

The Rink

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/43487794) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/43487794>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Percy Jackson and the Olympians - Rick Riordan , The Heroes of Olympus - Rick Riordan
Relationship:	Annabeth Chase/Percy Jackson , Jason Grace/Piper McLean , Calypso & Leo Valdez , Nico di Angelo & Will Solace
Character:	Annabeth Chase (Percy Jackson) , Percy Jackson , Piper McLean , Calypso (Percy Jackson) , Thalia Grace (Percy Jackson) , Will Solace , Nico di Angelo , Leo Valdez , Jason Grace , Rachel Elizabeth Dare , Luke Castellan
Additional Tags:	Originally Posted on FanFiction.Net , Cross-Posted on FanFiction.Net
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-12-14 Words: 147,773 Chapters: 45/45

The Rink

by [fiction4life101](#)

Summary

Hockey players and figure skaters. The rivalry between the two groups has existed for as long as anyone can remember. No one knows how it started but all Annabeth Chase knows is she can't stand the star hockey player of the Tridents team Percy Jackson. Will all that hate turn into something else when the two are forced to start sharing the rink? Percabeth AU and OOC

Notes

Hi! This entire story was originally posted on fanfiction.net but I've decided to upload it here as well because I find myself spending more time on this site now. It also gave me an excuse to go through and further edit my previously written chapters.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

Annabeth grinned in triumph as she finally landed her triple Lutz, a jump she'd been trying to master on the ice for weeks now. She had been worried she would never get it considering the amount of times she had fallen on the ice in attempt to get her landing right.

"Good Annabeth. Give me another then you're free to go." Her coach Christina told her.

Annabeth nodded and started to pick up speed on the ice again. When she had enough speed and the space was clear around her she preformed the jump again. This time her landing was a little shaky, something that could be improved with more practice. With a nod from her coach, Annabeth skated off the ice and headed to the locker rooms where the other figure skaters were. She often stayed a couple minutes after to get help from her coach on a jump she was trying to master.

Annabeth had been skating since she was nine. She had gone to a friend's birthday party at the ice rink when she was in the third grade and instantly fell in love with it. She loved the feeling of gliding smoothly across the ice. She had begged her mother to sign her up for lessons and from that point on Annabeth had been competing in several competitions and winning many medals. She wasn't in it for the awards though. She did it because it was her passion. Whenever she needed time to think or just be alone she would skate. Her father had left her mother and her when Annabeth was fourteen and during that time she remembered staying at the ice rink way past her practice time and just skating. It helped to clear her head and she doesn't know what she would have done if she didn't have skating in her life during that period of her life. She was now 18 and becoming one of the most talented skaters in the state.

Once in the locker room she was greeted with the sight of the other figure skaters in her class. Among them was Piper, she was fairly new having just moved to New York from North Carolina but she had shown that she wasn't one to be taken for granted on the ice. She had choppy brown hair and eyes that constantly changed color like a kaleidoscope. Annabeth had been the first to befriend her and the two were now close friends.

Calypso was another skater in her class. She wasn't the strongest on the ice but she was someone who wouldn't give up no matter how many times she fell down on the hard ice. She had dark almond colored eyes and long caramel colored hair. She was also the nicest person Annabeth had ever met. Seriously, that girl did not have a mean bone in her body. She was a year younger than everyone being only 17 but she was welcomed warmly into the group.

Then there was Rachel. Annabeth still has no idea what she did to make Rachel hate her so much but she was the only other skater that had been in the program as long as Annabeth had. She had fiery red curly hair and she always wore tons of makeup. When Annabeth had tried to talk to her during their first few weeks of meeting each other Rachel had tripped her while they were skating causing Annabeth to get a sprained ankle and have to sit out of practice for a couple weeks. From that point on the two had despised each other but Annabeth had to admit that Rachel knew her way around the ice. The two often competed against each other during competitions.

"Fall on your ass again Annabel?" Rachel asked harshly, her friends Ashley and Rebecca laughing along with her.

Ashley and Rebecca were skaters too. They were always somewhere around Rachel so Annabeth liked to call them Rachel's minions. Ashley had hazel eyes and blond hair like Annabeth's but it

was straight instead of in curls. Rebecca had wavy black hair and brown eyes.

There were other skaters on the team as well. For the most part they were a bonded team with the exception of Rachel, Ashley, and Rebecca who never bothered to get to know anyone else.

“As a matter of fact no. I landed it.” Annabeth said, sending a glare towards Rachel before walking over to her locker to change. When Rachel was about to comment back Calypso cut in.

“That’s awesome Annabeth!”

“Yeah congrats!” Piper added, giving her a quick hug.

“Whatever.” She heard Rachel mumble under her breath.

When Annabeth’s finished switching her white skates for some comfortable boots, she shouldered her duffle bag before following the other skaters out of the locker room. The rink was for the most part your standard ice rink. People came all the time to skate for fun and the lessons for the different teams were in the evening. The atmosphere was cold seeing as how even if you weren’t exactly on the rink, the sitting room and front desk where people rented skates and bought tickets to skate was still filled with cold air. The fact that it was the middle of January didn’t help much either. She heard the light tread of her feet as well as the other figure skaters walking on the rubber-like flooring that was made so that the sharp blades of the skates didn’t do damage to other floors like wood. Many scratches and indented marks could be seen on the floor from people walking on it in skates over the years.

She heard the clanking of equipment, sticks to be more exact. A series of laughter and conversation broke out a few feet away from her and she tensed, hearing the heavy skates make contact with the floor.

Of course at the same time they made it out of the locker room the hockey team that was practicing in the rink next to theirs got out of practice. Why would she expect it to be any other way? Annabeth thought sarcastically. Both groups stopped in their tracks when they saw each other.

There had been a rivalry between the two groups for as long as Annabeth could remember. She didn’t really know why. There was just some unspoken rule that figure skaters and hockey players were just supposed to hate each other she guessed.

If there was one person Annabeth couldn’t stand more than Rachel it was the captain and star player of the Tridents hockey team. Percy Jackson. She’d met him when she first started skating in the third grade. She didn’t know how long he’d been playing hockey for but it couldn’t have been too much longer than how long she had been figure skating. The rivalry had still been around even all those years ago but it was more of a thing where the groups simply avoided each other. Nowadays there was a full out war between the groups.

I guess it makes sense if you use logic. They were younger back then, more interested in drawing and playing games than fighting. Now that she thought back on it, the older skaters who had long since left the rink to go on to college would have arguments all the time back when she was nine. She just never paid it much attention and now she was in their position. She could deal with pretty much everyone on the Tridents team for the most part, they were annoying but it was tolerable. It was just their egotistical captain that she hated with every fiber in her being.

The guy was full of himself and thought figure skating was easier than hockey. If anything, hockey was an easier sport to master. All you really needed for hockey was speed and direction.

“Well well, look who it is.” Percy said coyly, looking in her direction and shooting her a cocky expression with his piercing green eyes.

Rachel silently giggled near her and Annabeth rolled her eyes. Rachel had a not so secret crush on Percy for the longest time. She can admit he’s not exactly *bad* looking with his unusual sea green eyes and messy black hair but that didn’t make up for the fact that he was a total jerk.

Both teams attended the same high school. Goode High School to be more specific. With the exception of a few of the players and skaters most of them were all in their senior year. It was challenging to balance out schoolwork and skating for Annabeth but she still managed to be one of the top students in her class, earning all A’s and being a part of many different clubs like the student council.

Since both teams had the same practice times during the school week they had to share the big rink all the time. Today the hockey team got it so Annabeth and the other skaters had to make do with the smaller one.

“Jackson.” Annabeth sneered back.

“Is that any way to greet someone princess?” He replied.

“As if I’d waste my breath greeting you.”

A chorus of *ooo*’s came from the guys standing behind Percy but his stupid amused grin stayed plastered on his face. Annabeth hated that stupid smirk that always seemed to play on his lips.

“You’re just upset you and your little group of ballerinas didn’t get the big rink today.” Percy teased.

“Figure skaters.” Annabeth corrected, sending him a hard glare.

“Whatever. Same difference.” Another one of the hockey players, Leo Valdez commented.

“It is not! I’d like to see you even *try* to do what we do!” Calypso but in, glaring menacingly at Leo. I guess Calypso really did have a mean streak to her but it only came out when Leo was around.

Leo was the goalie for their team. He had brown curly hair and brown eyes. He wasn’t as big as the others but he had fast reflexes. From what Annabeth had observed, he was someone who was always cracking jokes. He was a close friend to Percy which gave Annabeth all the more reason to not like him. Calypso and him had immediately gotten off to a bad start when he had locked her inside the ice rink as a prank to mess with her.

A wave of arguments settled over the two groups. Everyone was bickering except Rachel and her minions who were just standing off to the side staring dreamily at Percy.

How pathetic. You call yourselves figure skaters yet you don’t defend your own sport? Annabeth thought.

“Alright, alright break it up!” Christina and Coach Hedge (the hockey team’s coach) shouted while trying to get in between the two groups.

“Ladies I said practice was over. You all can leave now.” Christina said harshly, turning towards Annabeth and the other skaters.

By the tone of her voice Annabeth could tell that for practice the next day they would all be conditioning for most of the time instead of working on jumps. Great, just what she needed.

“Locker room to change. Now.” Coach Hedge demanded while standing in front of Percy and the other hockey players, pointing towards the doors to the men’s locker rooms and looking like he was about to explode with rage.

Both groups dispersed but not before Annabeth gave Percy one last glare which he gladly returned.

Annabeth groaned as she hit the button on her alarm clock to make the beeping stop. It was Friday morning and she was so ready for the weekend to begin but first she had to get through one more day of school.

Slowly dragging herself out of bed, she walked lazily to the bathroom to get a shower. She turned on the water and while she was waiting for it to warm up she stripped out of her pajamas which consisted of comfortable shorts and a black t-shirt. She hated wearing pajama pants to bed because they always made her really hot so she wore shorts to bed all year round. If she ever got cold she would use a blanket but normally she was fine with just a comforter.

When she figured the water was warm enough she quickly got in the shower, letting the water and the steam soothe her muscles from practice the night before.

Her peacefulness didn’t last long as she thought about all the things she had to endure before the day was over and the weekend finally started. A math test, an English in class essay and figure skating practice where they would most likely condition. Not to mention she would probably bump into Percy either at school or at practice and he always had some way of making her day a bad one.

After a few minutes she switched off the shower and stepped out, wrapping a grey towel around herself and heading back to her room where she could get dressed.

The cold air brushed against her causing goose bumps to appear on her skin. She grabbed a pair of light blue jeans from her dresser, along with a cream colored tank top and her white converse low tops. Fifteen minutes later Annabeth was dressed and downstairs in the kitchen where she saw her mother making breakfast.

“Hey mom.” She greeted as she grabbed a piece of toast from the plate on the table.

Her mother Athena Chase was one of the if not *the* top architect in New York. Her architecture firm was very successful and had constructed a lot of the buildings in New York City. Annabeth only hoped that one day she would be that successful but in her own passion- figure skating.

“Morning Annabeth. You better eat fast or you’ll be late to school.” Athena warned her daughter.

Annabeth’s eyes widened when she saw that she only had ten minutes before first period started. It’s a good thing she lived close to the school. It was about a ten minute walk but five if you drove there which she usually did.

She shoved the rest of the toast into her mouth before grabbing her car keys and rushing out the door, grabbing her backpack in the process.

Upon reaching the high school, Annabeth pulled into a parking spot, grabbed her stuff and got out of the car. As she walked up the steps she admired the modern style looking building otherwise known as Good High School. Students could be seen talking and laughing amongst themselves.

As soon as she made it to her locker the bell signaling that first period was starting soon rang. She quickly grabbed her stuff for her first few classes before lunch, which included her heavy biology textbook and walked to first period. When she entered the biology classroom she smiled when she saw her best friend sitting at one of the desks with an extra seat saved for her.

“Hey Thals. You’re here early.” She commented, taking a seat at the desk next to hers. Thalia was never early to school. She was one of those people who ended up having to go to the office to get a late slip because she always slept in late and missed half of first period.

Thalia and Annabeth had been friends for as long as Annabeth could remember. They didn’t seem like a common pairing though. Thalia was someone who enjoyed wearing all black no matter what the weather was outside, Annabeth didn’t even know if Thalia owned a piece of clothing that wasn’t a dark color. She was a punk rock type of person with short choppy black hair while Annabeth had wavy blond hair and preferred to wear lighter and simpler clothing instead of black leather jackets with studs. One thing the two shared was their intimidating nature. Although Annabeth didn’t have half the school scared to death of her like Thalia did, they were both the type of people you did not want to make angry. There was only one thing Annabeth didn’t like about Thalia and it wasn’t even necessarily about her.

Thalia and Percy were cousins. Annabeth didn’t know how it was possible that her best friend could be related to such an ass with a big ego but it was true.

“Yeah I had to take the bus today instead of driving because my car has some stupid problem with it.” She grumbled tiredly, Thalia really wasn’t a morning person.

Before Annabeth could reply the teacher, Mr. Jameson started the lesson on enzymes and proteins so Annabeth took out her notebook to write down the notes the teacher was writing on the chalkboard. Her teacher went abnormally fast during the lesson, so Annabeth’s usual neat and straight handwriting turned out to be messy and unorganized.

Forty-five minutes later the bell rang signaling the end of first period. Annabeth’s next class was English where she would have to write an in class essay on the Shakespeare novel they had just finished reading. It took her the whole period but as soon as the bell rang Annabeth finished writing her last word on the page and turned it in to her teacher.

Two periods later it was finally time for lunch. When she reached her locker, Annabeth chucked her books into it and makes her way to the cafeteria where her friends Piper, Thalia and Calypso were sitting at a table eating.

“Can this day go any slower?” Piper groaned in annoyance as Annabeth took her seat next to Thalia after getting her lunch. Picking up a forkful of her salad, she listened as the conversation unfolded amongst her friends.

“That’s what you say everyday Piper.” Calypso responded.

“Well it’s true! School sucks.”

“You can say that again.” Thalia said.

The cafeteria looked like your typical average high school. Everyone was split up by table and had their own cliques. There was the skateboarders consisting of the guys and girls who rode their boards to school everyday and for the most part didn’t talk to anyone but each other.

The nerds who were your typical book worm and straight A students. Annabeth was friends with a

lot of them because of the fact that she was a pretty big nerd herself.

The theatre kids who loved everything that had to do with art and music. They practically lived on the stage where all the school plays took place. They were really nice once you got to know them.

Lastly, Annabeth's favorite, the populars (note the sarcasm).

The group mostly consisted of the girls who caked their faces in make-up and the guys who were jocks and hooked up with just about anyone they found worthy of their time. Rachel and her minions were part of this group as well as-yup, you guessed it-Percy freaking Jackson.

Besides being one of the most gifted high school hockey players in the state he was also the most popular person at Goode. He had just about every girl in the school wrapped around his finger. Annabeth couldn't understand how they could like someone so self centered and full of himself.

Annabeth herself as well as her friends didn't really belong to any specific clique. They considered themselves to be more of a group that didn't want to be defined by a title.

"So you think coach will make us condition today at practice?" Piper asked, interrupting Annabeth from her thoughts.

"I don't think, I know she will."

Piper groaned in response. "This is so unfair. It's not even our fault! It's those idiot hockey players with their stupid egos."

"Uh...can someone fill me in here?" Thalia asked confused.

"This is why you should be on the figure skating team Thalia. You would know everything that goes on." Calypso said.

"Oh hell no. Annie tried to take me skating once and it ended horribly. Besides, seeing you guys all riled up everyday when you explain what happened is entertaining."

Annabeth and the others shot her a glare before Piper filled her in on what happened at the rink yesterday, an annoyed expression apparent on her face as she recalled what happened.

"And it really bites cause today we're supposed to get the big rink but instead we'll be doing leg and core workouts and probably not even touching the ice." Calypso added once Piper finished.

"Damn that really does suck." Thalia replied.

"Yeah and it's all your cousin's fault." Annabeth said angrily, taking a bite of her salad. The sound of the lettuce crunching filled the table as she chewed.

