah, that’s true. Paul, I’m sorry. Ever since he died, I’ve had no idea what I’m doing anymore. I just feel so alone,” I sobbed. Paul nodded.

“Yeah, I get that. Martha, it’s okay to feel alone. I feel alone all the time. Anyway, we were just checking in on you to see how you’re doing. Oh, and Martha?” Paul said. I looked up at him.

“Yes?” I mumbled.

“How would you like to go on a quest with me?” Paul asked. I gave him a confused look.

“What quest? Where would we go?” I asked, confusion in my tone. Paul grinned.

“You and I are going to get Jason back,” Paul said. I stared at him like he was nuts.

“You-you can’t be serious. Paul, you’ve got to be joking,” I managed to say. Paul shook his head.

“I’m not joking. The two of us are going to go on a solo quest to get your boyfriend and my best friend back. Are you in or not?” Paul asked. I was too stunned to answer. Here was a guy who joked about the most offensive thing anyone could think of, and yet he was asking me if I wanted to go with him to save Jason. I nodded.

“Yes, I’m in,” I managed. Paul smiled.

“I knew you’d be in. Let’s get going,” Paul said.

Chapter 72

A New Threat

Max’s POV

After Paul and Martha left, the team looked at me.

“So, what do we do now, Max?” Jake asked. I shrugged, as I had no idea as to what we would do next.

“I don’t know. I guess we’ll just wait for any threats or something,” I said.

“How will we know when there’s a threat?” Wendy asked.­

“When the alarm goes off,” I said.

“When will the alarm go off?” Chloe asked. After she asked that, the alarm blared.

“Right now.”

I ran to the control room, turned on the laptop and booted up the software to see what was attacking. What I saw was not pretty or good in any way. I saw a robot attacking San Diego, California, my home town. The robot was walking around the city, destroying anything and everything in its path. Ash shook me.

“Max, what’s going on?” Ash asked. I didn’t respond, as I was too busy staring at the robot destroying everything.

“Max, what is it?” Ash demanded, shaking me out of my trance.

“The robot,” I managed. Ash gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean? What robot?” Ash asked with confusion in his voice. I stared at him like he was insane.

“Dude, look at the screen. Do you not see that robot?” I asked in a demanding yet confused tone. Ash studied the screen for a few seconds before shaking his head.

“Max, there’s no robot,” Ash said.

“Hang on. What’s causing everything in the city to get destroyed?” Jake asked as he watched the screen.

“The robot is attacking the city and destroying everything in its path. I’m telling you, there’s a robot. I swear to god, I’m not going crazy!” I blurted. Ash gave me a concerned and worried look. He put a hand on my shoulder.

“Max, maybe you should get some rest and sit this out,” Ash said in a calm tone. I stared at him in disbelief and shook my head.

“No,” I said. Ash gave me a confused glance.

“No what?” Ash asked.

“No, I’m not sitting this out.”

Ash sighed and put a hand on my shoulder again.

“You clearly aren’t in a good enough mindset to fight. It’s best if you sit this out,” Ash said in a calm tone. Again, I shook my head.

“I’m not going to sit this out. Besides, what are you going to do?” I asked.

“We’re going to fight,” Ash said.

“What are you going to fight?” I asked.

“We’re going to fight the robot attacking the city,” Ash said.

“How are you going to do that if you can’t see him but I can?”

Ash had to think about that for a few seconds. After thinking in silence for a few seconds, he shrugged.

“I don’t know how we’re going to fight it. To be honest, I don’t even know if we can fight it,” Ash admitted. I nodded.

“That’s why you need me,” I said. Ash gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean you guys need my help to fight the robot.”

“Why do we need your help to fight it?” Ash asked in a confused tone.

“Because you guys can’t see it,” I said.

“So?”

“So, if you guys can’t see it, you aren’t able to fight it.”

“Why not?” Ash asked.

“Dude, you can’t fight something you can’t see,” I said like it was obvious. Ash shrugged.

“I guess that’s true,” Ash muttered. I nodded.

“It is true. You may not like it, but you need me to help you guys fight the robot since I’m the only one who can see it,” I said. Ash groaned with annoyance. He sighed.

“Okay, fine. You can come help us,” Ash said. His tone was full of annoyance, making it clear he didn’t like the fact that I was coming along.

“Really?” I asked. Ash didn’t look happy, but he nodded.

“Yeah. If you’re the only one who can see the robot, then you have to be the one to fight it and defeat it. We would help, but since we can’t see it, we wouldn’t know where it is,” Ash said. I nodded.

“Alright. Sounds good.”

Chloe cleared her throat. She had been silent for so long that I forgot she was there.

“So, what do we do, Max?” Chloe asked. I looked at the alarm, then at the armor and weapon rooms.

“Get ready, guys. We’ve got a new threat.”

We ran to the armor room and changed into armor, then ran to the weapons room and grabbed weapons, and we were all suited up.

“Where’s the attack at?” Jake asked. I looked at the screen to see the robot was at the main center of San Diego.

“It’s at the main center of San Diego. Come on.”

We ran to the teleport pads and got teleported to the main center of San Diego. When we got there, buildings were in ruins, and an army of robots marching across the city, following a bigger robot, who I assumed was the leader. I ran at the army and started to fight the robot army. It took a lot of energy and strength, but I managed to defeat the army, making it so I was facing the big robot who I saw on the screen. The robot clapped with sarcasm.

“Well done, Max Wilson,” the robot said.

“How do you know my name?” I demanded. The robot chuckled.

“Silly boy. I know a lot of things, including your name,” the robot said.

“Who are you?” I asked in a stern tone.

“My name is Flamtar,” Flamtar said.

“Why are you attacking the city, Flamtar? And why can’t anyone in the team see you but me?” I asked with confusion in my tone. Flamtar shrugged.

“I’m attacking the city because I feel like it. And only you can see me because I made it so only you can see me,” Flamtar said. I glanced at him with confusion.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You see, I can make it so everyone can see me, but that wouldn’t be very interesting. So, with that thought in mind, I decided to make it so only you can see me,” Flamtar explained.

“Why did you make it so only I can see you? Why me?” I asked in a confused tone. Flamtar chuckled.

“Well, you were the one who killed Varkon.”

“So?” I asked.

“So, isn’t it obvious?” Flamtar asked. His tone was demanding. I shook my head, clearly confused.

“No, it isn’t obvious,” I admitted. Flamtar sighed in annoyance, making it clear he was annoyed at my stupidity and at the fact that I didn’t know why he made it so only I could see him.

“Varkon was an expert fighter who I hired to kill you guys,” Flamtar said.

“Well, look how that ‘expert’ turned out,” I said, chuckling.

“Okay, yeah, he was horrible,” Flamtar admitted.

“Got that right,” I muttered.

“Anyway, you killed Varkon,” Flamtar said. I nodded, but then gave him a confused look.

“Yeah. Wait, how did you know?” I asked. Flamtar chuckled.

“I’m Varkon’s boss. When you killed him, an alarm went off, and the monitor turned on, showing you killing Varkon.”

“Okay. So, you never said why only I can see you,” I pointed out.

“Right. I made it that way so I can get my revenge on you,” Flamtar said. I gave him a confused glance.

“Why do you want revenge? What did I do?” I asked in a confused tone. Flamtar sighed, sounding more annoyed than before.

“I already told you. You killed Varkon,” Flamtar said with annoyance in his tone. It was quite clear he was annoyed with my stupidity along with the fact I didn’t know what I did.

“So? Why do you want revenge on me just because I killed him?” I asked.

“I’m his boss,” Flamtar said.

“Okay. Why does it matter that you’re his boss?” I asked in a tone full of confusion. I gave Flamtar a confused expression.

“It matters because since you killed Varkon, now you must die,” Flamtar snarled.

“So, what? Do the two of us have to fight?” I asked. Flamtar nodded.

“That’s right. We have to fight.”

I shrugged.

“Alright then. Let’s do this,” I said.

Chapter 73

Fighting Flamtar

Max’s POV

I got my sword out. Flamtar threw his hands down and erupted into flames. I stared in shock and nervousness as his body erupted into flames.

“Okay then. I guess this won’t be a fair fight,” I said in a high pitched voice. Flamtar cast me a confused look.

“How is this not a fair fight? I thought you had fire powers like me,” Flamtar said with a confused tone. I sighed in annoyance.

“I did have fire powers,” I said. Flamtar looked even more confused.

“What happened to them?” Flamtar asked in a confused tone.

“Dominic took them,” I grumbled.

“Oh yeah. Sorry about that,” Dominic said with a weak smile. I glared at him in annoyance with the fact that he took my powers and never gave them back.

“Thanks a lot, Dominic. Can I have my powers back?” I asked in a tone full of annoyance. Dominic nodded.

“Alright. Here you go,” Dominic said. He put his hand in his pocket then cast a confused look as he pulled his hand out and nothing was in his hand.

“Well? Am I getting my powers back or not?” I demanded. Dominic chuckled nervously and gave me a weak smile.

“Yeah, you will soon,” Dominic said. I raised an eyebrow and cast Dominic a confused look.

“Soon?” I asked. Dominic nodded.

“Yeah. Soon.”

“Why soon? Why not now?” I demanded.

“Well, funny story,” Dominic started.

“What?” I asked.

“I promise you will get your powers back soon.”

“Again, why not now?” I asked, putting a hand on my hip.

“Well, there’s a problem with getting your powers back right now,” Dominic said. I crossed my arms.

“Which is what?” I asked in a demanding voice. Dominic gave me a confused glance.

“Huh?” Dominic asked in a confused tone. I sighed in annoyance, as he didn’t understand what I meant.

“What’s the problem with getting my powers back right now?” I demanded. Dominic chuckled in a weak way, making him sound nervous.

“Oh, yeah. The problem,” Dominic started. I expected him to say something after that, but he didn’t, as he hesitated.

“Dominic!” I snapped. That was enough to snap Dominic back into the moment.

“What?” Dominic demanded.

“What’s the problem? Why can’t I get my powers back?” I demanded. Dominic sighed sadly.

“Okay. You want the truth?” Dominic asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I do,” I snapped. Dominic took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell me.

“The truth is I can’t give you your powers back,” Dominic admitted. I stared at him in confusion.

“Why not?” I asked in a tone full of annoyance.

“The device,” Dominic started.

“What about the device?” I asked.

“I lost it,” Dominic blurted. I stared at Dominic in disbelief and like he was insane, as he had lost a really important object.

“You lost it?” I demanded. Dominic shrugged.

“Yes and no.”

“What do you mean yes and no?” I snapped.

“Well, the truth is someone stole it,” Dominic admitted.

“Who stole it?” I asked. Dominic shrugged.

“That’s the main problem. I don’t know,” Dominic said. I stared at Dominic like he was crazy, as I couldn’t believe he didn’t know who stole his device.

“Dude!” I snapped. Dominic gave me a confused glance.

“What?” Dominic asked in a confused tone.

“How can you not know who stole your device?” I demanded. Dominic shrugged.

“Man, I don’t know. One night, I had it, and when I woke up, it was gone. However, I did have a dream,” Dominic said.

“What was the dream about?” Jake asked. Dominic hesitated and didn’t answer.

“Dominic!” Ash snapped.

“What?” Dominic demanded.

“What was the dream about?” Chloe asked. Dominic took a deep breath, hesitating, but getting ready to tell us about his dream.

“In the dream, I was asleep,” he started.

We waited for him to continue.

“The device was on my desk. Anyway, while I was asleep in the dream, my bedroom door opened and a man in black robes and a scythe came into my room. He walked over to my desk and stole the device. Then, he whispered to me, ‘See you soon, Dominic.’, and then left, and then I woke up,” Dominic said. I groaned in annoyance. I didn’t want to believe that the device had been stolen, but I had a feeling that I had to believe it, no matter what.