"You know he's really not that bad once you get to know him." Thalia defended, trying to ease the tension in the air that had surrounded them.

"As long as he's a hockey player and as long as he acts like a complete and total arrogant jerk I won't see any point in getting to know him."

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

“Alright give me one more minute of jumping jacks without stopping then thirty reps on each leg of mountain climbers. Finish with twenty lunges then you can have another water break.” Christina demanded as Annabeth and the other figure skaters continued doing jumping jacks in the dry room of the ice rink.

Annabeth was right when she predicted that they would be conditioning for the whole practice instead of being on the rink. Their coach Christina was pushing them harder than she could have imagined and every one of the girls was exhausted, their breaths coming out in heavy ragged patterns as they tried to get through the rest of the jumps. The sounds of feet repeatedly hitting the floor and arms moving up and down quickly through the air only to snap back down to their sides filled the atmosphere.

“Rachel I said no stopping! You just made the one more minute of jumping jacks into two more minutes for your team.”

Annabeth and the others turned to look at Rachel, venomous expressions plastered onto their faces. They continued to jump. During the next minute the time between each jumping jack was slower and less effort was put into it as the girls began to tire even more. After they had completed the two minutes Annabeth immediately moved on to mountain climbers. Her legs burned as she switched her legs back and forth for every repetition. She counted the reps as she did them, trying to go as fast as she could so she could get it over with and take her break.

She started the lunges next. Her face glistened with sweat as she lowered herself down to the ground onto her right leg. She had to hold back a yelp of pain when she felt the muscles in her leg screaming at her to stop. Each time she went down on either leg it got worse. When she was done her legs were on fire.

She was the first one to finish and walked exhaustedly over to where her water was. When the cold liquid touched her lips she sighed in pleasure. She grabbed a towel from her duffle bag and used it to wipe her face as the other girls finished up and joined her, looking just as tired as Annabeth and panting heavily as they tried to get the water down their throats.

“You all did this to yourselves. If you hadn’t argued with the Tridents team then maybe we would all be out on the big rink practicing jumps but you did.”

Annabeth didn’t dare to speak up and say that the hockey players were the ones who had originally started the insults. The last thing they needed was another round of leg workouts.

As Annabeth was making her way out of the dry room after practice, she was stopped short by a hand grabbing her arm. She turned around to find her coach standing in front of her. Annabeth gave her a confused look, wondering why she was being held after practice. Had she done something wrong? Was her coach going to make her condition all over again? She wasn’t sure if she would be able to feel her legs at all if she had to do that again. When all the other skaters are gone and it was just the two of them her coach spoke.

“After you get changed meet me back here.” Her tone of voice held a certain urgency in it and Annabeth could do nothing but nod in response before heading out of the locker room

The thoughts of what her coach needed her for swam around in her head. As she was leaving the dry room she stopped short when she saw none other than Percy Jackson walking out of the weight room at the same time. She had successfully avoided him all day including in history, the class they had together by sitting as far away from him as she could but her luck had run out as she was now standing across from him. His blue shirt was soaked with sweat, his black hair sticking to his forehead and it was then that Annabeth realized the hockey team must not have been on the ice that day either but instead working out in the weight room as a punishment.

“Checking me out princess?” He asked amusedly when he saw her.

“You wish.” She scoffed in response, pushing past him and continuing to make her way to the locker room. She couldn’t afford to get into another argument with him, competitions were just around the corner and she needed all the time on the ice that she could get.

The sight of the figure skaters changing into fresh clothes that weren’t sweaty filled her line of vision as she walked into the locker room. She walked briskly over to her locker. It wasn’t really a locker but more of a wooden cubby. Each one of the skaters had one. There was a small cubby at the top followed by a larger space underneath with metal hooks for their jackets or duffle bags. There were no locks on them but that had never proved to be a problem before.

At the top of her locker in her cubby area sat her pristine white skates. She had always made sure to take very good care of her skates but no matter how hard she tried she still managed to go through about three pairs of skates a year because of how worn out they got. Her current pair was fairly new so they hadn’t gotten too bad yet with the exception of the ends of the laces being a bit frayed and the bright white color from when they were brand new changing to a more duller shade that didn’t stand out as much.

Her shirt stuck to her skin as she pulled it up and over her head. She grabbed a spare shirt from her duffle and put it on. Her skin still felt dirty but for the moment she would have to deal with it until she got home and was able to get a shower. She didn’t bother changing her exercise shorts or her running shoes because putting on her jeans or sweatpants while being so sweaty was not something she wanted to do.

After she changed, she started her trek back towards the dry room, curious as to what her coach needed to talk to her about. A weird feeling formed in the pit of her stomach and she suddenly felt like she was about to walk into something awful.

She was surprised to see the hockey team’s coach standing next to Christina when she entered the dry room for the second time that day. Their expressions were hard to read as they both stared at her with blank expressions.

“Hello again Annabeth. We’ll tell you why you’re here in a minute. We’re just waiting for-”

Christina got cut off when the click of the door opening sounded and a certain green-eyed hockey player entered the room. He paused when he saw everyone in the room, his eyes moved quickly back and forth from the coaches to Annabeth.

Of course. Why wouldn’t Percy be involved? Annabeth sarcastically thought.

“What’s she doing here?” Percy asked, looking towards Annabeth.

“What’s *he* doing here?” Annabeth replied, glaring at Percy.

“We called you here to discuss something important.” Christina said, gesturing for Percy to come

closer and stand next to Annabeth. He did so reluctantly, suddenly getting the feeling that he wasn't going to like whatever he was about to hear.

"The smaller rink is now only going to be used for individual practice. Since both groups practice at the same time you're going to have to figure out a way to share the rink. You all need to get over your stupid feud and this is the only way we could think of to do it. When Christina and I think you've resolved all your issues only then will we open both rinks up for practice." Coach Hedge explained while standing in front of both Percy and Annabeth.

No one said anything for a few seconds. The silence was enough to make anyone shuffle uncomfortably. Annabeth's mouth formed an o shape as she tried to reply to the news but found herself unable to.

They were supposed to *share* the rink? Was that seriously what they were telling them? Her mind wandered. The amount of problems that would result from them having to do this was never ending. Finally finding her voice, she put her thoughts into words.

"But that's not fair! We've got competitions coming up we can't share the rink with them! It's bad enough we've got to alternate everyday." Annabeth argued after she processed everything he had said.

"Coach the season's just starting! We need that big rink, it's the only one big enough to practice every single one of our plays on! We can't split it *everyday* with a bunch of ice ballerinas!" Percy said angrily, the seriousness of the situation taking a toll on him.

Annabeth crossed her arms across her chest.

"*Figure skaters*. Why is that so hard to get into your head! Is your brain the size of a squirrel's? Oh wait, that would be an insult to squirrels!" Annabeth said menacingly, turning towards Percy and momentarily forgetting the conversation with the coaches.

"Well at least I'm not a snobby little privileged princess who gets just about everything she wants! I bet you never had to work for something in your life!" Percy snapped back, spinning around to face her with his hands clenching into fists.

"Excuse me? You don't know anything about me or my life so fuck off Jackson!"

"Ooh Princess has a trucker mouth. I better listen to her." He taunted, shooting her an angry glare. Annabeth's nostrils flared. She could feel her face become red with anger. Before she had a chance to argue she was interrupted.

"Alright that's ENOUGH!" Coach Hedge shouted, ending the argument between Percy and Annabeth.

"We know you've both got games and competitions coming up so I'd suggest solving your problems fast. This fight between the figure skaters and the hockey players seems to be centered around the two of you and it's been going on for too long. I'd expect more from you Annabeth. You're my most promising skater." Christina scolded, turning to Annabeth.

"And you have the potential to be a great hockey player in the future Percy. I haven't seen talent like yours in a while but I'm disappointed in you." Coach Hedge added, looking straight at Percy.

Annabeth and Percy stayed silent as their coaches stared down at them.

"All this starts tomorrow so I trust that you'll tell your respective teams now go home." Christina

told them strictly.

Feeling insanely guilty, Annabeth quietly exited the room with Percy right behind her. Before another argument could break out she adjusted the shoulder strap on her duffle bag and walked out of the rink, not looking behind her.

“Whoa wait... we have to do what?!” Piper shouted, staring up at her in disbelief while tightening the laces on her skates in the locker room.

It was Saturday morning and they were all getting their skates on for their weekend practice. Annabeth stood in front of the whole team. She had just finished explaining to them what Christina had told her yesterday and the response was a mix of angry and shocked expressions. The room was silent as everyone stopped tying their skates.

“We have to share the big rink with th-”

“Oh I heard you. I just didn’t want to believe it was true.” Piper said, cutting Annabeth off.

Annabeth sighed. “It’s true. Believe me, no one’s more angry about it than I am but coach won’t open the other rink for anything other than individual practice until we supposedly ‘make up’ with the Tridents team.” She explained, using air quotes for the last part.

“So we’re just supposed to skate on half the rink? How is that going to be enough room for all of us to practice?” Calypso asked annoyed.

“Well one of us will always be on the small rink practicing. We can all alternate but...we’ll have to share that with the hockey players too I’m sure.”

A series of groans filled the locker room after she finished.

“So now I’ve got nothing but the small rink and half of the big one because of something all of *you* did?” Rachel interrupted, gesturing to all the skaters except Rebecca and Ashley who stood behind her like always.

“What are you talking about?” Annabeth asked, not having the energy to argue with her at this point.

“Well we’re the only ones who don’t have a problem with the hockey players. We haven’t done anything wrong and now because of all of you we’ve got to suffer losing practice space.” Rachel explained while her minions nodded in agreement.

“Listen freckles if you wouldn’t make disgusting googly eyes at Percy every time you see him maybe you and your little minions would see that-”

“Let it go Piper. She’s not worth it.” Annabeth said sharply, glaring at the fiery redhead.

Rachel glared back before turning around to walk out of the locker room with her friends in tow. When she was gone from the line of vision everyone turned back to Annabeth.

“Alright, lets go. We’ve got to be the mature ones about this. We want our rink back? We’ve got to work for it even if it means being nice to those jerks.” Annabeth finished, grabbing her white skates and beginning to loosen them so she get them on.

The others sigh in annoyance and continued to put on their skates. Annabeth almost cut off all the

circulation in her feet by pulling on the laces of her skates too hard as she thought about what the next few practices would be like. Surely they won't be something she'll want to remember. Especially because of the fact that she'd be sharing the rink with none other than Percy Jackson.

"You've got to be kidding me." Leo said once he had processed everything Percy had just said.

"Dude how are we supposed to share the rink with them?" Another one of the hockey players asked as they all stood in front of Percy.

"Yeah the season's just starting!"

"And we don't have enough space to practice everything!"

There was a chorus of shouts and arguments as the news got around to everyone on the team. Percy wanted to shout out a few things himself on what he thought about sharing the rink but he held back, knowing that since he was the captain he was supposed to show that he was in control of the situation.

"Guys I know this is the last thing we needed but if we really want our rink back we're gonna have to show coach that we can...tolerate the figure skaters. I'm just as mad about this as you are if not more. We have the small rink open but only for individual practice and we'll be alternating with the others on that too." Percy explained. His tone of voice was cold and angry.

There was a grumble of agreement from the other players as they finished getting ready for practice, throwing their bags into their locker spaces and following Percy out of the locker room.

This practice should be interesting.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Cool air blew across her skin as soon as Annabeth entered the rink. Her footsteps were heavy, being weighed down by the skates she had on. Trying to walk as steadily as she could, she led the other figure skaters over to the bleachers where she could see Christina and Coach Hedge standing alongside one another at the base of the steps. Their faces held firm expressions. Annabeth and the other skaters took a seat on the right hand side, the blades of their skates clanked on the metal benches while they climbed the bleachers.

They were alone for only a minute before the sound of thick hockey skates and sticks filled their ears. Percy led the team over to the opposite side of where the figure skaters sat. They were dressed in their usual heavy padding which consisted of shin guards, hockey socks, elbow and shoulder pads, gloves, hockey pants, a neck guard and a mouth guard. They all wore large grey practice jerseys and held their black helmets by the chinstrap in one hand, the other carried their hockey sticks.

Annabeth was thankful that she didn't have to wear all that gear for the sport she practiced. She knew it had to be heavy and it probably wasn't the most comfortable thing to wear either. Especially in Leo's case, since he played the position of goalie he had to carry a larger stick, wear large goal pads that covered his legs, thicker padded pants, a different kind of helmet designed for goalies that had a facemask, a chest and arm protector, the list went on and on.

Annabeth wore a pair of black leggings that covered the tops of her white skates and a snug fitting, dark purple quarter zip that kept her body heat in but also allowed her to move easily. Her shoulder length hair was up in a simple bun. A couple hairs had fallen out of it and now framed her face. The other figure skaters were dressed similarly, their hair was up in either ponytails or buns to keep it out of the way.

The two groups refrained from speaking to one another. They settled for scowls instead because talking would lead to arguing and arguing would lead to more practices where they would have to share the rink. If either of the coaches saw them already starting to argue it would just prolong the torture of only getting half the rink to skate on. The high pitch sound of Coach Hedge's whistle blew through the air, stopping all conversations that had started. Looking satisfied with the silence, he gestured for Christina to begin.

"Alright. Well I'm sure Percy and Annabeth have filled you in on why you're all here in the same rink."

Displeased whispers and murmurs broke out from both ends of the bleachers. It was hard to tell which side was more disturbed by the new arrangement.

A whistle sounded again as Christina called for everyone's attention, her arms crossed on her chest. She could be pretty scary if she wanted to be which made everyone quiet down and focus their attention back on the two.

"For whatever reason you all can't seem to get along. In attempt to solve this issue both teams will be practicing on the same rink. Now don't think you can all pretend for a little while to like each other before going back to how it was before, it doesn't work that way. Both groups will be working together. That's right, you heard me. No individual practices held on either side of the rink-together." Christina shouted loudly up into the stands.

Immediately realizing what this meant, arguments emerged. The shouting was deafening as both groups shared their opinions, protesting the news. Percy and Annabeth hadn't been informed of this the night before so it came as a shock to them as well. Not using a whistle this time, Coach Hedge placed two fingers in his mouth before blowing out, creating a loud sound that momentarily stopped the noise.

"Shut up!" He bellowed, grabbing the attention of everyone before continuing.

"No room for arguments! You *will* be skating alongside one another. Both teams can learn from each other. Boys you will be improving your balance to maintain better control during games. Girls you will be enhancing your speed to strengthen your performances. You *will* be doing drills together and you *will not* be complaining. Understood?!"

A chorus of yes's followed as Christina spoke again. This was worse than Annabeth could have imagined. Not only did they have to share one rink, they had to actually practice drills with one another. That was crazy.

"Today focuses on balance. Monday will be speed and Tuesday will be whatever we decide. The cycle repeats on Wednesday with balance and so on. You will be allowed the last half an hour of each practice to work on your respective skills while splitting the rink." Christina explained.

"The small rink next door will be used only for individual practice. If at any point we find more than one person practicing in there you will face the consequences. We've come up with a schedule of what times during team practice each one of you will be allowed to leave and practice alone for thirty minutes. Yes, thirty minutes. We need to be able to accommodate as many people as possible. Those who do not have individual practice one day will have it the next. The way it will work is figure skater for thirty minutes, hockey player for thirty minutes, figure skater for thirty minutes and so fourth. Any questions before we start practice?"

For a moment no one said anything. It was so quiet you could probably hear a pin drop. As the news began to sink in Annabeth felt like she'd just been slapped across the face. Regionals were only in a few weeks time and she only had thirty minutes every other day to practice individually. In her mind that was equivalent to teaching someone how to swim and then making them race in a meet two days later. Maybe Christina would allow her to stay a few minutes after each practice so she could have more time on the ice. She could only hope.

"Ok then. With that said, everyone on the ice!" Coach Hedge barked with one last blow of his whistle.

"Balance. Now I'm sure you all know it's vital in figure skating but what most of you probably don't realize is how important it is to hockey as well." Christina started, skating slowly from one side of the rink to the other with her hands clasped behind her back.

All the skaters were spread out along the width of the rink facing towards their two coaches. Percy's body itched to start gliding across the ice. He had ADHD so it had always been hard for him to sit still for too long. It was hard, but he managed to stand still and pay attention as the figure skating coach continued.

"Balance is important for both sports because without balance you don't have control and you don't have power."

"It's also important for shooting and stick handling. If you're off balance when shooting you're not going to have good weight transfer and your shot is not going to be a powerful one." Coach Hedge

added, looking pointedly towards his team.

“We’re going to start with a basic simple drill. Each of you will be skating back and fourth across the length of the rink on one foot. Every time you get to one of the lines you will switch feet and skate on the other foot. The purpose of this drill is to make sure you’re completely comfortable skating on either foot even if it’s not your dominant one. And on that note, lets get to it.”

The exercise was simple enough. All the skaters formed a line and skated behind each other, switching the foot they were skating on each time they crossed a line. Annabeth noticed a few of the hockey players stumbling slightly when they switched to their non-dominant foot. She was the first ones in the line, followed closely by Percy who seemed to be one of the hockey players doing the best during the drill.

When the coaches called them all back after a few minutes Annabeth stopped skating, using her toe pick to come to a complete stop. Percy didn’t expect the sudden action. Before he could do anything to stop, he crashed right into the blond haired skater, knocking her over onto the hard ice. He almost fell himself but managed to keep himself upright.

“Ow! What the hell-” Annabeth looked up to see Percy standing above her. She glared up at him, brushing the flakes of ice off her shoulder. For a second she could swear she saw a look of apology on his face, but it soon disappeared and was replaced by his usual annoying smirk as he tried not to laugh.

“Oops. In my defense, you could give a person a little warning when you’re going to stop like that. I’ll help you up anyway though because I’m just that nice.” He replied cockily, sticking his hand out toward her to help her up.

“I don’t need help from a conceited jerk thank you very much. I can get up just fine on my own.” Annabeth replied, pushing herself up off the ice and ignoring his outstretched arm as she skated back towards the group.

She heard him skating behind her before they both joined the others in front of the coaches. She noticed Piper come back from the small rink while Leo exited the rink for individual practice. Annabeth had almost forgotten about the separate practices and wondered when she was going to get called. She didn’t have much time to think about it because Coach Hedge started explaining the procedure for the next drill.

“The next exercise will be somewhat similar to the first one. You’ll be jumping over the lines first with both feet then with one. A stable landing is very important to have so make sure you’re focusing on that. There will be two groups this time lead by Percy and Annabeth.”

The coaches made sure to split up all the skaters so that not all the figure skaters were with Annabeth and not all the hockey players were with Percy. Annabeth had done this drill countless times before when she was practicing for a big competition last season so she was completely comfortable with it.

The drill went by pretty smoothly with the exception of slight tension being present in the air. No one was talking to each other, it was silent. Usually during practice Annabeth and the other figure skaters would talk and make jokes with one another as they practiced drills together as a team but now it was as if no one knew each other.

“Annabeth.” She heard her coach call. She skated silently over to her while the others continue with the drill.

“You’re up to skate on the small rink. You’ll have thirty minutes to practice by yourself and then Percy will be after you.” She explained. Annabeth nodded and turned towards the door where she could see one of the hockey players coming back in.

She left the big rink, smiling at Calypso who was taking a water break as she passed her. The small rink was about half the size of the big one. She wasn’t one hundred percent sure why there was a small rink and a big rink instead of two big rinks but she thought it might be because the youth hockey and figure skating teams used it for games and competitions. That was one thing she loved about the place. You could basically sign up to be part of a team or league from the age of four.

When Annabeth stepped onto the ice she noticed the many skate marks and scratches from the others who had been there before her. She steadily skated around the rink a few times, pondering which jumps she should work on while she had the space to herself.

She decided to continue practicing her triple Lutz, not being completely comfortable with her landing just yet. She also worked on her axel and double axel. She fell multiple times but always got back up and began again. Before she knew it, it had been half an hour and she had to go back to the big rink where everyone else was. She nearly bumped into Percy when entering.

“Just can’t stay away from me can you Princess?”

Anger boiled up in her. Gods he just infuriated her. Putting a hand on his chest, she stopped him from walking any further out the door. He looked at her surprised, his eyebrows raised suggestively.

“Alright lets get something straight. First off, my name is *Annabeth* and just because our coaches say we have to practice together doesn’t mean you get to come and act like you own the place. Just stay away from me and I’ll do the same to you got it?”

“You got it...Princess.” And with that, he pushed past her and made his way towards the small rink, leaving Annabeth to glare at his retreating form.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Annabeth didn't do much for the rest of the weekend after Saturday's practice. Sunday's were usually her lazy days that she spent watching TV on the couch and finishing up the mountains of homework her teachers gave her for Monday.

When Monday came around she got up rather exhaustedly. The mornings were usually like that for her after the weekend had just passed because it was hard to go from staying up late two nights prior and sleeping in to waking up twice as early for school at the start of a new week. Taking a shower in the morning always helped her wake up though.

She was never one to dress up for anything unless it was super important so she decided on some dark denim jeans, a knitted burgundy sweater and her pair of white low top converse. She brushed her teeth and ran a comb through her messy hair after only half drying it with the hair dryer. It would probably be a bit frizzy but what did she care? When she got downstairs she saw her mother making what looked to be French toast for breakfast. Smiling thankfully at her mother, Annabeth took a seat at the kitchen table with the plate of food in front of her. She wasn't running late that morning, which was surprising considering it was Monday.

"Get all your homework done Annabeth?" Athena asked, taking a seat at the table with her own plate.

"Yes mom, it's all done." She answered as if the line had been rehearsed. The older woman nodded in approval before going back to her plate of breakfast.

Athena made sure to keep on top of her daughter's grades. Annabeth thought it was nice that she cared so much but sometimes it was tiring to talk about the same things. Her mother had to know she was a good student, one of the best in her class. She was in so many clubs and never failed at getting all A's on her report card while at the same time spending every afternoon at the ice skating rink training.

That was another thing. Annabeth knew her mother didn't mind her skating but she could tell that Athena only saw it as a side activity rather than a potential career. She never said it out loud but Annabeth could tell her mother wanted her to pick a more realistic path for her future such as a doctor or an architect like her.

"I should get going mom. I'll see you later on tonight." She said, placing her empty plate in the dishwasher and grabbing her backpack.

"Bye Annabeth. Oh! Don't forget to pick up that list of possible scholarships from the main office!" Athena shouted just as her daughter was shutting the front door.

She sighed. It was hard being the daughter of Athena Chase.

"I'm telling you Annie. Ms. Dodd's is trying to kill me!"

Annabeth opened her locker, rolling her eyes at her overdramatic best friend while placing some of her books inside the enclosed space and grabbing some money for lunch.

"Thats it's the lunch period. You haven't even had her class yet."

“Yeah but she gave me the meanest glare when she walked past me in the hall after third period. That could only mean one thing, she wants to kill me!” Thalia exaggerated.

“Or it could just mean you’re being a drama queen like usual.” She heard another voice cut in. Recognizing the voice, Annabeth looked over to see her troublemaker of a friend with his arms crossed on his chest. His eyes swirled with an unknown depth to them as he approached them and turned towards her best friend.

“Shut up Nico. Where did you even come from? You’re way too quiet.” Thalia said, punching her cousin in the shoulder.

“I guess I must have magical powers that let me travel from place to place. That or you know, you’re hearing is just really bad.” He replied, receiving a harsh look in return from Thalia while rubbing the spot she had punched him.

Annabeth laughed, bringing him in for a friendly hug. She’d met Nico not long after she had met Thalia considering they were cousins like Percy and Thalia were. This in turn meant that Nico was also Percy’s cousin. She chose not to dwell on the subject too much. He had dark black hair and pale skin. His style was somewhat similar to Thalia’s. He always dressed in black and some kind of band t-shirt. He was probably the most mysterious one out of their friend group and he often had a very carefree attitude toward everything. As soon as Annabeth pulled out of the embrace she slapped Nico’s arm rather harshly.

“Ow! What is this? Beat up Nico day?” He whined, rubbing his arm.

“Why did you skip school on Friday?” Annabeth demanded seriously, all friendliness gone from her voice.

He shrugged. “Slept in. Plus I had an English exam that I didn’t want to take.”

Annabeth sighed. “If you keep skipping there’s a chance you won’t be able to graduate this year. You of all people should be the one doing everything they can to get out of this place.”

“Geez you sound like a mother.”

Annabeth continued to stare him down. Not willing to accept his response to her statement. They shared a very unique relationship. It was similar to how a sister treats her brother. A minute passed before he broke.

“Okay, okay. I promise I’ll try harder to come to school. Happy?”

“Very.” Annabeth replied, shutting her locker.

“Great now lets get to lunch I’m starving.” Nico commented, heading in the direction of the cafeteria with Thalia and Annabeth in tow.

“Are you actually hungry or do you just want to go to the cafeteria so you can stare at Will Solace the whole period?” Thalia asked teasingly while nudging him.

Nico’s cheeks colored and Annabeth laughed.

“He’s blushing!”

Nico groaned in response. “I regret ever telling you guys anything about that.”

Will Solace was one of the rare guys in their senior class who wasn't a complete jerk. He had tan skin and bright blond hair. He seemed to get along with just about everyone so he didn't really have one friend group he hung out with. He was very social and always positive. Annabeth didn't think she'd seen him mad once. He'd moved to New York in their sophomore year from Florida and since then Nico had had a huge crush on him. Will and Nico however were like complete opposites when it came to character and personality. They were real life examples of the saying "opposites attract."

"Oh come on Nicky. You know you love us." Thalia said, using the nickname she'd given him as they walk through the double doors and into the all too familiar lunchroom.

The lunch line was pretty short so they got their lunch rather fast and found their table where the others were sitting. Annabeth took a seat with Thalia and Nico filling in on either side of her.

"Oh look who's back." Calypso said once she spotted Nico across the table after they placed their trays down on the round surface.

"Yes, let's just throw a party shall we. I've finally come back to school after skipping one day!" Nico shouted sarcastically.

"Gosh what's up with you?" Piper asked.

"Oh he's just embarrassed cause Thalia and I were teasing him about the love of his life that he's too scared to talk to." Annabeth explained innocently, taking a bite out of her pizza. The others shook their heads in disapproval towards him.

"I never said he was the love of my life!" Nico defended.

"Oh yeah he's not the love of your life and I'm George Washington." Calypso stated sarcastically.

Nico huffed in annoyance, going back to his cheeseburger and taking a rather aggressive bite before mumbling something under his breath.

"You guys are the ones to talk. Annabeth I heard a rumor that a certain blond haired, blue eyed jock is back from his trip." He teased, staring straight towards the grey-eyed girl.

"What, no way. Luke's back?" Thalia spoke up surprised.

"If the rumors are true which I'm pretty sure they are." He replied.

Annabeth's cheeks flushed and she looked down at her food. She hadn't known he was back but it didn't matter much anyway. Sure he would talk to her from time to time but there was no way that he liked her in that way.

Luke Castellan. Also in their class, he was another one of the most well known guys in school. He hung out with the popular group but unlike a certain sea green eyed hockey player, Luke wasn't full of himself and knew just about everyone in their senior class. He was captain of the wrestling team and had tons of girls swooning over him, Annabeth included.

The only person Luke didn't seem to get along with was Percy. Annabeth wasn't sure of the reason why the two had so much hatred towards each other but it was always there. They sat at the same table and hung out with a lot of the same people but never with each other.

A second later she was broken out of her thoughts by a French fry flying towards her and hitting her right in the nose. She froze, momentarily stunned by the action before looking up to find the

culprit. Calypso gave her a smug look, not even trying to hide the fact that it was her who did it. Annabeth's eyes furrowed in confusion towards the caramel colored hair girl.

"What was that for?"

"Just trying to snap some sense into that head of yours. When are you going to get over yourself and ask him out already? What's the worst that could happen?" She asked.

"Uh...she could get rejected." Nico said like it was common sense. Piper responded to the statement by flicking his forehead with her finger.

"Gods. I need some new friends who won't try to beat me up everyday because this is just getting ridiculous!" He moaned in pain, his hand coming up to rub the spot.

"Oh please. You bring it upon yourself." Thalia replied.

"Anyway" Piper started, stopping the side conversation. "Back to the matter at hand, Calypso's right Annabeth. You've been crushing on him forever and the only way to find out if it's going somewhere is if you ask him out."

Annabeth sighed, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear carefully. "I-I don't know guys. I mean even if he said yes it's not like I would even have time for a boyfriend. Between school and skating...I just don't think there would be enough time." She explained honestly. She failed to mention that her mother would also probably never allow it because it would be a huge distraction in her eyes.

She'd gone on a few dates here and there. Mostly group dates that never really meant anything. She had never experienced what it was like to be in an actual relationship and most likely never would for a long time because of everything she had going on. It disheartened her. She remembered when she was little and always thought about what high school was going to be like, how she would have the quote "bestest boyfriend in the whole world" whom she would one day marry and they would live in a huge house together. The idea seemed stupid now but it wasn't back then.

Having said that, Annabeth wouldn't give up the many hours she spent skating at the rink for anything. As she said multiple times, she loved it. It was more the idea that she couldn't allow herself to slack off even a little in school that made everything harder. When she got even just a C on a quiz her mother would look disappointed in her. For that reason, every moment she didn't spend skating she spent studying.

Lunch ended a few minutes later. After saying goodbye to her friends so she could go to her locker and agreeing to save a seat for Piper in her next class, she steadily walked out of the cafeteria and towards the hallway where her locker was. She grabbed her textbook for history along with a few other materials. The hall where her locker was located had to be one of the busiest spots in the entire school. Tons of people sweep past her as she gathered her things.

When she shut her locker after getting her things and turned around she was suddenly jolted to the side from another student who looked to be around the age of a freshman rushing to get to class. The action caused her textbook as well as her folders containing several papers to fall all over the floor in front of her. The papers scattered and the book fell on its spine, opening up the pages. Annabeth exhaled in annoyance before getting down on her knees to start picking up the mix of assignments.

She heard footsteps approaching her but passed it off as just another random person walking by. She failed to notice that the footsteps stopped and a second later a certain raven-haired male knelt

down to start helping her. She shots him a surprised look but he didn't look up at her and instead continued collecting papers. It was silent as the two worked on putting everything together. Annabeth did so shakily, still in a state of complete surprise.

Why was Percy Jackson helping her? He had never shown her an ounce of kindness before. What was so different now? The thoughts flew through her head as she straightened out the papers in her hands, putting them back into the folder and taking Percy's stack as well. He picked up her textbook, closing it and holding it out to her. When she went to take it from him their fingertips touched briefly for a split second and a weird tingling sensation shot up her arm but it was gone as soon as it came. At that moment the two met eyes. Green on grey.

He was dressed in a plain blue hoodie with jeans. A pair of worn out black converse accompanied the look and his black hair lied sticking up in every direction. His eyes held something in them. An emotion that she couldn't quite figure out and no matter how hard she tried to, she couldn't look away.

They seemed to snap out of it at the exact same time a few seconds later. She hastily grabbed the book that was still being held out between them and stood up with him following suit.

"Uh...thanks." She finally said after an awkward pause, looking down at her now organized folders. Thankfully the hallway wasn't as crowded as before. She heard him shrug.

"Whatever." He mumbled lowly, walking past her as if he'd never stopped to help at all leaving Annabeth confused out of her mind.

She shook her head, walking briskly to her next class. As she walked the situation replayed in her head over and over again. She wanted to know what parallel universe she had gotten herself into. Percy Jackson, most popular guy in school, womanizer and all out jerk had just voluntarily helped her when no one else stopped in the hall to do so. Not only that, but what in the world was that strange tingling feeling that happened in her arm? She just didn't understand it, any of it.