“Okay, well then. Where is this guy at?” I asked. Dominic shrugged helplessly.

“I don’t know. He could be anywhere,” Dominic said.

“Did you put a tracker on the device?” I asked. Dominic nodded.

“Yeah, I did. So? Why does it matter that I put a tracker on the device?” Dominic asked. I sighed, annoyed that he wasn’t understanding the point I was trying to make.

“It matters because if there’s a tracker on the device, then you can track where the device is, showing us where the guy who took it is,” I said in an annoyed tone. Dominic’s eyes lit up and he nodded, as he was understanding where I was going.

“That’s a good idea. It just might work,” Dominic said. I nodded.

“Yeah, I know it’s a good idea and it will work,” I said in agreement. I faced Flamtar.

“This isn’t over. We will meet again, and when we do, we’ll fight,” I said. Flamtar laughed.

“Ha! You really think that you’ll be alive to meet me again? In your dreams, Max!” Flamtar snapped. Before I could respond or ask what he meant, Flamtar charged at me, his body flaming, thrusted out his hands and shot fire at me. I screamed in pain as I was getting hit from the fire. Normally, fire wouldn’t have hurt me or burned, but this fire burned, and hurt a lot. After shooting fire at me for quite some time, Flamtar stopped.

I fell to my knees. I tried to stand, but when I tried, red and black dots came into my vision. I was dying. Flamtar laughed.

“And now to deal with the rest of the team,” Flamtar snarled.

“No, please,” I whispered. Flamtar ignored me. He thrusted his hands out and shot flames at Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe and Dominic. They collapsed to the ground, all bloody and bruised. Their clothes had burn marks on them.

I wanted to scream. I wanted to fight back and kill Flamtar. I wanted to do something, but I knew I couldn’t. I was too weak to do anything.

“Y-you won’t get away with this,” I croaked in pain. Flamtar turned to face me and chuckled.

“Oh, I think I will get away with this,” Flamtar said. He pointed his finger at us, and fiery bullets came at us and erupted. We slammed onto the ground, groaning in pain.

Flamtar walked away, chuckling. I reached for my communicator Harold had given us when we needed to contact him. It hurt to move my arm, but I managed to grab the communicator. I flipped it open and called Harold. He answered.

“Hey, Max. What’s up?” Harold asked.

“Harold. Ow…come to the main center of San Diego, and get here fast,” I croaked softly and in pain.

“Okay. Wait, why?” Harold asked with a confused tone.

“We got hurt in a fight badly. There’s black and red dots in my vision. I don’t know if I can last longer,” I admitted.

“I’m on my way,” Harold said.

“Hurry,” I croaked.

I waited for Harold. After a few minutes of waiting, I saw a portal open and a man stepping out. The man looked familiar. It was Harold. He bent down on his knees to face me.

“Max, it’ll be okay,” Harold said.

I blacked out.

When I blacked out, I started dreaming, and like always, it wasn’t a good dream. In the dream, I was laying on the ground, slowly and softly breathing. Red and black dots danced in my vision. Jake was kneeling beside me, looking calm, holding my hand.

“Just relax, babe. Everything is going to be okay,” Jake assured me in a calming voice. I nodded, tears streaming down my face.

“Jake, I don’t want to die,” I sobbed. Jake leaned in and kissed me.

“Everything will be okay. Trust me,” Jake whispered.

Chapter 74

Armatron

Max’s POV

When I woke up, I was in my room at the mansion. I got out of my bed and went downstairs to the kitchen, where Jake, Ash, Wendy, Chloe, Dominic and Harold were.

“Hey, guys,” I said. They turned. Jake walked over to me.

“Hey, bud. How are you feeling?” Jake asked. I shrugged.

“I’m feeling better.”

Jake smiled.

“That’s good. I’m glad you’re feeling better,” Jake said. I nodded.

“Yeah. So, guys. I think I have an idea of how to get Dominic’s device back,” I said. That got Dominic and the rest of the team perked up.

“What’s your idea?” Dominic asked eagerly.

“My idea is we turn on the tracker that’s on the device. Then, we’ll know where the device is, and then we can go get it,” I said. The team nodded. Dominic cast me a confused look.

“That sounds like a good idea, but how will we turn on the tracker?” Dominic asked in a confused tone.

“You can leave that to me,” I said. I got my laptop out of my backpack and placed it on the counter. I turned it on and booted up the tracking software, then went to Dominic’s device and activated the tracker. Shortly after that, a map appeared with a blinking red dot. The red dot was on the planet Garbatrine, which was in the galaxy Armatron.

“What’s that blinking red dot?” Jake asked.

“That’s the tracker on the device,” I answered.

“Where is it?” Ash asked.

“It’s on the planet Garbatrine in the galaxy Armatron,” I said. Ash gave me a confused glance.

“Where is that?” Ash asked in a confused tone.

“It’s in another dimension,” Dominic told him. I cast Dominic a confused look.

“How do you know?” I asked.

“I’ve been there before,” Dominic answered.

“So, if it’s in another dimension, how will we get there?” I asked.

“Leave that to me. I recently built a device that can make it so we can travel through dimensions,” Dominic said. I nodded, impressed.

Dominic got out the device to travel through dimensions.

“So how does this device work?” Chloe asked.

“Simple. Just say where you want to go and a portal will open and you’ll be there,” Dominic explained. I nodded.

“Okay. Take us to Garbatrine in the galaxy Armatron,” I requested. A portal opened. I looked at Dominic.

“Now what?” I asked.

“Now we go through the portal and we should be at Garbatrine,” Dominic said. I nodded.

“Alright, guys. Let’s do this,” I said.

We walked through the portal. When we got out from the portal, we were standing on a grassy field. Past the grassy field was a town. In the town were buildings, shops, restaurants, and more. We wandered around and started to gawk at everything.

“Whoa. Now this is a nice place,” I said in awe and shock. The team nodded in agreement.

“Sure is,” Jake agreed.