She didn't get to think about it much longer because blue eyes and blond hair fill her line of vision as she turned a corner. There were still others walking to class but she spotted him almost immediately. The rumors were indeed true. Luke Castellan was back. His bright eyes stood out from the blue and white letterman jacket he was wearing. A fluttering feeling erupted in the pit of her stomach as he got closer. She patted down her hair, cursing herself for the slight frizz in her curls. He smiled when he saw her.

"Hey Annabeth." He addressed her, walking past her and into one of the classrooms to her left.

She waved back, the smile not leaving her face.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

The school week went by pretty fast for Annabeth and before she knew it, it was Friday and the weekend was just around the corner. For the most part the week went smoothly. She didn't have too many tests or graded assignments to do which was good. Practice was probably the only part of the week where things were kind of tense and uneasy. Unsurprisingly, Percy had managed to get under her skin all week. He would constantly annoy her by not using her actual name, being overly confident whenever they had to do a drill that he was particularly strong in and just overall pushing her to her limit. It was as if that one random act of kindness he'd shown by helping her with her books on Monday was some dream that had never happened.

In addition to having to share the rink with him, she also had to deal with constantly hearing Rachel flirting and batting her eyelashes at him every chance she got. It made her sick. Practice used to be the one part of the day she looked forward to the most, now it was more like her least favorite part. On the bright side though, she talked to her coach Christina and she said yes to allowing Annabeth to skate privately on the big rink after practice time was over. She was only permitted to on Saturdays after practice but she'd take what she could get.

She was currently on her way to her car that was sitting in the parking lot of Goode high school. Other students all around her swarmed out of the building, all too excited for the end of the week. She heard several pieces of conversations with people talking animatedly about what they were going to do for the next two days. The school day was over and she was so looking forward to having her own individual practice time after getting through the team practices that day and the following day. She smiled happily, there was light at the end of the tunnel.

She must have jinxed herself because about ten seconds later when she made it to her parked car she noticed that she had a flat tire. Normally this wouldn't be such a big deal, you would just use the spare tire hidden in the car but what made it unfortunate was the fact that she had no idea how to change a tire. These were the types of things they should've been learning in school, not imaginary numbers and quadratic formulas. She sighed in annoyance. She needed to get home so she could get dressed for practice. Her mother was out working and wouldn't be back until later tonight so calling her was out of the question. It didn't look like there were any other students around that she could ask for help even though just seconds ago there were tons. The amount of time it took for students to exit a school building was incredible. She could walk home considering she lived pretty close. She would have to leave her car at the school, but she could come pick it up later on that night. Seeing no other solution, she started on her walk home. She didn't get a chance to leave the parking lot because a moment later she heard a voice call her name.

"Annabeth, wait up!" She turned around to see Luke jogging up to her. Her heartbeat picked up. She tried to appear as casual as possible so as to not let him know the affect he had on her. He stopped running and stood about three feet in front of her.

"Hi Luke." She greeted in a way she hoped didn't come across as overly excited. He smiled at her, greeting her back and making her stomach flutter lightly.

"I saw you go to that car but then you started walking. Isn't it yours?" He asked, gesturing to her dark blue Toyota corolla. She blushed, realizing how weird it must've looked to see her walk up to her car but then leave without it.

"Yeah, it is. I just-I have a flat and I...don't know how to change a tire." She admitted bashfully.

He probably thought she was so stupid, not knowing how to do something as simple as changing a tire.

“Well lucky for you, I do. I’d be happy to help.” He offered, not an ounce of displeasure apparent in his response. Annabeth looked up, grateful for his help.

“Can you? That’d be great, thank you so much.”

He shrugged like it wasn’t a big deal before speaking, starting to slowly walk back towards her car. “Let’s take a look.”

When they got to the car Annabeth got the spare tire out along with the wrench and tire jack. She handed the stuff to Luke who was examining the back tire that had gone flat.

“Do you have any wheel wedges?” He asked after a beat. Annabeth stared at him blankly, when it came to cars she was pretty clueless. He laughed, taking the silence as her answer.

“Hang on, I’ve got some in my car.” He said, getting up to grab them from his own car. He returned with two small black plastic pieces that did indeed appear to be shaped like wedges you would see in a door. He placed them safely under the tires before going to work. Annabeth felt pretty useless, not knowing anything that she could do to help. She surprised herself when she started a conversation.

“So, no wrestling practice today?” She asked, sitting down and leaning her back against the side of the car as he removed the hubcap and loosened the bolts on the tire.

“Nope. Coach has been pretty easy on us lately actually. We all think it’s cause he’s getting married.” He replied, putting the tire jack underneath and beginning to raise it. Annabeth laughed at his words.

“Wish I could say that about my coach.”

“You figure skate right? What’s up at the rink?” He asked curiously, removing the flat tire and beginning to put the spare one on.

“Where do I even begin? The hockey team is now practicing with us so it’s kind of a mess not to mention we have less space to practice for regionals.” Annabeth explained hastily.

“It’s really annoying. We have to practice drills together and actually try to get along oh and don’t even get me started on the rotating schedule we have-” She stopped speaking when she realized how fast she had been talking. Luke stared at her with his eyebrows raised.

“Sorry, you probably didn’t need to know all that.” She said, feeling her cheeks heat up.

He chuckled. “No it’s cool. Sounds like it’s pretty rough. Everything gets better with time though, you just have to believe it will.”

“Did you get that off a greeting card or something?” She teased, not believing that he actually came up with that last sentence.

“Probably.” He said causing both of them to burst out laughing. This was the first real conversation she’d had with Luke. Usually when they talked it was just a quick greeting or maybe to complain about a math test (the one class they shared).

He finished tightening the nuts and bolts, lowering the car back into place and putting the hubcap

back in its rightful spot before returning all the equipment. He held his hand out to her and she took it, letting herself be pulled up off the ground and into a standing position. His hands were soft in hers but she pulled her hand back after a minute, not wanting the situation to become awkward.

“So uh, thank you again for everything. You really saved me.” She said, breaking the silence.

“No problem. Who wouldn’t stop to help a pretty girl in need?” He responded, grinning towards her.

Annabeth could feel the fluttering stronger than ever in her stomach. Was it just her imagination or did Luke Castellan just call her pretty? Her cheeks reddened again at the thought.

“So I’ll see you...around then?” She said, finally finding her words.

“I hope so, I’ll be looking forward to it. Bye Annabeth.” He said, slowly making his way towards his black Camaro. She waved as he left, still feeling like she was floating on air.

Had he been...flirting with her? The smile grew on her lips as she pondered the thought. On the way back to her house the only image in her head was of a certain blond haired, blued eyed jock.

On Fridays the main area of focus during practice was speed. They started off sadly with many squat and lunge exercises in the dry room. Coach Hedge and Christina had told them the main way to improve your speed and maintain it was to strengthen your legs because that was what you used the most to skate. Therefore, they had set up a rotating exercise drill for them to do. The exercises weren’t bad compared to all the conditioning Annabeth had to do that other day as a result of arguing with the Tridents team. That seemed like it was so long ago but it was actually only a week ago. She remembered that her muscles took days to recover from how sore they were.

She couldn’t help it when her mind started to drift off while she was doing lateral lunges. She found herself thinking about her earlier encounter with Luke and smiled to herself. Not only had he done her a huge favor but he had also confirmed her thoughts on the fact that he was different from the rest of the popular group at school. He wasn’t shallow and rude to others. Instead he was an honest nice guy.

“What’s got you all smiley Annabeth? You’re kinda starting to freak me out.” Piper commented, walking over to stand next to her and starting to do lunges as well.

She told Piper about the encounter, trying to recall it as best she could without making her face heat up at the memory. Piper’s jaw dropped when she was done explaining, grinning at her friend and trying not to be too loud when she let out an un-human like sound in response.

“I told you he liked you! You really need to stop doubting me. I know these things.” She said, pointing to herself to prove her point further.

“Well maybe but also...maybe not. He could’ve just been saying that to be nice.” Annabeth responded hesitantly.

“Are you kidding me?! Listen to me.” She stopped in the middle of her stretches and took hold of Annabeth’s shoulders dramatically.

“*He likes you.*” She said slowly, trying to get her point across to the blond. “One of you just needs to ask the other out already or I’ll do it for you.”

Annabeth’s eyes widened in fear. “Don’t, for the love of Gods, do that. Besides Pipes, I told you, I

don't exactly have time for a boyfriend right now."

Piper sighed. "Excuses, excuses."

Annabeth laughed at her friend, moving on to squats and feeling her legs start to burn from the movements. The sound of a whistle blowing interrupted her work out.

"Alright everyone back to the big rink for the remainder of practice!" Coach Hedge shouted, grabbing the attention of everyone in the crowded room.

When they get back to the rink after a short break for water and after changing their sneakers for skates they're told to make a line again across the width of the ice. Christina got their attention, shouting loudly across the room.

"We've decided that we're going to hold a little friendly competition. We know the last few days have been rough so why not end Friday on a high note?" Looks of relief and excitement could be seen on the faces of both the figure skaters and the hockey team. Annabeth loved competition. She'll admit that sometimes she could get a bit too competitive but that's what made her determination all the more stronger.

"You'll be split up into two teams. And no, before you start forming your teams, we'll be choosing them for you. There will be an equal mix of both my skaters and Coach Hedge's team. Since today's practice is speed each one of you will be trying to skate as fast as you can once around the perimeter of the rink before tagging the next person in line's hand so they can go. When you get to the last skater, that person will be doing two laps on the ice before coming to a full stop and joining their respective team. Both Coach Hedge and I will be standing at each teams completed lap finish line for the next person to go. I expect you all to work together." Christina explained, starting to count them off into two separate teams.

When the two teams were formed there was an equal amount of fourteen people on each. The ratio of figure skaters and hockey players was very close if not perfectly even. Almost right away Annabeth noticed something that concerned her. Percy Jackson was on the opposing team and she knew that he was the biggest threat seeing as he was the strongest player on the hockey team and he was faster than anyone else.

Both teams formed huddles to discuss the order each of the skaters was going to be in. There was a lot of arguments that emerged from the groups at first, especially on the subject of who was going to be the last person in line. When Annabeth heard her name come up she instantly focused her attention closely.

"I'm telling you. The other team is obviously going to put Percy last and we need to put Annabeth last. She's the strongest skater on this team and I for one think if anyone has a chance against Percy it's her." One of the figure skaters, Addison, stated. Some of the hockey players on her side of the rink argued with the statement. Leo surprised everyone with his words when he finally spoke up.

"I think she's right. Guys we've skated against Percy in drills before and remember how well that turned out for us? We should let Annabeth do it, she's a good skater from what I've seen in our joined practices." He said, addressing his hockey teammates.

Annabeth turned to look at the curly haired boy, her facial expression showing nothing but surprise. She sure wasn't expecting that from one of the hockey players.

"Thanks Leo." She said. He nodded in her direction before going back to discussing the rest of the racing positions in line. They finish a moment later and so does the opposing team. When they're in

line Coach Hedge calls it and with one final blow of his whistle, they're off.

The next few minutes were a blur, literally, as many skaters sped past them. People could be heard cheering for their teammates loudly. Annabeth looked across the ice to indeed see Percy standing last in line, waiting for his turn. He looked up and caught her eye. She saw a spark of competition light up in his orbs as a look of determination spread across his face. A crooked grin formed on his lips and he shook his head back and fourth as if in disbelief. If he thought it was going to be easy to beat her he had another thing coming.

When it came down to the last two people in line Annabeth got ready, making sure her skates were snug on her feet. The two teams were close, either one of them could easily win. She knew it was going to come down to her and Percy to determine which team won. Jason, one of the hockey players second to last in her team took his turn, gliding across the ice easily. She stuck her hand out so he could tag it and saw Percy in the corner of her eye doing the same but to Rachel who was second to last for their team.

When Jason tagged her hand she shot off, trying to gather as much speed as she could and not bothering to see if Percy had left. After completing her first lap she noticed him for the first time, having completed his lap as well. They had different ending lines on either side of the ice rink so she wouldn't know who had won until she finished. Wind blew across her face as the blades of her skates made continuous contact with the ice. By the noise coming from the other skaters she could tell they were really close. She heard a loud applause come from the opposing side right before she crossed her end line.

She came to a complete stop, breathing heavily and turning to face her team who were applauding her. When she looked over to the coaches they blew their whistles before speaking.

"This side wins!" Coach Hedge announced, pointing to the side where Percy was standing, being given claps on the back and high fives from his team. Annabeth's heart sunk a little at the sight. She hadn't been able to beat him.

She snapped out of it when other figure skaters came up to her, bringing her in for short hugs. The hockey players on her team high five her as well.

"You did amazing Annabeth! It was a great race." Piper told her, nudging her comfortingly.

"No, seriously Annabeth. I don't think anyone has ever come that close to beating Percy in a race." Jason added, the other hockey players nod in agreement.

"Thanks guys." She said, not really used to all the attention. The other skaters joined them a second later, forming one big group again. She didn't notice Percy skate up to her until he was right next to her.

"If you've come over here to gloat about winning you can save it. We all know you've won." Annabeth said, cutting him off before he could say anything.

He had the nerve to chuckle at her words before responding. "Relax Princess. I was actually coming over here because I wanted to say that it was a good race. You...you're a good skater."

He mumbled the last part but Annabeth still heard it. Despite the fact that he had called her Princess, he had said something nice to her for once and it takes her completely off guard.

"Oh, uh thanks...you're a good skater too." She said awkwardly. When she took a look around she noticed a fair amount of the figure skaters talking with some of the hockey players about the race.

The activity seemed to have broken some of the tension between the groups. Was the coaches plan actually starting to work? Of course there was still a clear divide between the teams but it didn't seem to be as strong.

"Thanks." He said, beginning to turn around to the others. Annabeth shocked herself when she spoke up, stopping him.

"Jackson." She shouted. He paused in his tracks and turned back around to face her with a curious look on his face.

"I want a rematch soon." She commented, her competitive side showing. A hint of a smile crossed his lips and his eyes flashed with something undecipherable.

"Anytime, anywhere." He replied smugly. He walked towards his other teammates without another word.

Annabeth didn't know it yet but that day would be the day her feud with the green-eyed hockey player became just a *tiny* bit less of a rivalry.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

Saturday practice for Annabeth ended up being pretty tolerable for the most part. The hockey players still made annoying comments from time to time but there seemed to be less insults going around overall. Things were finally starting to take a turn for the better. There would still be strong disagreements between the groups and the drills they did together were still a bit tense but it was an improvement. Either way, Annabeth didn't think her good mood could be ruined that day anyway. It was their weekend practice meaning it was also the day she would get to stay after to skate on the big rink individually.

After several drills and exercises the combined practice was finally over and everyone headed to their respective locker rooms to change. Since she was staying longer, Annabeth didn't have to change out of her skates just yet. The others gave her strange looks when they saw her not changing but she didn't care. As a matter of fact, Annabeth didn't even have to follow the others into the locker room in the first place. She only went because she wanted to freshen up a bit and use the restroom. The only people who knew that she was going to be staying after on Saturdays were Piper and Calypso.

After Annabeth waved goodbye to her two close friends and the locker room was clear of everyone else, she started on her way out and towards the big rink once again. She carried nothing but her now refilled water bottle in one hand. She would take all her stuff out later when it was time to leave and she had to change. Suddenly, she was hit with a big flash of *déjà vu* when she saw Christina, Coach Hedge and Percy all outside the doors to the big rink. Percy looked as confused as she felt when she walked up to them.

"There seems to have been a miscommunication on our part." Christina started, gesturing to herself and Coach Hedge. Annabeth's stomach twisted. Those were never words you wanted to hear.

"Coach Hedge had promised Percy the rink the same time as I had promised you it Annabeth. We should've talked about it beforehand and for that we apologize but I'm afraid both of you will have to share the rink on Saturdays after practice. We would switch one of you to a different day of the week but unfortunately we can't because the time slots have been taken by other leagues." Christina explained.

Annabeth tried to wrap her head around the situation as best she could. Her supposed to be individual practice time had now turned into not being individual. She had to share the rink with one other person and that person was Percy. There really was something that could ruin her good mood after all and that was it. She sighed in frustration. This could not be happening.