As we walked around, I started to feel like I could stay here for a little while longer, even after we got Dominic’s device. I had a feeling the others felt the same way, since they were pointing at things we saw as we walked. I guess Dominic had a feeling we were about to get sucked in, so he stopped us and pulled us behind a building.

“Hey! Why are we here?” I demanded.

“You guys are getting sucked into this place,” Dominic said. I chuckled.

“No we aren’t. Can we get ice cream?” I asked. Dominic raised an eyebrow, looking suspicious. I realized he was right about us getting sucked into this place. I sighed.

“Okay, you’re right. But why does that matter?” I asked. Dominic sighed in annoyance at the fact I didn’t understand.

“It matters because if we end up getting sucked in, he’ll know,” Dominic said in a panicked tone. I gave him a confused look.

“He? Who is he?” I asked. Dominic looked around nervously.

“He goes by the Dark Lord. His real identity is Sarden Tenebris,” Dominic said. For some reason, he kept glancing around nervously.

“Dude, why do you keep looking nervous?” I asked.

“Because whenever someone says his name, he comes to them,” Dominic said nervously. I looked around. I didn’t see anyone.

“Well, I don’t see anyone. Where is Sarden?” I asked.

“I’m right here,” a voice behind me said. The voice was a heavy male voice. I turned around to see a man in black robes holding a scythe in his hand.

“Oh, hi, Sarden,” I said. Sarden took loud, deep breaths, trying to control his anger.

“My oh my, you seem to like taking risks,” Sarden said. I shrugged.

“I mean, I guess so,” I said. Sarden chuckled.

“My boy, you don’t seem to know what you’ve gotten yourself into or what you’re doing,” Sarden said in a deep voice. I gave Sarden a confused look.

“Um, yes I do know what I’ve done. I said your name. However, I’m not sure what I’ve gotten myself into. Could you tell me?” I asked. Sarden looked at Dominic.

“Dominic, tell him,” Sarden said in a commanding voice. Dominic nodded quickly and nervously.

“Max. Do you know what you’ve gotten us into?” Dominic asked. I shrugged and shook my head.

“Trouble?” I guessed. Dominic nodded.

“Big trouble.”

I gave Dominic a confused look.

“What? Wait, why?” I asked in a confused tone.

“Do you know what happens after you say his name?” Dominic asked. I nodded.

“Yeah. He shows up. Duh,” I said. Dominic nodded.

“Yes, he shows up. But that’s not all that happens,” Dominic said. I gave Dominic a puzzled look.

“Well, what else happens?” I asked.

“Do you want to know?” Dominic asked. I nodded.

“Yeah,” I said.

“Are you sure you want to know?”

“Dude, just tell me!” I snapped. Dominic took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell me.

“Okay, well. When someone says his name, he shows up. After that, he, well…” Dominic’s voice faded. I raised an eyebrow, glaring at him in an impatient way.

“Well? What happens after that?” I demanded in an impatient tone.

“After he shows up, he takes you and anyone else with you,” Dominic said. I gave him a confused look.

“Takes them where?” I asked. Dominic hesitated to answer. He didn’t respond.

“Dominic, where does he take them? And when you say anyone else with you, do you mean us?” I demanded. Dominic took a deep breath, hesitating to tell me.

“Yes, I mean all of us. And he takes us to…” Dominic’s voice faded. I raised an eyebrow, urging him to tell me where Sarden will take us.

“He’s going to take us to his dungeon,” Dominic finally said. I chuckled.

“Not if I can help it,” I said. Sarden chuckled.

“Oh yeah? Tell me, Max. What are you going to do about it?” Sarden asked in amusement.

“This!” I threw my fist at him. Yeah, that bad a bad idea. Sarden gripped my fist, then poked me in the ribs with his index and middle fingers. I didn’t think anything would happen. Oh boy, I was wrong. When he did that, I felt my soul floating out of my body. Soon, I was hovering above my body. A few seconds later, he put his fingers off of my body and my soul came back into my body.

“Do you still think you can do anything about it?” Sarden asked. I shook my head.

“Not a thing,” I said quickly. Sarden chuckled.

“Good. Now, all of you are going to the dungeon,” Sarden snapped. He opened a portal and shoved us in the portal.

“That’s what I thought. Now, follow me to the castle,” Sarden snarled.

Sarden opened a portal and shoved us into the portal. When we got through the portal, we were at a castle made of red stone. Sarden led us inside.

“Guards!” Sarden shouted. Two guards in armor ran over to us.

“Yes, Sarden?” one of the guards asked.

“Take these heroes to the dungeon to have some fun,” Sarden said. I glared at Sarden. I wanted to do something, but I knew I couldn’t do anything because Sarden was stronger than I was. The guards dragged us away to the dungeon.

The dungeon of Redstone Castle was not fun at all. It was a room filled with jail cells. In many of the jail cells, there were chairs with spikes, saws, and many other devices of torture. The guards shoved us into a cell, then locked the cell door, then went out of the dungeon, locking the door behind them. I sighed sadly and sat down, hiding my face in my shirt.

“Hey, bud. Why the sadness?” Jake asked in a concerned and calm tone. I shrugged.

“I don’t know. I guess I’m just not sure if we’ll make it out of here,” I admitted.

“Dude, don’t talk like that,” Ash said. I got my head out of my shirt and looked at Ash.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because we’ll figure it out,” Ash said. I shook my head.

“No, we won’t,” I said. Ash stared at me in disbelief and in silence. Chloe broke the silence.

“Max, you always have a plan. We can make it out of here. We *will* make it out,” Chloe said. I shook my head and sighed.

“Not this time, guy. It’s time to give up,” I muttered. Jake, Ash, Wendy and Chloe stared at me in disbelief, shock and silence. Ash shook his head.

“No,” Ash said. I looked at him.

“No?” I asked.

“No,” Ash repeated. I gave him a confused look.

“What do you mean no? No what?” I asked in a confused tone.

“No, it’s not time to give up.”

“Oh, yeah? And why not?” I demanded.

“Because you *will* come up with a plan. You always do. And you may not have a plan now, but you will soon,” Ash said. Jake nodded.

“Max, Ash is right. If anyone can get us out of here, it’s you,” Jake said. I sighed.

“How am I supposed to do that?” I muttered.

“You’ll need to get a plan,” Jake said. I stared at Jake like he was insane.

“But I don’t *have* a plan!” I snapped. Jake nodded.

“Maybe not now.”

I gave Jake a confused look.

“What do you mean?” I asked in a confused tone.

“Like Ash said. You may not have a plan now, but you will soon,” Jake said. Ash nodded. I sighed.

“What makes you guys think I’ll have a plan?” I asked in a demanding tone.

“Because you always do,” Wendy said. I shook my head.

“I can’t come up with a plan right now. Don’t you guys get it? It’s over,” I said in a snapping tone.

“Max, you can do this, we know you can. We believe in you,” Jake said. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“I believe in you,” Jake said. I nodded. Suddenly, my eyes lit up as I began to think of a plan. It would have to take a lot of thinking, as I was coming up with possibilities and outcomes as to what would happen. I stood up. A grin crept up my face.

“Guys,” I started. The team looked up at me.

“Yeah?” Ash asked.

“I have a plan,” I said. The team stood up.

“We’re listening,” Wendy said.

“Okay, so, my plan is to figure out any possibilities and outcomes that could happen if we try to get out, then figure out what to do next,” I said. The team nodded.

“So, how are we going to get out?” Chloe asked.

“I’m going to pick the lock,” I said. Chloe looked at me with a confused expression.

“How?” Chloe asked.

“I learned how to pick locks from Cole,” I said. Chloe nodded.

“Alright. So, what are you going to do?” Chloe asked.

“Get me something skinny that can fit in the lock, like a spike from the chair or something,” I said. Chloe nodded and pulled out a spike from the chair. I took the spike and stuck it in the lock, then began to jiggle the spike, then twist the lock to the left. The door opened. Chloe stared at me in shock.

“Wow. That was impressive,” Chloe said. I nodded.

“I know. Because I managed to pick the lock,” I said.

“Okay, so we’re out. Now what?” Wendy asked.

“Now we figure out what we’re doing next.”

“Which is what?” Dominic asked. After he asked that, an alarm blared, and guards came rushing into the dungeon. Soon, twenty guards surrounded us.

“Apparently we fight,” I said.

Chapter 75

The Talk

We got out our weapons and charged at the guards. It took a few minutes to fight and beat all the guards, but it was worth it in the end. After we took out the guards, we ran out of the dungeon. We were almost at the exit of the castle, but Sarden stopped us.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Sarden demanded.

“We’re getting out of here,” I said.

“Now, why would you be leaving so soon?” Sarden asked in a fake sad tone.

“We have a quest to do,” I said. Sarden scratched his chin.

“Oh? What is this quest you have to do?” Sarden asked in amusement. I shrugged.

“To be honest, it’s not really a quest, since we haven’t gotten a new prophecy, but what we’re doing is stopping a robot named Flamtar who’s destroying the city,” I explained. Sarden growled in annoyance.

“Not Flamtar,” Sarden grumbled in an annoyed tone. We gave him a confused look.

“You know Flamtar?” I asked in surprise. Sarden nodded, but didn’t look happy about the fact that he knew Flamtar.

“Oh, I know Flamtar. I know him very well,” Sarden snarled.

“How do you know Flamtar?” Jake asked.

“We used to be friends a long time ago,” Sarden admitted.

“Used to be? What happened?” Ash asked.

“We had a feud to put it short,” Sarden said.

“Why?” I asked.

“Long story short, we both ruled a planet, but Flamtar wanted to keep it for himself, and I told him I was fed up with his bullshit and that he was just rude in general. After that, it was the end of our friendship. We haven’t been friends since,” Sarden said. He sighed sadly. I put a hand on his shoulder.

“Sarden, I’m sorry to hear that,” I said. Sarden shrugged.

“Eh, it’s no big deal,” Sarden said. His tone made it clear it was in fact a big deal indeed that needed to be dealt with. I shook my head.

“Yes, it is a big deal,” I said. Sarden shook his head.

“No, really. Trust me, it’s fine guys,” Sarden insisted. I shook my head.

“Dude, no. It’s not fine,” I said. Sarden sighed sadly.

“You’re right.”

“I am?” I asked in surprise. Sarden nodded.

“Yep.”

“Wait, what am I right about?” I asked in a confused tone.

“You’re right that it’s not fine,” Sarden said. I nodded.

“Yeah, it’s not.”

“So, what are we supposed to do?” Sarden asked.

“We have to do something about it,” I said.

“Like what?” Jake asked.

“We lure him here,” I said. Everyone glanced at me with confused expressions on their faces.

“How?” Ash asked.

“Simple. We have Sarden call Flamtar and say he managed to capture us. We’ll obviously be faking being knocked out, and Sarden will show that to him,” I said. The team nodded in agreement with my plan.

“Okay. Then what?” Sarden asked.

“Then hopefully Flamtar will come over here and then you guys can hopefully make up,” I said.

“Okay. Then what?” Ash asked.

“Then hopefully we’re all good and we won’t have to fight each other,” I said with hope in my voice. The team nodded.

“Alright. Let’s do it,” I said.

Chapter 76

The Plan

Max’s POV

We got into position to make it looked like we were knocked out. Sarden tied us up to make it look like he captured us. After that, he called Flamtar. Flamtar answered.

“Hello? Who is this?” Flamtar asked.

“It’s Sarden,” Sarden said. Flamtar sighed in annoyance.

“Look, Sarden. You already said I can-,” Flamtar started.

“I captured Max and his team,” Sarden interrupted. That made Flamtar shut up fast. His eyes widened.

“You did?” Flamtar asked in surprise. Sarden nodded and pointed his camera to us, showing Flamtar he “captured” us.

“Oh my god, you really did!” Flamtar exclaimed. Sarden nodded.