"So you're saying we have to share it every Saturday afternoon after practice? The two of us?" Percy asked annoyed. His expression showed that he was both frustrated and irritated, just like Annabeth. It was supposed to be the time she had to practice for upcoming competitions and now she had to share it just like they had to share the rink during regular practice.

"Yes. Again, we apologize. Christina and I can open the small rink up for one of you to practice on if you want." Coach Hedge offered.

"I don't plan on using the small rink. I'll stick with the big one." Annabeth replied. She had her mind set on using the larger one. It was actual competition size which is what she needed to be practicing on. She spotted Percy in the corner of her eye shake his head.

“Me either. Guess it looks like we’ll be sharing Princess.” He said, turning towards her. Annabeth huffed in annoyance. Like she said, she could somewhat tolerate Percy now but that didn’t mean he didn’t get on her nerves still. Their coaches nodded their heads, addressing the two again.

“Well you guys can stay up to two hours but no more. I’m heading home but Coach Hedge will be in the office if you should need anything. One of us will always be here each week if you need us. Now I’ll see you both at practice on Monday.” Christina said before grabbing her bag and exiting the rink. Coach Hedge let them go through the doors to the ice rink a minute later and then left in the other direction towards the office.

“Will you keep it down. I’m trying to focus on my landing!” Annabeth shouted, turning to face Percy on the other side of the rink where he had set up a goal and was trying to practice shooting the hockey pucks into the net from different angles. Each time the stick made contact with the puck a noise that sounded like a loud pop sounded, distracting Annabeth to no end.

They’d been practicing for about half an hour and there hadn’t been any problems. Percy kept to his side of the rink and she kept to hers. She was able to skate around the perimeter though because Percy had told her he wouldn’t be using the edges of the rink. It had all been working...well up until now.

Percy stopped in the middle of shooting and turned to face her as well. She had her arms crossed over her chest and an angry expression appeared to be present on her face. For a split second the thought that Annabeth looked pretty hot when she was mad crossed his mind but then it was gone.

“Can’t exactly make hitting hockey pucks quieter.” He responded coyly. She narrowed her eyes at him slightly. He was not making it easy for her to get along with him.

“Well try because I’ve got to perfect my landing for regionals.” She said annoyed. He brought his hands up in an ‘I surrender’ motion.

“You know you could give me a break from time to time. You’re too high strung and serious. Maybe that’s why you can’t get the landing.” He said, beginning to spin around to the goal again.

“What are you talking about Jackson?” Annabeth scoffed. Percy sighed, facing her again before speaking.

“Just that you need to stop thinking over everything so carefully and just do it. Not everything can be studied you know. Try doing it without thinking about it.” He explained hastily.

She thought it over. It sounded crazy to her. To learn something you were supposed to think about the dynamics of it all and study it not just empty your head. Maybe she could make a deal out of his idea though.

“Fine. But if I do you need to agree to stop making so much noise.”

“I’ll do my best.” Percy agreed.

With that Annabeth began her approach to the double axel she was trying to land. She tried to clear her head of everything, letting herself feel the movement in her legs. When she had enough speed she jumped, swinging her leg back and spinning in the air. She heard the crisp crunch of the ice beneath her when her blade hit the ice. She didn’t wobble a single bit, much less fell on her butt. It was her most perfect landing yet. She smiled, coming to a stop before looking across the ice to see Percy smirking at her.

“I believe the words you’re looking for are ‘thank you’.” He said, skating over to where she was standing.

“How did you know that would work?” She questioned suspiciously, ignoring his previous statement.

He shrugged. “I do it all the time in games.”

Annabeth struggled to fight back a laugh. By the way he said it, it sounded like Percy was saying he did double axels all the time during games. The image in her head of him doing that almost made her burst out laughing. Percy must have realized it too because she swore she could see his cheeks redden and it wasn’t from the cold air.

“I-I meant the clearing your thoughts thing. Not uh, you know.” He said, scratching the back of his head and not making eye contact with her.

“Well thanks. It helped.” Annabeth said, nodding at him before going back to practice the jump again as well as some other jumps. Percy moved back over to where the hockey goal was and the two continued to practice in silence. A little over an hour later Annabeth decided to get going. Surprisingly the practice hadn’t gone as bad as she’d thought it would.

Maybe it wouldn’t be too bad after all.

“Wait let me get this straight, you and...Jackson have to share the rink for your individual practice now too? That defeats the whole purpose hence the word, *individual*.” Piper claimed annoyed.

Annabeth sighed, it was Sunday and she had just finished telling her friends about her newfound weekend practice arrangement. They had all decided to go out for some lunch at the 50’s style diner a few blocks away from Annabeth’s house. She took in the different reactions across the table and next to her. Piper seemed angry. Calypso looked sorry for her. Thalia and Nico grimaced, thinking about how many bad outcomes there could be from the arrangement.

“I know. That’s exactly what I said. I need the practice time though, you guys know how important regionals are.” Annabeth said, looking to Piper and Calypso who nodded understandingly.

“Well who knows, maybe your life will become like one of those cheesy movies and you’ll end up falling in love with him.” Nico commented jokingly. They all shared a laugh and Annabeth shook her head at the ridiculous statement.

“Ok sure, that’ll happen.” She replied sarcastically.

“Yeah Nico, we all know she’s got her eyes on someone already.” Thalia added teasingly. Annabeth felt her cheeks heat up and looked down at her half eaten cheeseburger.

“Speaking of...look who just walked in.” Calypso added, nodding towards a boy with blond hair and bright blue eyes as the bell at the top of the door dinged to show that new people had just come in.

Annabeth looked back up to indeed see Luke. He was surrounded by some of the other jocks at their school. They picked a booth near the door and Luke sat on the side facing the back wall, where Annabeth was. When he recognized her, his lips turned up in a smile. Feeling more heat rush to her face, she grinned shyly back before looking down again.

“He’s coming over here.” Piper said, looking to Annabeth who felt her heart rate quicken. Why

was he walking over to their table? To see her? No, maybe he saw someone else he knew at a table near where they were seated and wanted to talk to them.

Her thoughts were interrupted when Luke stopped in front of their table. He looked straight at her and she felt like she was frozen on the spot. So he *was* coming over to her. She felt her palms get sweaty as the nerves took over in her.

“Hey Annabeth.” He said casually with a smile on his face. He addressed the others at the table as well before turning back to her. She smiled back and opened her mouth to speak, hoping that she wouldn’t say anything stupid.

“Hi Luke.” She managed to get out. She said it rather quietly but luckily he still heard her.

“So what’s brought you all here?” Luke asked, mentally face palming himself for asking such an obvious question. There weren’t a billion reasons why someone would come to a diner.

“Hunger.” Annabeth replied teasingly. He chuckled lowly back.

“Right. Uh, anyway are you coming to Silena’s party on Friday night? I heard it’s gonna be huge.” He asked, not taking his eyes off of the blonde.

Silena was a girl in their grade who was known for two things. Her immense beauty and her ability to throw some pretty awesome parties. Annabeth had never been to one of them but she’d often heard people talking about them in between classes. It wasn’t that she never got invited to them but rather that she just couldn’t go because her mother would probably kill her. They were always on Friday nights too and Annabeth had to wake up early the next morning for Saturday practice. When Annabeth didn’t say anything Luke took it as a moment of hesitation.

“Oh come on, you should really come. All of you.” Luke interrupted, finally looking away from her and to the other people at the table.

“Um, I don’t think-” Annabeth started.

“She’ll be there. We all will.” Piper interrupted. Annabeth turned to look at her, surprised and not knowing what to say.

“Great. Well I should be getting back. I’ll see you at school tomorrow. Bye guys.” He said, making his way back to his own table where his friends were now ordering what to eat.

“Piper! You know there’s Saturday practice. We can’t go to a party!” Annabeth claimed after Luke was out of earshot. Piper just smiled and ignored that detail.

“Come on Annabeth, live a little. Luke obviously wanted you to go to that party and we can even leave early so we won’t be too tired in the morning ok?” She asked.

Annabeth sighed. She knew she wasn’t going to get out of this one. When Piper had her mind set to something there was no stopping her. “Fine.”

The bell sounded at the top of the door again and she looks over to see a guy with messy black hair wearing a blue jacket paired with some dark washed jeans and converse. Percy Jackson. Was their whole school just going to come to the diner today or something? When he walked in the staff smile upon recognizing him. He must have been a regular.

Luke stopped in his tracks on the way back to his table when he laid eyes on him. Percy soon spotted him as well and you could literally feel the air become uneasy. Annabeth watched as the

two stared each other down. Percy easily had about two inches on Luke but neither one backed down. Luke approached him until they were only a few feet apart with his arms crossed.

“Jackson”

“Castellan” The two greeted each other coldly.

She wasn't sure if it was only her but it seemed like everyone in the diner seemed to have stopped their conversations and were focused closely on the two.

“Don't worry. I'm not staying long, just picking up some food so you can continue lunch with your little group of followers.” Percy said harshly, glaring at him. He gladly returned it.

“Oh well don't let me stop you from leaving.” Luke retorted. Percy turned to grab the carry out order he came for, paying the lady as well.

Whatever happened between the two of them seemed to be the biggest mystery in the school. Annabeth was determined to one day find out what exactly caused all the fighting and tension between them. Before Percy exited, he saw Annabeth and her friends across the room. When his eyes met hers, he looked almost...ashamed of his behavior but it quickly disappeared and he shook his head, pulling the door open and leaving the small diner.

That was when Annabeth realized there was more to Percy Jackson than she had thought. He was one big mystery waiting to be unraveled.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Calypso groaned, rubbing her arm and running a hand through her hair that now had some snow in it. Getting on her knees, she used the wall surrounding the ice rink to pull herself back up.

“Callie, you ok?” Annabeth asked, skating carefully over to her friend and making sure to stay close to the wall in case she fell as well.

“That depends on what your definition of ok is. I’m having flashbacks to elementary school when I was just learning how to skate.” She said exasperatedly.

“You’re telling me. I don’t think I’ve ever felt this uncomfortable in a pair of skates before.” Annabeth agreed, staring down at the wide padded skates.

“What are you talking about? You’re doing amazing. I haven’t seen you fall once.”

“Hey, I’ve come close at least five times in the last few minutes!” She argued, grabbing Calypso’s arm to steady her. They began to skate together around the perimeter of the rink, making sure to stay within an arms length of the wall.

“I still don’t really understand the point of this. I mean what were the coaches thinking? Renting hockey skates for us and figure skates for the hockey players. That’s insane!” The caramel-colored hair girl complained, making sure to say it so that only her and Annabeth could hear it. The last thing she needed was for one of the coaches to make her condition.

“Well look at the bright side. We seem to be doing a whole lot better than the guys.” Annabeth replied, gesturing over to a group of the hockey players who were struggling to stay upright. She almost laughed when Leo fell for the second time while trying to get back up.

“That’s true. I’m almost positive Christina or Hedge are going to start making us do stuff other than just skating around the rink though. I should start preparing myself to fall more.”

Right after she said it, Christina blew her whistle for everyone to gather around her. It took a while before everyone came together but eventually after many wobbles and near falls, everyone stood around the two coaches. Annabeth had trouble trying to stop in her skates. She was used to having a toe pick at the front of the blade but hockey skates didn’t have those.

“For the remainder of practice Coach Hedge and I will be taking our teams to opposing sides on the rink and we’ll be having separate team practices. This will not become a regular thing but for today it is. You will have to stay in the skates you have on though. The purpose of the switch is to manage your stability and speed even with blades you are not as familiar with. When you return to your usual skates tomorrow your skills should show improvement. That’s all. Tridents team is on that side and my team is over here.” She explained, skating towards the left side of the rink. The figure skaters followed her lead and the hockey players moved to the other side, still struggling to keep themselves upright.

Annabeth would admit that hockey skates were pretty comfortable compared to figure skates. There was so much more padding and they just didn’t seem to be hurting her feet as much. That didn’t mean she enjoyed them though. She felt so out of place and not herself with the skates on. She was so used to the snug white skates that she always practiced in not these thick heavy black ones.

Christina had them do a few small drills. They balanced on one leg, practiced forward and backwards swivels, and even did an exercise where they had to learn how to come to a stop in hockey skates. Annabeth didn't really get the point of that one. They were figure skaters and after today they would go back to using the toe pick to stop so why learn how to stop in hockey skates? There were a few falls here and there but their team looked like pro athletes compared to the Tridents team. She stared across the rink at the others.

Coach Hedge seemed to be having them do several exercises involving leaning in different directions and skating at an angle and it was not going well. *Maybe now they would see how hard it really is to skate in figure skates* Annabeth thought as Jason fell backwards onto the cold ice. It seemed like they all ended up losing their balance at one point, everyone except Percy. That boy seemed to be surprising her day after day.

He was a little shaky of course and he might have stumbled once or twice but Annabeth was pretty amazed at how fast he'd managed to recover and keep himself from falling. He had a look of pure determination on his face, he liked to be challenged. She admired that quality, as she had it herself. None of them had to wear their hockey gear today so Percy skated in some jeans and a black hoodie. She noticed that his eyebrows furrowed in concentration as he looked down at the skates and in that moment, he almost looked...cute.

"Annabeth!" She heard someone shout. She nearly fell, putting her hands out in front of her and looking embarrassingly over to Piper who was staring at her curiously.

She couldn't believe she had just said, or rather had a thought that Percy looked cute. Where the hell had that come from? They weren't super cliché archrivals anymore but she was supposed to be thinking of him as someone she could just barely tolerate, nothing else.

"Coach called for us come on." Piper explained, taking her by the arm and carefully skating over to the team.

"We're going to finish off practice with a few small jumps. I won't be making you do really hard ones because I don't want to risk anyone spraining an ankle. I know hockey skates aren't made for jumps but trust me when I say that if you can perform a clean jump in these skates, when you try it in figure skates it'll be near perfect. That said, lets try a waltz jump."

They spread out and Annabeth began her approach. She stumbled but manages to hold her balance before jumping up and putting one skate down to land on. The blade comes in contact with the ice but not in the way she hopes. She felt her cheek on the cold hard ice a moment later. She sat up, her arm starting to feel numb from the ice. She had landed on her side and knew that tomorrow she would be finding a nice purple bruise on her hip. She glared at the skates on her feet. She could have easily landed that if she were in figure skates. Calypso came over to her, putting her hand out for the blonde. She took it thankfully.

"Guess it's my turn to help you." She teased, bringing Annabeth to her feet. Calypso almost ended up falling as well but Annabeth grabbed onto her when she was standing up and prevented that from happening. They seemed to do a little dance before they were both somewhat stable once again.

...

"Pick up the pace boys! You should be able to do this in your sleep!" Coach Hedge shouted, observing his team skating around half the rink practicing forward crossovers.

"I think he's forgetting the fact that we're in figure skates." Jason said, coming up to skate next to

Percy.

“It’s Hedge. He doesn’t give a crap. Meanwhile we’re all here trying not to go face first into the ice.” He replied as they completed another small lap around the half rink.

“Well we are. *You* on the other hand seem to be doing fine. You’re like the only one who hasn’t fallen. Complete opposite from Leo.”

“Hey I heard that!” The curly haired male shouted, slowly catching up to the two of them. It takes a little while but eventually he was level with them.

“I’ll have you know that before today I hadn’t touched a pair of figure skates in my life. Now I’m starting to realize why too. These things are so uncomfortable and stiff.”

“I’m pretty sure none of us have figure skated dude. Can’t argue with you on the uncomfortable factor though. I have to give them props, they skate in these daily without looking like it’s killing their feet.” Jason said, gesturing to the other team across the rink that was attempting small jumps.

Percy followed his gaze, looking over to see a particular blonde taking her approach for a jump. The moment she comes down to land it her skate doesn’t touch the ice right and she falls. Calypso comes to help her up and they manage to retain balance after a minute. They were wearing hockey skates that day but it *was* pretty impressive that they practiced in such stiff skates every other time.

“Yeah, I guess.” He shrugged nonchalantly.