“Yeah. So, want to come over?” Sarden asked. Flamtar nodded.

“Yeah, sure. I’ll be over there in a few minutes.”

Flamtar and Sarden hung up.

Chapter 77

The Truth

Max’s POV

Sarden untied us after he and Flamtar hung up. A few minutes later, Flamtar appeared. He saw that we were untied, and gasped in surprise.

“Sarden! Why are they untied?” Flamtar asked. Sarden sighed.

“I untied them,” Sarden said.

“Why?” Flamtar demanded.

“Look, the truth is, I didn’t capture them. We made it look like I captured them so we could lure you over here,” Sarden admitted.

“What? Why would you do that?” Flamtar demanded in a yelling voice.

“It wasn’t his idea,” I said. Flamtar glared at me.

“What are you talking about?” Flamtar asked. I sighed.

“It was our idea,” Jake said. Flamtar turned his gaze to Sarden.

“Why did you allow them to do this?” Flamtar demanded.

“I just wanted to be friends again,” Sarden muttered. Flamtar’s expression softened.

“Really?” Flamtar asked in a quiet voice. Sarden nodded.

“Yeah. That fight we had so long ago was stupid now that I look back to remember it,” Sarden said. Flamtar nodded.

“Yeah, it was,” Flamtar agreed. Sarden cleared his throat.

“So, uh. Are we cool?” Sarden asked with a hint of hope in his voice. Flamtar nodded.

“Yeah, we’re cool,” Flamtar said.

“So, uh, since we’re cool, want to go hang out and go somewhere?” Sarden asked. Flamtar nodded.

“The fight clubs?” Flamtar suggested. Sarden’s eyes lit up.

“Just like old times?” Sarden asked. Flamtar nodded.

“Just like old times,” Flamtar agreed. They walked off.

Chapter 78

The Solo Quests

Max’s POV

After they left, my phone rang. I saw that Paul was calling, and I answered it.

“Hey, Paul. What’s up?” I asked.

“Hey, Max. Good news,” Paul said.

“What’s the good news?” I asked.

“We got Jason back!” Martha exclaimed over the phone.

“You did?” I asked in surprise.

“Yep, we sure did,” Paul said.

“So, where are you guys?” Jake asked.

“We’re at the base. You guys should get here, and fast,” Jason said.

“What? Why get there fast?” Ash asked.

“Rob is here. I think we have a new prophecy,” Jason said.

“Alright, we’re on our way,” I said.

We opened a portal to our dimension and ran to the base. Sure enough, when we got there, Rob was there in Oracle form.

“Hey, we’re here,” I said, out of breath.

“Cool. Why are you out of breath?” Martha asked in a confused tone.

“We ran here,” I said.

“Ah. Anyway, Rob, we’re all here,” Jason said.

“Great. Now, this is not a prophecy, but more of a telling for your solo quests,” Rob said. We glanced at each other in confusion.

“Rob, what are solo quests?” I asked.

“Solo quests are quests each of you must do on your own,” Rob said.

“Oh, okay. Tell us what we have to do,” I said.

“Max, since you are immune to fire, your solo quest is to find the Flaming Sword and Shield. Jake, it is your duty to find the Mystical Icicle. Ash, your job is to find the Water Sword. Wendy, you must find the special Grass Blade. Chloe must find the Golden Clover. Jason must find the Mystical Cloud. Paul must search for the Rainbow Belt. Finally, Martha must find the Magic Glitter. Good luck,” Rob said. After Rob said what Martha would search for, I chuckled.

“What are you chuckling at?” Ash asked.

“Nothing, just that Martha has to search for glitter,” I said while snickering. Martha glared at me, looking annoyed.

“Oh, shut up, Max,” Martha snapped.

“Sorry,” I said. I turned back to Rob.

“So, Rob. Where are we going to find these items and how will we get there?” I asked.

“I will teleport you guys to the locations in which the items will be located at,” Rob said. I nodded.

“Alright, Rob. We’re ready,” I said.

“Alright. Prepare to be teleported,” Rob said.

We waited. A few seconds later, I was at Maghearth, the volcano planet.

“Did it work? Max, where are you?” Jake asked through my phone.

“I’m on Maghearth, the volcano planet. Where are you?” I asked.

“I’m at the ice planet, Cain,” Jake said.

“Cool. Well, I guess we’d better start searching for our items,” I said.

“Yep. See you back at the base. Love you,” Jake said.

“Love you more.”

I hung up and walked around Maghearth to search for the sword and shield. I remembered Rob saying because I was immune to fire, I was the one who had to find the flaming sword and shield. I was wondering what that meant, but then I saw something shining in the pool of lava. I had no idea what it was. I squinted to get a better look. That’s when I realized: it was the flaming sword and shield. I had completed my solo quest. I dove into the lava and swam to the bottom of the lava pool. Once I was at the bottom, I scooped up the flaming sword and shield and swam back up to the surface. Then, I opened up my portal with a teleporter Rob had given me and I teleported back to the base. A few minutes later, portals opened, and the rest of the team emerged from the portals with their items.

Jake’s POV

After I hung up from Max, I began to wander around Cain. I was wondering where the Mystical Icicle was, since a lot of icicles could be seen. That was when I noticed one specific icicle was glowing white. I walked over to it, and picked it off the tree. I had found the Mystical Icicle.

Ash’s POV

I got teleported to the ocean.

“Okay, I hope finding this water sword should be easy,” I said to myself as I swam. After a few minutes of swimming, the water seemed to get darker above, but for some reason, something was glowing under the surface. I swam under the surface to see a whirlpool was glowing. I swam in the whirlpool and found myself in an ocean near an island. I swam to the island to find a sword made of water on the sand.

Wendy’s POV

I got teleported to a field of grass. I sighed in annoyance, as it would take me a long time to find a blade of grass. I started to walk around, wondering where and which blade of grass would be the one I needed. That was when I noticed a blade of grass glowing. I plucked it out from the ground to find it was indeed the blade of grass I needed.