“Mom I’m home!” Percy yelled, slipping his Adidas slides off by the door and dropping his duffle bag at the bottom of the stairs. He noticed that his feet were still a bit sore from the skates he had to practice in that day.

“In the kitchen!” A voice called. He headed straight before making a left where the dining area and kitchen were located in the small apartment.

When he set foot in the room he smiled when he saw his mother at the stove cooking what looked to be like some spaghetti with meatballs. He expected to be greeted with a hug and a kiss but what he got instead was the opposite. She turned around with her arms crossed on her chest, a menacing look plastered on her face as her brown eyes bore into his.

“Practice ended over an hour ago. Where have you been?” She interrogated. Percy was significantly taller than her but that didn’t mean she wasn’t super intimidating when she wanted to be.

“I was just out with a few people. Lost track of time sorry.” He replied. Sally Jackson’s expression changed to one of disapproval as she looked at her son.

“Percy...you promised you were going to stop getting into trouble.” She sighed, not really knowing what else to say.

She hated when he didn’t let her know where he was. Last time it had happened he had come home with a black eye from having been involved in a fight at a party. Another time he’d come home smelling like smoke. He claimed that it wasn’t him but a few of the people he was around were smoking. Either way, she didn’t like the people he hung around outside of playing hockey. They made him into someone completely different. Luckily, she hadn’t had any confrontations with the cops about him but she felt that it was bound to happen.

“Mom I’m fine. Stop worrying so much. Is dinner almost ready? I’m hungry.” He said, bringing her in for a quick hug before looking over to the food.

“It’ll be ready soon. Go get cleaned up and it’ll be waiting when you come down.” She told him, spinning back around to finish up dinner.

He returned around fifteen minutes later wearing some gym shorts and a t-shirt, his hair slightly wet from the shower he had taken. The two sit down at the small wooden table in the kitchen. Percy’s stomach growled as he looked down at the delicious looking meal.

“So how was practice today?” Sally asked, using her fork to pick up some spaghetti.

“We had to switch skates today. The guys and I all had to practice in figure skates and the figure skaters used hockey skates. It was awful.”

“Well maybe now you understand that figure skating is harder than it looks son.” Sally said proudly.

Ever since he was little Sally had tried to get him interested in figure skating. She used to be a skater herself when she was in high school and a rather good one. She made the mistake of stopping when she got to college and regretted it more than anything. It was just as much a boys sport as it was a girls sport but Percy was fascinated by hockey and didn’t seem to think figure skating was as interesting. Somehow he’d gotten into the mindset that figure skating shouldn’t even be considered a sport and was stupid. To this day the two disagreed on the topic. However, lately he seemed to be realizing that it was challenging and required a lot of work.

Percy mumbled something incoherently back that sounded sort of like he was in agreement and she smiled. Even though she initially wanted him to figure skate she was happy he played hockey. She could tell he loved the sport and he was *very* good. She went to as many games as she could when she wasn’t working as a waitress at her day job and he always impressed her with his skills on the ice.

After they finished dinner Percy helped her with the dishes. He went to put something on TV for them to watch but Sally stopped him.

“It’s Wednesday night. Shouldn’t you be doing homework?”

He groaned, placing the remote back on the coffee table and heading upstairs to his room where his backpack lied with homework assignments over the past week that hadn’t been touched. He attempted to do the overdue assignments and that night’s homework for about twenty minutes before a wave of sleepiness overcame him and he laid back on the small twin bed in his room. Deciding to just do some work in the morning, he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8

“You’re out of your mind if you think I’m going to wear *that*.” Annabeth grimaced, pointing to the item of clothing her friend had just walked out of her closet with.

“Oh come on! Why is it even in your closet if you’re never going to wear it?” Piper argued, stepping over the pile of discarded t-shirts and jeans that now lie between the bed and the closet doors.

“I didn’t even know I had that. I have no idea where it came from!” She replied honestly. Someone must have given the piece of fabric to her as a gift cause there was no way in Hades she would buy something like that for herself. She was a hoodie and denim kind of girl.

“Pleeease. At least try it on.” Piper begged, holding the dress out to the blonde, kaleidoscopic eyes staring at her pleadingly.

“Just try it on Annie, what’s the harm in that?” Thalia called from her position of lying down on the bed and continuously throwing a random ball up into the air and catching it.

“Fine. I’m taking it off right afterwards though.” Annabeth huffed in annoyance, snatching the dress from Piper and walking into her bathroom to change.

She pulled it on and somehow managed to get the zipper up without any help. Not bothering to look in the mirror at her reflection, she walked back to her room where her friends sat waiting for her, all dressed and ready for the night out.

Unsurprisingly, Thalia had chosen to wear the color black. She wore her signature leather jacket with a flowing black blouse underneath, black jeans and black combat boots. She didn’t do anything with her hair, leaving it choppy the way she liked it and besides some eyeliner, she didn’t look like she had much makeup on.

Calypso was dressed in an off-the-shoulder white blouse that had patterns of blue flowers on it accompanied by a pair of jeans and white wedges. Her hair was in a single braid on the side and she had a few touches of makeup on her face that outlined her eyes and cheekbones.

Piper had a casual solid maroon colored dress with a sweetheart neckline at the top. She wore a pair of black heels with it and a long silver necklace with a geometric shaped pendant was around her neck. She straightened her hair as well and used some lipstick and blush on her face.

None of them wore much makeup, Annabeth the least. She had some concealer and lip-gloss on but that was it.

When she walked back into her room the others stared at her with wide eyes. After a moment, Piper clapped her hands excitedly and smiled.

“You look *hot* Annabeth. No guy within a hundred mile radius is going to be able to keep his eyes off of you.” She said, turning her around to face the full-length mirror on the back of the door. Annabeth stared at herself in shock, not recognizing the beautiful girl staring back at her.

The dress was a tight-fitted short navy bodycon dress that outlined her figure quite nicely. The top of the dress was off the shoulder, similar to Calypso’s shirt. The outfit was nowhere near what she

usually wore.

“You have to wear that dress!” Calypso agreed, walking over to stand next to her in the mirror.

“Guys I’ll freeze in this, it’s January, in case you haven’t noticed. Plus, it’s way too short for my taste.” Annabeth replied, tugging at the bottom of the dress that only went down to her thighs.

“We’ll stay inside the whole time. As for the shortness...” Piper leaned forwards, smacking Annabeth’s hand away from the dress, receiving an indignant “Ow!” from the victim.

“Leave it be. It looks amazing on you and I’m sure Luke will think so too.” She argued, adding the last part in for good measure.

Annabeth immediately blushed. “Shut up. There’s going to be tons of people at the party, there’s a big chance we might not even see him.”

“I have a feeling he’ll be looking for you. Trust me on this, wear the dress.” Piper insisted, grabbing a pair of white heels to hand to her.

“Pipes...” Annabeth said unsurely, subconsciously tugging at the bottom of the dress again.

“Annie, you’re wearing the dress.” Thalia cut in, making it sound like she didn’t have a choice. Annabeth stared at her three friends, rolling her eyes and cursing under her breath.

“Ugh, alright fine but I’m not wearing those devil shoes with it. Let me wear my white low top converse and we have a deal.” She bargained. Piper squealed in delight.

“Ouch okay, what did I just walk into?” Another voice from the doorway asked. Nico came into view wearing a simple black button down with some dark jeans and all black converse. He covered one ear from the sound of Piper’s high-pitched scream.

“Annabeth agreed to wear that dress.” Calypso explained, gesturing to the blonde who had just finished tying the laces to the white converse on her feet. Nico nodded his head in approval.

“That looks great on you Annabeth. If I was straight I’d date you.” He joked, causing everyone else to laugh.

“Come on, let’s go.” Thalia said, grabbing her phone before starting to leave for the car. Annabeth took a look at herself in the mirror once more, observing the outfit unsurely.

“Actually guys...I think I’m just going to stick with some jeans and a nice shirt. Sorry.” She said, walking over to her closet again to start looking.

“No you can’t! Nico grab her!” Calypso shouted urgently.

Annabeth didn’t even get a chance to turn around before she was suddenly hoisted up on Nico’s shoulder fireman style. The action caused her to drop the clothes she had in her hands.

“What the-Nico! Put me down right now!” She yelled, struggling to get free from his hold. The others were quick to grab their stuff, following Nico down the wooden stairs and out the door where his car was waiting. It was a good thing her mom was working late and none of her neighbors were outside because the scene was definitely a weird one.

“What the hell guys?!” Annabeth shouted when she’s seated in the back of the car and they’re on their way.

“You agreed to wear the dress if we let you wear the sneakers. You can’t just take it back. We had to do what we had to do.” Piper explained like it was common sense.

Annabeth huffed in frustration. The whole drive over to Silena’s house she tried to make the dress a little longer but every time she tried the top got pulled too low so she had to leave it alone. The others laughed at her struggling and she eventually gave it up, thinking a few choice words about her so called friends that she wants to, but doesn’t say aloud.

When they pulled up to the house she was not surprised to see empty beer bottles all over the yard and random streamers thrown everywhere. There were a few groups of people outside but Annabeth was sure the scene was much worse inside the house, if you could even call it that. Silena never advertised it much, but the girl was rich. She lived in a huge mansion with a courtyard, an outdoor and indoor pool, and enough rooms to get lost in for a good week. That was probably the main reason her parties were so popular.

As soon as she stepped out of the car she smelled the alcohol that only got stronger as she approached the house. The front door was wide open and once the group entered Annabeth practically choked on the smell of intoxicating alcohol, drugs and sweat. Inside, people could be seen drinking from red solo cups, playing games that looked to be spin the bottle or seven minutes in heaven, and dancing (rather intimately) to the stereo that was pounding music so loud she was already getting a headache.

It was definitely not her scene. Ask her to choose between a high school party or spending an hour at the rink skating and she’d always choose the latter. Her friends didn’t seem to think the same way she did though, barely a minute after stepping foot inside the house, Piper and Thalia headed straight for the dance floor, grabbing a red cup with some random type of liquor on the way. So much for staying together.

Calypso, Nico and her headed to the kitchen which surprisingly seemed to be the least occupied area in the house. On the way there, Annabeth felt eyes all over her from many of the guys just standing in the hall. She shifted uncomfortably, not used to the attention and now wishing more than ever that she had never even tried on the short dress in the first place. Calypso spotted some of her junior friends talking amongst one another. They smiled and invited her over.

“Go. We know you have other friends besides us.” Annabeth reassured, gesturing for Calypso to join them.

“Yeah, just know that we’re always your number one group of friends.” Nico added smugly, getting an eye roll from Annabeth and a small laugh from Calypso.

“Thanks guys. I’ll catch up with you later.” She walked through a couple groups of people and then she was out of sight.

“Guess it’s just you and me Blondie.” Nico said, walking further into the kitchen where there was some food and, of course, a ton of beer bottles both empty and not even opened yet. He grabbed one for himself before offering one to Annabeth who shook her head. The last thing she needed was a hangover before practice tomorrow.

She spotted Will Solace making his way into the kitchen, probably to grab another beer from the corner of her eye. He was wearing an orange collared shirt with some jeans. Nico didn’t seem to be paying attention, instead gorging himself on the many different snacks at the snack table. A meddling grin spread across her face when she got an idea; the perfect plan for revenge. Nico had carried her out of the house forcing her to wear the outfit she had on and now she would be able to get her payback.

“Hey Will!” She called out, beckoning him closer. Nico’s head shot up, his eyes widening in terror. He made a series of really odd hand movements in attempt to tell her not to bring him over. Annabeth ignored him.

“Hey Annabeth, Nico. What’s up?” He greeted, nodding politely to both of them. Nico raised his hand up to wave back shyly, almost knocking over his beer in the process causing his cheeks to color.

“Well Nico and I were just discussing how cool of a house this place is. We were actually just about to head up to the rooftop. You wanna come with us?” She offered.

“Yeah I’d love to. It’s beautiful up there.” Will smiled, turning to Nico who was fiddling nervously with his hands. He looked back up and neither one of them broke eye contact. Annabeth internally sighed, it was so obvious.

“Great! Well I actually need to use the restroom but I’ll meet you up there.” She lied, quickly exiting the room before Nico could kill her.

A moment later she realized that she was now alone with none of her close friends around her, but it was worth it to see the look on Nico’s face before she left the room.

Not really knowing what to do, she walked through the house, passing many drunk teenagers. She’d been there not even twenty minutes and she already had a huge desire to leave. Off the side of the main dance floor she spotted a familiar face, no, faces. Talking with a lot of the other people in the popular group, and with a certain redhead clinging to his side, stood Percy Jackson dressed in a loose sea green button down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. He also wore dark colored jeans with a pair of very worn out high tops. She had to admit that he looked good. He laughed carelessly at what someone else had said, not bothering to shake off the frizzy haired girl at his side.

Gods, she is pathetic Annabeth thought. Rachel stood pinned to his side wearing just about the sluttiest outfit she had ever seen. Her green tank top looked ten sizes too small, skin tight and short enough to not even touch her belly button. The jean shorts she had on showed as much leg as possible, and to top it all off, she had black stilettos on her feet and her face was completely caked in make up.

She noticed that each person in the group seemed to have a drink. Some of them looked like they were on their fourth or fifth drink by the way they could barely stand upright.

Everyone, except one.

Percy didn’t have a single cup or bottle of alcohol in his hand. As a matter of fact he looked to be completely sober. He joked with the others and laughed but not once did he stumble or look dizzy and out of it. He caught her gaze but only for a second because she turned away to walk down another hall, still processing the idea that Percy Jackson, known for being a bit of a delinquent and all out player, was sober at a party.

Somehow she ended up walking by a series of closed doors with some unsettling sounds coming from behind them. She quickened her pace to get out of that section of the house but before she could leave, she collided into someone, losing her balance and catching herself on the wall next to her. The person she ran into groaned, rubbing their head before standing up. She got a good look at the guy and when she did she wished more than anything that she hadn’t come to this godsforsaken party.

Right in front of her, looking like he just recently redressed himself, his hair messy, sticking up everywhere and his breath smelling strongly of vodka stood the guy Annabeth had been hoping would talk to her all night.

“Luke?”

His face drained itself of color. Annabeth had never seen him like this. He’d clearly had a lot to drink and it didn’t take a genius to figure out why he’d just stepped out of a room with his clothes all wrinkled and messy.

Her assumption was confirmed when a girl about her age with straight brown hair and green eyes emerged from the doorway, giggling hysterically and hiccuping. She hung onto Luke for balance and Annabeth felt her heart drop. A lump formed in her throat and she took off. Running down the hall, not caring which direction she went.

“Annabeth, wait!” She heard his voice call desperately but she didn’t stop. Pushing her way through the crowds of people, she ended up finding herself at Silena’s indoor pool. Luckily, no one else was in the room.

She let the tears she was holding in fall down her cheeks. It was stupid that she was so upset over a guy. There was a small part of her that thought, just *maybe*, Luke might like her. She realized how idiotic that thought was. He was one of the most popular guys in school. She was just Annabeth Chase, bookworm and figure skater with practically no social life. Her eyes glazed over as she continued to cry silently. She sat by the edge of the pool, unlacing her shoes before sticking her feet into the fairly warm water. She never even wanted to come to the party in the first place. She jumped when she heard footsteps behind her, spinning around surprised to see none other than Percy Jackson approaching her.

She inhaled deeply, using the back of her hand to wipe the tears off her face in attempt to hide her crying.

“What do you want Jackson? I’m not in the mood.” Her voice broke and she turned back around to look down at the pool, hoping he would just leave.

“I just-....are you ok?” His voice got closer to her. The way he spoke made it seem as if he was genuinely concerned about her. An Oscar-worthy performance.

“I’m fine. Nothing you would bother with. Just go back to your group of friends. I’m sure by now they’re all trying desperately not to pass out from all the booze and drugs they’ve inhaled.”

He ignored her, coming over to her left side to also sit by the edge of the pool. He left a few feet of space between them. Annabeth didn’t even flinch, choosing to stay quiet and keep her eyes on the mesmerizing water patterns at the bottom of the pool.

Percy broke the silence.

“You know I thought about becoming a swimmer once. Saw it on the Olympics one year and I thought it looked pretty cool. I had it all planned out, in high school I would be captain of the swim team, beating everyone I raced by a mile in the freestyle.” Annabeth rolled her eyes, realizing that even back then he was cocky.

“Then...I went to my first hockey game. I remember being in a trance, watching the players fly across the ice like lightning. The speed and agility they had was amazing. That’s when I realized there was nothing else I wanted to do but be a hockey player.” He finished, looking a little lost in

thought and swirling his feet back and forth in the water, since he had taken his shoes off a few minutes ago.

“Why are you telling me this?” Her voice was quiet and curious. He could’ve been anywhere else at the party but he had chosen to stay there, with her. Why?

He shrugged. “I have absolutely no idea.”

Against her better judgment, Annabeth cracked a smile at his ridiculous response. He looked over at her and grinned. She didn’t look up but she could see it from the corner of her eye. It was as if he was a completely different person. She was glad that he hadn’t asked her again why she was so upset. He was trying to make her feel better by distracting her with conversation and it was...sweet.

“So, while we’re sharing stories, what’s yours Princess?”

“Oh you were doing so well till you used that name Hockey Boy.” She replied, finally looking up to catch his eye.

“Hockey Boy? Wow, way to be creative.” He responded sarcastically.

“You calling me dumb?” She retorted, raising an eyebrow challengingly.

“If the skate fits.” He teased. Annabeth gasped in mock hurt. What happened next, Percy had no control over. In her defense, he should’ve known better.

She got up from sitting at the ledge in the blink of an eye. Percy barely had any time to stand up before the blonde came up behind him and pushed him into the water. There was a big splash before he came up sputtering pool water and stared at her, stunned. Had she really just done that? She stood with her arms crossed on her chest on the mostly dry poolside, looking down proudly at the sea green eyed boy who was treading water.

Annabeth couldn’t help it, she busted out laughing at the scene. She had to hold her stomach because it hurt from laughing so much. He swam back over to the edge of the pool, lifting himself out of the water, soaking wet.

“What the hell was that for?!” He said, flipping his wet hair out of his eyes. She noticed a hint of a smile on his face.

“No one calls me dumb.” She stated simply, keeping her distance from him as he stood in front of her.

“Well now that I’m soaking wet and my mom is going to most likely kill me when I get home, I think the least I should get is your skating story Chase.”

She pretended to think it over. “Hmmm. Nope, sorry, but the only people who get to know that story are my friends.”

“Ouch Princess that hurts. I have to be qualified to hear your story?”

She nodded. “Yup.”

“Well then I guess I better start from the bottom.” She stared at him confused until he stuck one of his hands out that was still dripping with water.

“Acquaintances?” He asked, staring at her for a reply.

She smiled. She hated to admit it but he somehow had managed to make her feel better after what happened with Luke. She'd been seeing a different side to Percy Jackson lately, a caring and actual human side of him. He was different when he wasn't around his friends. She knew there was more to his story as well, and she found herself wanting to know more. With that thought in mind, she placed her hand in his, trying to ignore the warm feeling that spread all over her.

“Acquaintances.”

Chapter 9

Chapter 9

Annabeth pushed her way through the other students walking or just talking amongst each other. She was trying to get to her locker where she met up with her friends in the mornings. Usually she would try to get to the school earlier, so as to avoid a backpack to the face or someone stepping on the back of her converse, but today she had woken up late.

It was Monday, meaning not only could you see the glum faces of all the high school students, you could physically feel the resentment in the air. No one wanted to be there. She passed through the front door, finally being able to walk around easier with the added space. Adjusting the strap of her backpack on her shoulder, she started the route to her locker.

She passed some students lazily texting on their phones, probably just texting the person right next to them. Others were grouped with their friends discussing what they did over the weekend. One group of girls stood shoulder-to-shoulder trying to cram last minute information from a textbook into their heads, awaiting a test in first period. She even saw a guy laying down sleeping on the tiled floor in a corner, his black backpack serving the purpose of a pillow. She turned the corner and rolled her eyes when she took note of the two people about twenty feet away from her who were making out near the line of lockers.

Looks like Drew Tanaka was the ‘lucky girl’ who got to date the famous Percy Jackson. Note the sarcasm. She awkwardly walked around them.

It seemed like Percy had a new girlfriend everyday. Actually, not really a girlfriend so much as someone he just hooked up with before breaking her heart. She gave their relationship two weeks max before he would call it off. On the bright side, while they were dating she could just enjoy watching Rachel practically fall apart when she found out.

She found it really hard to believe that the guy currently French kissing the head cheerleader of the school was the same one who’d been so kind and caring when she needed someone to talk to at Silena’s party. It just didn’t make sense. How were they the same person? It was like one minute he was caring and sweet but the next he was a cocky player.

Fortunately since the party when they had agreed to be acquaintances Percy hadn’t done much to get on her nerves. On Saturday when they were practicing together, he’d simply said hi to her and they’d had a couple mini conversations about random things, mostly concerning skating, after the team practice when they shared the big rink. Piper and Calypso had immediately caught on to the fact that they weren’t fighting like usual and Annabeth had to explain what happened at the party. They didn’t believe that such a different side existed to the great Percy Jackson either.

Her thoughts were interrupted when she spotted her friends gathered in a group beside her locker. Nico was the first one to see her. He smiled and waved her over, his obsidian eyes lighting up with delight.

“Hey Annabeth.” He greeted from his current position under Will Solace’s arm.

That was another thing that had occurred at Silena Beauregard’s oh-so-famous party. She didn’t know all of the details but when the two had gone up to the rooftop together they had apparently shared a romantic moment and now Nico and Will were dating. She didn’t mean to brag, but it was all thanks to her that they were together. Ok, maybe she did mean to brag.

Upon hearing her name, all eyes in the group turned around to look in the direction she was coming from. It looked like everyone was actually on time to school today. Wait...no she spoke too soon. Thalia was the only one missing. And as usual, she'd most likely be late to biology.

“Hey guys, Will.” She addressed casually.

“What, I have to be greeted separately from everyone else? That hurts Annabeth. Hurts right here.” Will replied in mock hurt, gesturing to his heart. Nico rolled his eyes at his sarcastic boyfriend, gently nudging the tan boy's side.

The others laughed and then Will suddenly detached himself from Nico and pulled Annabeth into a hug. She chuckled and hugged him back.

“I'm just kidding with you girl. It's everyone's lucky day though because I'm probably going to be spending a lot more time with this group. Especially because I'm with this thing now.” He said teasingly, pointing sideways to the shorter male who had his arms crossed, his mouth open in shock at the statement.

“This *thing*? If you know what's good for you you'll stop talking Solace.” Nico said insulted, staring pointedly up towards him.

“Make me, di Angelo” Will replied, his face inching closer to the scowling boy. Nico's face lost its frown when he realized the little amount of space between them. Calypso cleared her throat, interrupting the moment between the two males.

“Still here guys.” Nico's face flushed and he jerked back, increasing the distance between them once again. Will simply laughed it off.

Annabeth smiled at the two. They were so different but seeing the smiles that donned their faces proved they were meant to be together. There had always been a level of chemistry between them and she was overjoyed that they'd finally gotten together. She could only hope that one day she could be that happy with someone. Nico and Will had just gotten together yet it seemed like they had been in a relationship for years.

“Another person who makes fun of Nico. I like you Solace, you'll fit in just fine with our little group.” Piper said approvingly, Nico glared at her.

Right at that moment the bell rang from the intercom of the school building signaling the start of first period. Annabeth opened her locker, placed her stuff in the enclosed space, and took out her bio book. She turned around to face the others who were still gathered.

“So I guess I'll catch up with you guys later?” She asked, closing the metal door behind her.

She received a series of agreements in response to her question before they all dispersed, each heading in a different direction.

Four periods of agonizing torture later, it was finally time for lunch. The cafeteria was loud as usual and there was a long line of students waiting to buy food. Once she got her tray, consisting of a Caesar salad and some vanilla yogurt, Annabeth took a seat at their table next to Will and Piper.

“Three more periods. Three more periods and we get to leave.” Thalia commented from across the table.

“Ugh I've got so much homework to do when I get home. I hope I'm not too tired after practice.

Man, I hate junior year.” Calypso added.

“Ah junior year. One word I could use to describe mine...hell. Just keep your head up. You’ll get through it and before you know it, you’ll be a senior.” Will encouraged, taking a bite out of his sandwich.

Loud obnoxious laughing filled the room. Annabeth looked up to see Percy with a few of the other popular people walking next to him. Drew had an arm around his waist as they walked and she glared at any girls who so much as glanced at Percy. Talk about possessive. They walked over to their table at the center of the cafeteria and sat down.

She hadn’t realized she’d been staring until sea green eyes caught her own stormy grey ones. When he saw her his laughter died down. As he stared at her she tried to take in his appearance. His hair looked like he had tried to comb it but failed and he was wearing a black graphic tee with some blue jeans.

He smiled genuinely at her and in response Annabeth dipped her head politely in his direction to acknowledge his greeting.

Percy was broken out of his trance when Leo howled in laughter at something another guy said, leaning against him for support. When he tried to look back up at the familiar blonde, he failed to catch her eye again as she went back to talking animatedly with her friends on the other side of the room.

“What was that?” Thalia asked in surprise, having caught the short exchange between them.

“What?”

“When you saw my cousin and he saw you neither one of you glared. In fact, he *smiled* at you.”

“Oh yeah well we’re kinda-”

“Dating now?! Oh I always thought you two would make a great couple!” Will cut in excitedly, interrupting Annabeth.

“No! I was just gonna say we’re acquaintances now. Nowhere near what you thought!” She responded hastily. Will’s face dropped in disappointment. Percy and her as a couple? The thought of it was so alien to her.

“Really? Never thought I’d see the day when you two became friends.” Thalia replied, her mouth full of burger.

“Acquaintances”, Annabeth corrected her best friend.

“Same thing.” Nico added, waving his hand dismissively.

“It is *not*.” She argued.

She then goes on to explain everything that happened at the party Friday night from seeing Luke to Percy finding her. They listen intently without interrupting.

“Wow I’m so sorry about Luke, Annie. Are you ok?” Thalia said once she’d finished.

“Yeah I’m fine. He wasn’t mine to begin with so it shouldn’t matter that he kissed another girl.” Annabeth replied glumly.

“Well who says you need a man in your life to make you happy? You be you Annabeth, and if Luke doesn’t see how great you are then he doesn’t deserve you.” Will retorted, making Annabeth smile in thanks.

“I’m happy you and my cousin aren’t mortal enemies anymore though.” Thalia added. Annabeth was thankful for the subject change.

“Yeah we were all shocked when they didn’t try to kill each other at practice on Saturday. At least now things aren’t as tense between our team and the hockey team. Good timing too, because qualifications for regionals are this Sunday and we don’t need anything in our way.” Piper explained, getting a nervous look on her face at the end.

“Yeah don’t remind me. I don’t know what I’ll do if I don’t qualify for regionals.” Calypso said worriedly.

“You’ll do fine, Callie.” Annabeth reassured.

“Easy for you to say. You’re an amazing skater Annabeth. You’ll qualify for sure.”

“We’ll see on Sunday. I’m going to get something from the vending machine, anyone want anything?” She asked, getting up slowly from the table and looking questioningly at her friends.

“Yeah, I want your talent for Sunday.” Piper muttered in response, getting an eye roll from Annabeth.

She exited the noisy area and walked into the hallway where the two vending machines sat. One with snacks and another with drinks. She decided on a red Gatorade, pays for it and then waited for it to come down. When she heard it fall she grabbed it from the bottom slot and then stood back up. She almost had a heart attack when she saw a familiar face right in front of her after she stood up. She took a subtle step backwards.

“Hey Annabeth”

“Luke” She said coldly.

This was the first time she had seen him since the party. She knew that technically she shouldn’t be treating him so harshly, because they were never together in the first place. Luke had every right to kiss anyone he wanted to at the party but still, she couldn’t help but act distant towards him. She thought there was a chance that they had something between them but that clearly wasn’t the case. He had hurt her and right now all she wanted to do was get back to her friends.

“Listen can we talk? About what happened at Silena’s party on Friday?” He asked hopefully. Annabeth shuffled uncomfortably, not wanting to make eye contact with the person in front of her.

“I don’t know Luke. I don’t usually like associating with guys who lead me on and then go off to make out with other girls.” She said, finally letting some of her anger slip out. She started on her way back to the table but he ran out in front of her, stopping her retreat.

“Please just give me a minute to explain.” He pleaded. She glared up at him and crosses her arms, cursing herself for what she was about to do.

“One minute.” She agreed.

“I got to Silena’s party around 9ish. There were already tons of people there and of course a ton of beer all over the place. I mean you were there, you know what the scene looked like.” Annabeth

didn't say anything, just waited for him to continue.

"I hung out with a few of my buddies and had a couple bottles of beer but nothing strong enough to make me as drunk as some of the other people there. The third thing I had to drink wasn't beer out of a bottle it was in a red solo cup. Now that I think about it, I can't really remember where I got it from but all I knew was that it tasted kind of funny. I drank it anyways though and after that the night was pretty fuzzy. I didn't realize until the next morning that someone had put drugs in the cups. I only remember certain moments like when this girl, Stephanie I think was her name?, Came on to me and pulled me with her onto the dance floor. Next thing I knew we were upstairs in one of the many bedrooms and she was kissing me. It didn't get too far because I pulled away and opened the door to leave. That's when I saw you and seeing the expression on your face was one of the very few clear things I remember. I tried to go after you when you ran but I got stuck behind this group of people in the hallway and when I finally got around them, you were gone."

Annabeth's scowl slightly wavered but she still stood her ground, trying to process the whole story and debating on whether or not she should believe him. He came closer to her, grabbing one of her hands in the process.

"I know it sounds kind of pathetic but you have to believe me. I never meant to hurt you Annabeth, and I'm so sorry. In fact, ever since I came back I've been meaning to tell you that...I have feelings for you. I had originally planned to ask you out at the party, but that clearly backfired." He chuckled nervously.

"What I'm trying to say is that I like you Annabeth. You can't tell me that you haven't felt something between us. Do you think that maybe you could forgive me and...give *us* a chance?" He whispered pleadingly.

Annabeth had been silent the entire time he had been speaking because she was listening but now she was completely rendered speechless by his confession. He liked her. As in he liked her as more than a friend. She had wanted this for the longest time, for Luke to return her feelings but now that he had finally admitted it she was having trouble giving him an answer. On the one hand she could accept his apology and they could be together as a couple like she'd always wanted. On the other hand, she didn't know if she should trust him, because how did she know he didn't make the whole thing up? It seemed genuine but ninety percent of the things that happened in high school were untruthful.

"Annabeth?" He asked in a hushed tone, gently squeezing her hand that was still in his. She sighed, finally managing to find her words.

"I like you too Luke. I have for a long time." He grinned widely but she puts her hand up to signal that she was not done speaking.

"But you really hurt me at the party. I know you were drugged and it makes me feel a little better that you weren't completely sober when you let some random girl make out with you but I just don't know if I can fully trust you yet."

His face fell in disappointment but he looked back at her understandingly. She took her hand back steadily to rest at her side.

"Maybe we should just start out as friends before we jump into anything." She suggested. He nodded in agreement, a hint of a sad smile still playing across his lips.

"Friends it is. Well, until you realize that you just can't resist all this." He said, gesturing to himself. Annabeth laughed and, just like that, the awkwardness between them diminished.

They separated with a casual 'see you later' and Annabeth made her way back to her lunch table. She must've been gone longer than she thought because all of her friends turned to look up at her with questioning and curious glances as she sat down.

"Where the hell were you? You've been gone half of lunch!" Thalia interrogated. They looked at her for an explanation and she told them everything about her conversation with Luke.

"Well you're just befriending everyone nowadays, aren't you?" Nico said when she was done talking.