Chloe’s POV

I got teleported to a field of clovers. I sighed in annoyance, as I had no idea which clover would be the golden one in this massive field of clovers. I was wandering around, wondering which clover was the golden one. I was starting to give up when I noticed a gold glow across the field. I saw it was coming from a clover. I rushed across the field and plucked up the golden clover. I had completed my solo quest.

Jason’s POV

I flew around the sky and looked for the Mystical Cloud. I felt like I wanted to give up, as there were so many clouds, since it was the sky. I felt like this was a stupid quest. That was when I saw a cloud cast a white glow. I flew over to the cloud. I had gotten the Mystical Cloud.

Paul’s POV

I was teleported to a dojo. I saw a man wearing a rainbow belt. I walked over to him.

“Excuse me, mister,” I started. The man turned.

“Yes?” he asked.

“Can I have your rainbow belt?” I asked. The man laughed.

“Ha! No. Listen, kid. If you want this belt, you’re gonna have to fight me for it, which you can’t. Why? Because you’re a small kid. Now, beat it,” the man snapped.

“Oh, you’re gonna regret that,” I snapped. The man laughed.

“Why would I?” he demanded.

I punched him in the face. It wasn’t that hard, but it knocked him out. He came to his senses, and looked stunned.

“Okay, kid. You can have this rainbow belt,” he said. He handed it over to me.

Martha’s POV

I was teleported to a hair salon. I was wondering where this glitter would be, when I saw something sparkling in a jar. I picked the jar off of the shelf and teleported back to the base.

Chapter 79

Farewell

Max’s POV

Once we were all at the base, we went outside of the mansion.

“Well, I guess this is it for now,” I said. The team nodded.

“Yep. It was nice having quests with you guys,” Jason said. Martha and Paul nodded in agreement.

“Sure was,” Paul said.

“Well, see you guys next time,” Jake said.

Jason opened a portal.

“Goodbye guys,” Jason said. And with that, Jason, Paul and Martha went through the portal and vanished. We looked at each other.

“So, what are we doing now?” I asked. Ash and Chloe took hands.

“Chloe, Wendy and I are going to Varcanth to train kids to be heroes,” Ash said. I nodded with approval.

“Nice. See you around then, man,” I said. Ash opened a portal and the three of them walked in and left. Jake looked at me.

“So, what now?” Jake asked.

“Well, since we’ve been married, want to have kids?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“I would love to,” Jake said.

3 years later…

I stood at the top of the hill, staring at the horizon. Jake walked over to me.

"Hey, babe. How are you feeling?" Jake asked. I shrugged.

"Honestly, I don't know," I admitted. Jake cast me a puzzled look.

"Why's that?"

"I guess I'm gonna miss the feeling of going on quests. I don't really know," I admitted.

"Well, I think I know something that will cheer you up," Jake said. I looked at Jake.

"Oh yeah? What's that?" I asked.

"A race around the town," Jake said. "Oh, you are so going to lose," I said. "Not if I outrun you," Jake said. He ran down the hill. I took one last look around, knowing we saved the world. A grin crept up my face, and I ran down the hill to catch up to Jake and our kids. For once I didn’t look back

Chapter 80

Another Threat

Max’s POV

It’s been 3 years since we finished our solo quests. That means it’s been 3 years since the team went off on our own. That means for the past 3 years, we’ve been able to relax. Or so we thought.

It started this afternoon. Jake, our kids and I were at the pool, having fun. We got out of the pool after about an hour. That was when we began to notice the weirdness outside. The sky was blood red. When I say that, I don’t mean sunset or sunrise red. I mean like human blood red. I had to blink a few times to make sure I wasn’t imagining it. I turned to Jake.

“Hey, babe. You notice anything weird?” I asked. Jake nodded while looking up at the sky.

“Yeah. The sky is blood red. I wonder why that is,” Jake said, scratching his head, squinting at the sky.

Just then, something flew overhead and crashed into a mountain, causing an explosion. Jake and I glanced at each other, then at where the explosion was.

“Should we check it out?” I asked. Jake nodded.

“Yeah. Let’s go,” Jake said.

We started to walk, but Jackson caught my arm.

“Dad, can we come with you guys?” Jackson asked. I shook my head.

“No way. Absolutely not,” I said. Jackson tilted his head in confusion.

“Why not? I want to help,” he said in a disappointed tone.

“Look, bud. I appreciate you’re wanting to help, but you can’t come. This is way too dangerous,” I said.

“Why is it dangerous? You don’t know what it is you’re going after,” Jackson said. He had a point.

“That’s exactly why you can’t come,” I said. Jackson gave me a confused look.

“Wait what? Why can’t I come if you don’t even know what you’re going after?” Jackson asked. I sighed, then looked at Jake for backup.

“Jake, can you back me up here?” I asked. Jake nodded and put a hand on Jackson’s shoulder.

“Look, Jackson. Even though we don’t know what we’re facing yet, you can’t come because we don’t know how bad or strong whatever it is we’re facing is. This could be a giant robot or something. We don’t know what it is or how strong it is, and as much as we want you to help, we don’t want you to get hurt. Do you understand?” Jake asked. Jackson nodded, though he didn’t look very happy about it.

“Yeah, I understand,” Jackson said. Jake smiled.

“Good. Now, we’re going to go check out whatever it is that crashed and caused the explosion,” Jake said. Jackson nodded.

“Okay. Good luck,” Jackson said.

“Thanks, bud. We’ll be back in a little bit, okay?” I said. Jackson nodded.

“Yep. See you in a bit,” Jackson said.

Jake and I walked over to where the explosion was to see a crashed ship. We opened the ship door and a man came out of the ship.

“Oh, thank you so much!” the man said in a grateful voice.

“What happened?” I asked. The man cleared his throat.

“You wouldn’t believe me,” he muttered.

“Dude, we’re heroes. We’re the ones who saved the world a few years ago. Whatever it is you have to say, we’ll believe you,” I said. The man took a deep breath, getting himself ready to tell us what happened.

“Well, I was flying my ship, right? And then out of nowhere, it got shot down and I crashed here,” the main said.

“What shot you down? Did you see?” Jake asked. The man nodded.

“Yeah. While I was falling, I looked in my mirror to see a man with a rocket launcher,” the man said.

“What did the man look like?” I asked.

“He was wearing golden robes and had long black hair, and he was floating,” the man explained. I scratched my chin, trying to think of who it could have been. That was when it hit me: the golden robes. The black hair. Only one person I knew looked like that, and he was not a nice person.

“Oh my god,” I finally said in shock.

“What is it, Max?” Jake asked.

“I know who it is,” I said.

“Who is it?” Jake asked in a tone that showed he was eager to know. I hesitated to tell him, as I wasn’t sure he would believe me.

“You might not believe me. This is going to sound crazy,” I admitted. Jake gave me a calm look and put a hand on my shoulder.

“Babe, I’m sure I’ll believe you,” Jake assured me. I took a deep breath, calming myself down and getting myself ready to tell him.

“It’s Haredge,” I blurted. Jake stared at me like I was crazy, then his expression changed to concerned.

“Max, ae you okay?” Jake asked in a concerned tone.

“I’m not crazy, I swear!” I protested. Jake put a hand on my shoulder.

“Max, I didn’t call you crazy,” Jake said in a calm tone.

“Well, maybe you don’t think you did, but you kind of called me crazy,” I snapped. Jake gave me a confused look.

“How did I call you crazy?” Jake asked.

“When you asked if I was okay,” I said. Jake nodded.

“Yeah. I asked if you were okay because I was worried about you,” Jake said. I shook my head, not believing him.

“No, you didn’t.”

Jake gave me a confused look.

“What do you mean?” Jake asked in a confused tone.

“You asked if I was okay because you wanted to make sure I wasn’t crazy,” I snapped. Jake put his hands up in defense.

“Max, I swear I didn’t mean it like that,” Jake said. I could hear a hint of annoyance in his tone.

“Then what did you mean, huh?” I demanded.

“I asked if you were okay because, well…” Jake’s voice faded.

“Because why?” I demanded.

“It doesn’t matter,” Jake snapped.

“Yes it does!” I snapped.

“Why does it matter?” Jake demanded.

“Just tell me why you asked if I was okay!” I yelled.

“I did it because I thought you were crazy!” Jake blurted. I stared at him in shock and disbelief.

“What…what did you just say?” I asked in a quiet tone. Jake nodded, sniffing.

“I did it because I thought you were crazy,” Jake muttered.

“Why did you think I was crazy?” I asked.

“Huh?” Jake asked.

“Why did you think I was crazy?” I demanded.

“Because Haredge is dead, remember?” Jake asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, I remember, but who else has golden robes and long black hair?” I asked. Jake shrugged.

“I don’t know,” Jake admitted. The man laughed.

“Why are you laughing?” I asked.

“Because you guys couldn’t figure it out,” the man said.

“Figure what out?” Jake asked.

“That I’m Haredge!” the man bellowed. Jake and I stared at the man like he was crazy.

“Hey, are you okay? Did the crash make you go crazy?” I asked. The man shook his head.

“I’m not lying to you, Max, I am Haredge,” the man said. I flinched when he said my name, since I never told it to him.

“How do you know my name?” I asked in a demanding yet nervous and shaky tone. The man laughed.

“I know your name because I’m Haredge,” the man said in a tone that sounded like it was getting annoyed. I shook my head, not believing him.

“Yeah, no you’re not,” I said.

“Oh really?” the man asked. I nodded.

“Yeah, really,” Jake said.

“Okay then. If I’m not Haredge, then how did I do this?” the man asked. Jake and I glanced at each other, then at him with confused expressions on our faces, as he didn’t do anything.

“Uhh…do what?” I asked.

“What do you mean ‘do what?’? Didn’t you see what I just did?”

Jake shook his head, mystified.

“Uhh, no. We didn’t,” Jake said. The man sighed in annoyance, as he was annoyed at us.

“Blink,” he said. Jake and I knit our eyebrows in confusion.

“What?” I asked, weirded out.

“Blink,” the man repeated.

“Why?” Jake asked in a confused tone.

“Do you want me to prove that I’m Haredge?” the man demanded. We nodded.

“Yes, we do,” I said.

“Then blink!” he snapped.

It was weird, but we blinked. When I opened my eyes, Haredge was standing there.

“Haredge?” I asked in surprise. Haredge nodded.

“Yep. Glad to see you, Max,” Haredge said.

“Why are you here? What do you want?” I demanded.

“This is going to sound crazy,” Haredge started.

“I bet anything you say will sound crazy,” I muttered. Jake elbowed me.

“Continue. What were you going to say?” Jake asked.

“I need your help,” Haredge blurted. Jake and I stared at Haredge like he was insane, which wasn’t hard since he was a bad guy asking for our help.

“Wait a minute. I’m confused,” I said. Haredge tilted his head, as he wasn’t sure what I was confused about.

“What are you confused about?” Haredge asked.

“I’m confused as to why you’re asking us for help,” I said.

“Why is that confusing you?” Haredge asked.

“You’re a bad guy,” I said.

“So?” Haredge asked. I sighed in annoyance as he wasn’t understanding.

“Okay, maybe this isn’t sinking into your brain. You’re a *bad guy*. Jake and I are *good guys*. It’s confusing because why would a bad guy ask good guys for help?” I asked. Haredge shrugged.

“They wouldn’t, I guess,” Haredge said. I nodded.

“Exactly. So, get out of here,” I said.

“But I really do need your help. It’s important,” Haredge said. I waved him off.

“Blah blah blah.”

I started to walk away.

“It could end your loved ones, including your kids,” Haredge said. I stopped in my tracks and turned to face him.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“The problem I need your help with. It can end humanity as we know it,” Haredge said.

“What’s the issue?” I asked.

“We need to go somewhere private to discuss this. Follow me.”