When lunch ended Annabeth headed to her next class with Piper after stopping at her locker. They had history and believe it or not that was her favorite subject, especially because of the unit they just started. They were learning about ancient Greece and the different Gods in Greek Mythology. Mr. Brunner, her favorite teacher, taught the subject as well.

Piper took a seat at the desk next to her in the middle of the room as the students filed into the classroom one by one. One of the last people to walk in (right at the bell, might she add) was Percy. He carelessly tossed his backpack next to a desk in the back as a few of his friends turned around to talk to him.

"Alright class, quiet down." Mr. Brunner called, getting the attention of most of the class. He waited a few more minutes and then the whole class was silent, waiting for him to continue.

"Thank you. Now, seeing as how we've been studying the Ancient Greek Gods and Goddesses for the past week I've decided to give you a project to test your knowledge of what we've studied so far."

A series of groans and sighs from the students followed the information. Mr. Brunner quieted the class again before continuing.

"Oh shush it's not that hard. The project will be to pick any Greek God or Goddess and give a PowerPoint presentation on them according to the rubric I hand out. This assignment will be worth thirty percent of your final grade, so it's crucial that you do a good job on it. You'll be working with partners and no, before you start eyeballing someone in the room, I've already picked them."

Again, the room broke out into protests at the statement. Annabeth hated working on partner or group projects unless she was with her friends. Even then, she preferred to work alone on assignments because she usually got them done faster that way. Besides Piper, she had no close friends with her in their history class so she hoped with everything that she had that she would get partnered with her, but she highly doubted it.

Mr. Brunner grabbed a clipboard from his wooden desk and began reading the list of names.

"Kerry Pierce with Michael Lynch"

"Evelyn Wilson with Christina Scott"

"Jack Evans with Todd Price"

He continued to list names for the partners which Annabeth only half listened to. It seemed like half of the partners were happy to be paired up but the other half looked like they'd rather be with anyone else but their partner.

"Piper Mclean with Jason Grace" All hopes of Annabeth getting paired with Piper flew out the

window after that announcement.

“Emily Roberts with Roy Henderson”

“And lastly...Annabeth Chase with Percy Jackson”

Chapter 10

Chapter 10

The moment the words came out of Mr. Brunner's mouth Annabeth wasn't sure if she should be glad she wasn't paired up with a complete stranger, or angry because she got paired up with Percy, who would probably do no work whatsoever on the project. Mr. Brunner continued by handing out the grading rubric for the assignment that was due Friday, making sure everyone got a copy before walking back to address the class.

"For the rest of class I expect you to be discussing ideas for the project with your partner. You won't have any more time in class other than today to work on it so you'll need to make arrangements with your partner outside of school. With that said, find your partner and start working." He moved to sit at his desk, looking down at some paperwork that needed to be filled out while the twenty something students each started getting up and walking over to their respective partners.

Piper got up before her, giving her a comforting smile before heading over to the side of the room where Jason was. She reluctantly got up from her own seat to walk towards the back of the room where she knew her partner was. As soon as she turned around she jumped ten feet in the air when she saw that Percy was right in front of her and when she said right in front of her, she meant *right* in front of her.

"Shit! Don't do that!" She said, putting a hand to her chest to calm her racing heart. He stared at her for a moment, his eyebrows raised before he chuckled lightly from her reaction and took a step back to increase the distance between them.

"Sorry, Princess. Just trying to get to my partner." He replied innocently, walking past her to sit at the desk that had previously been occupied by Piper. Once she got over her surprise she turned back around and sat at the desk she had just left, failing to notice that he had called her by the name she hated so much.

"Ok first let's establish something. I'm not going to do all the work on this project. I expect you to do your part too." She said once she was seated next to him, his feet kicked up on the desk. Her expression was firm, her arms crossed on her chest to show that she was serious.

"Course. What kind of person do you think I am?" He said lightly. She stared at him disbelievingly, not letting her serious expression abate.

"Don't tell me you haven't had someone else do your homework for you before because I know you have Jackson." There was a pause after she spoke as he just stared at her. Eventually he gave in.

"Alright, alright. I promise I'll help. So...what are we doing again?" He asked causing Annabeth to roll her eyes. She explained the assignment to him again in simple terms.

"So now we need to pick a God or Goddess to research." She said once she was done explaining everything for the second time.

"I personally think we should do Athena. She's the smartest Goddess being the Goddess of wisdom and not only that, she's also the Goddess of battle strategy. If we have to pick any God I say we pick her." She continued, getting a little lost in her thoughts.

“What?! No way! Sure Athena is cool and all but I think we should do Poseidon. He’s the God of the seas, that dude is badass. He doesn’t get enough credit in the myths. I mean think about it, he has control over water which makes up seventy percent of the Earth.” Percy argued, turning to face her. She was a little surprised that he knew that.

“I still think we should do Athena.”

“Well I think we should do Poseidon.”

“Athena”

“Poseidon”

“Athena”

“Poseidon”

“Athena”

“Poseidon”

“Ath- you know what? Why don’t we just pick a different God to do? There’s so many and it doesn’t look like we’re going to decide between Athena or Poseidon anytime soon. What about... Hestia?” Annabeth offered, looking to him for approval.

He sighed deeply. “Fine. Still think we should do Poseidon, but whatever.”

His lips turned down in a frown and in that moment Annabeth saw him as a little kid who looked like they dropped their ice cream. For a second she felt bad because his facial expression was so adorably sad but she got over it. She couldn’t give in.

“Great, Hestia it is. Now since we took so long trying to decide who to pick we barely have any time in class to actually research. We need to figure out times to meet outside of class. How’s today at my house after skating practice?” Annabeth offered, slightly annoyed that they had taken so long to pick a Greek God.

“Sure, I guess that works but I don’t even know where you live.” He shrugged.

“Give me your phone.” She stuck her hand out towards him. He stared at her confused. His eyes traveled back and forth between her outstretched hand and her face.

“Uh...why?”

“So I can put my number in and text you my address stupid.” She replied, taking the cell phone from him and doing just that. She added his own number into her cell phone as well before handing it back to him.

She knew that he could easily just follow her home after practice but the hockey team always took longer to change with all the equipment they had to wear, so she wouldn’t have to wait for him if she just gave him her address. The bell rang right at that moment and she gathered all of her things into her backpack, choosing to carry her history book separately.

Not wanting to seem rude since technically they were acquaintances now, she spun back around towards the raven-haired boy who was getting up as well.

"I'll see you later at practice then I guess?" She asked, taking him by surprise.

He nodded in response. "Yeah, see you later."

With that, Annabeth left her desk to go catch up with Piper who was laughing at something Jason had said. She raised her eyebrows at the scene, noticing her friend's rosy cheeks for the first time. Piper almost never blushed. When the brunette saw her, she said something to her partner which she assumed is some type of goodbye and picked up her backpack, walking towards her as they made their way into the hall.

"What the hell was that?" Annabeth asked, a teasing grin on her face.

"What was what?"

"Are we really going to pretend that you didn't just *giggle* at something Jason Grace told you?"

Her cheeks reddened even more. "I- well I don't really know what it was. He was really nice and somehow we got off topic and started talking about random things. He was really funny and just- don't tell anyone though ok? Especially Thalia cause it's her *brother* for Gods sake. It could be nothing anyway."

Annabeth smiled. "I won't."

Piper glanced thankfully at her and a beat passed before the curly-haired blonde speaks again.

"So...a hockey player huh?" She teased again.

"Shut up."

Practice had never been more boring than it was that Monday. They spent the entire time practicing forward and backward crossovers on the ice with the Tridents team. No one looked like they enjoyed practice and when it was finally time to go home, Annabeth had never seen so many expressions and sighs of relief. The only good thing that had resulted from the two hours of skating was the fact that both teams were getting along fine. There was an occasional insult thrown every now and then but they seemed to be more playful and teasing than serious. Also, Annabeth got a kick out of teasing Piper about a certain blonde Tridents player whenever they skated near him.

Back to the present, Annabeth rubbed her hair with her towel, trying to get it to dry as fast as she could before grabbing a comb to brush through her long curls. She felt refreshed and free of the sweat and grime she'd had on her skin from practice. When she deemed her hair to be dry enough, the blonde-haired ice skater exited the bathroom to go to her room. She got interrupted when the familiar sound of her doorbell was heard from the front of the house. Making her way down the stairs, she answered the door to find the one person she'd previously hated with a passion.

He looked up at her when the door opened, his famous annoying smirk present on his face. He stood with his hair tousled, a clean t-shirt and sweats with Adidas slides on his feet showing that he had changed from their practice before driving to her house right after.

"Hey partner. Ready to work on our project?"

At first she was surprised. If she was being completely honest, half of her thought that he wasn't going to show up at all, much less be early. She opened the door a bit wider so he could step in. He looked up and around in all directions at the place she called home, turning back to her a moment later.

“Pretty nice place Chase.” He said once he was done looking around, again surprising her with his compliment.

“Thanks.” There was a moment of awkward silence before she broke it.

“Uh...my laptop is in my room so I guess we can work upstairs.” She offered, gesturing for him to follow her up the wooden staircase to the second floor.

As soon as he stepped foot into the room Percy thought that the bedroom couldn’t describe her better. In the back of the room next to one of the windows was her bed clad in a grey comforter and matching pillows with grey polka dots. Her desk was near the other window with a white spiny desk chair in front of it, a laptop and lamp on top of the desk. There was a door on the other wall which he assumes was her closet. Above all, he noticed how clean everything was. The bed was made, the desk almost completely clear and if the bookcase was in alphabetical order he wouldn’t be surprised. He saw a few books that lie stacked up or opened to a page near her nightstand and windows but that was it.

“Sorry, it’s messy. I didn’t really have time to clean.”

His head snapped back to her and he stared at her like she’d just grown another head.

“Are you kidding me? If this is your definition of messy I don’t even want to know what your reaction would be to my room. Actually, scratch that I do, it’d be hilarious.” He teased. Despite her best efforts, she cracked a small smile toward the green-eyed boy before walking further into the room.

“Come on. Since I only have one chair we can just do it on the bed. My mother won’t be home until later so we won’t get interrupted”

She immediately realized how wrong that whole thing sounded and her face turned a funny crimson color. Turning back to face him, her laptop now in hand, she saw that he was trying super hard not to laugh. He jokingly eyed her seductively and she quickly grabbed one of the small throw pillows from her bed, chucking it at him with lightning quick speed. He ducked just in time to dodge the pillow, laughing when he stood back up.

“Pervert! You know what I meant!”

“Hey you said it Princess, not me!” He defended, walking over to the bed in the corner of the room, chuckling lightly. Her face still red with embarrassment, she quickly followed his lead by taking a seat on the bed across from him.

“So... Hestia. What do we know about her?” Annabeth asked while opening up a word document for them to list things in her attempt to change the subject.

He shrugged. “I don’t know”

She rolled her eyes. “Well at least *try* Hockey Boy. Let’s see, well I know she’s the Goddess of the hearth and the home.” The blonde stated excitedly, quickly typing the information on her computer.

He sighed. “Um...Isn’t her dad like that creepy time dude?”

“Creepy time dude? Who- do you mean Kronos?” She asked, ignoring his description of the Titan.

“Oh yeah, that’s his name!” He replied, a look of recognition of his face. She huffed, it was going

to be a long afternoon.

"I'm soooo bored." Percy mumbled from his position laid down on the bed. He heard the continuous clicking of her fingers on the keyboard as the girl across from him continued to type up information for their project.

"I know. You've said that about ten times in the last two minutes. By the way, if you mess up my pillows you're fixing them." She responded, not looking away from the screen in front of her.

"How long have we been working?" He asked, sitting up a bit straighter so that he wasn't on the pillows.

"About 20 minutes."

"..."

"Well I say we take a break!" He suggested, hopping up and scaring her, his ADHD getting the better of him.

She shook her head, going back to the keyboard. "We have to keep working. We've barely even started!"

"Oh come on, please? I'm dying here. I promise I won't bother you for the rest of the afternoon if we take a break."

She froze. It sounded almost too good to be true but if he actually did follow through with his promise they might be able to finally get something done on the project. She sighed in defeat.

"Alright fine. What do you suppose we do?" He grinned in triumph, fist pumping the air. He started on trying to think of an idea when his stomach growled rather loudly.

"You have any food?"

"Geez. Fruits, vegetables, protein shakes- do you have *any* kind of junk food Princess?" He asked, opening the fridge to see only healthy stuff.

She shrugged. "I don't eat junk food that much. Figure skater, remember? You shouldn't eat it either if you want to make it big in hockey."

He seemed to ignore her, moving on to her pantry still in search for something good.

"Aha! I knew you had to have something!" He said happily, coming out from the pantry with a package of unopened Oreos in his hand. They must have been really deep inside the pantry because she didn't remember ever seeing them. He opened it, offering one to her as he did so. She declined his offer.

"Oh come on, a little cookie isn't going to kill you." He stated, holding it out to her once more while putting another one into his mouth. It did look really good. For the second time that day she found herself giving in.

"Fine, but you have to microwave it first." Again, he looked at her like she'd gone crazy.

"I'm sorry?" He asked confusedly.

“Oh don’t tell me you’ve never tried a heated up Oreo. They’re only the best things ever! I used to have them with my dad when I was a kid. We’d never tell my mom though because they’re so unhealthy, it was just our little...secret.” She said, trailing off at the end. She hadn’t meant for all of that to come out and now that it had she couldn’t take it back. Thinking of her dad brought several flashbacks into her mind and she couldn’t stop them.

Percy looked back towards the girl who was just smiling and laughing a moment ago while recalling a happy memory. Now she looked downright depressed and sad. He wondered if it had something to do with the mention of her father. She never talked about him so it had to be. He wanted to know what happened but knew better than to ask about it. He felt the urge to make her happy again but he didn’t know why. Why was it bugging him so much that she was upset?

“Heated up Oreos it is!” He said, trying to lighten the mood again. It took her a minute but eventually a small grin managed to form on her lips.

He popped a few of the black and white cookies into the microwave for a few seconds before taking them out. He spun back towards her and she took one out of the bowl while he did the same. His eyes widened when he tasted the flavor of the hot Oreo and he couldn’t stop himself from moaning in delight.

“Fuck, these are amazing! How come no one ever told me about this before?!” He shouted, taking another one from the bowl.

Annabeth laughed, admiring the boy in front of her who was acting like he’d just discovered the most valuable thing on Earth. They were standing side by side with the ceramic bowl between them. She took note of the way his hair was swept messily to the side so it didn’t get into his eyes. His green eyes shined with delight every time he took a bite of the Oreos and his infectious smile put a grin on her face as well. She understood why all of the girls at school were all over him, his good looks could make any girl swoon.

“Woah slow down Hockey Boy. I think that’s enough Oreos. Lets get some fruit in you.” She offered, taking the rest of the cookies and putting them back in the pantry before he could heat up any more. She grabbed the container of cherries and grapes from her fridge and brought it out, much to his displeasure.

They sat at the two barstools in the kitchen as Annabeth ate the fruit from the bowl. Percy didn’t take any at first but when he realized that he was still hungry and she wasn’t going to let him have anymore junk food, he reluctantly took a handful of cherries and started eating them. When he saw the leftover stems he remembered something.

“Have you ever tried tying a knot in a cherry stem with your tongue?”

She looked over at him. “You mean the test to see if you’re a good kisser?”

He smiled, so she *did* know what he was referring to. “Exactly. Now I don’t mean to brag but I once tied a knot in 10 seconds flat.”

“Oh please, it’s not even that hard.” She said, waving him off.

“Really? Well care to take part in a little friendly competition, Chase?”

“What are you proposing Jackson?” She replied, a spark of competitiveness shining in her grey orbs.

“Who can tie a knot with their tongue faster. If I win you have to let me eat more heated up Oreos.”

“And if I win?” She asked, one eyebrow up in question.

“Well *if* you win, um... I’ll do the rest of the project by myself.” He offered, not seeing anything else to bet on.

“Really confident you’re gonna win huh, Hockey Boy?” She said, shocked that he’d bet on something so big.

“Please, I could do this in my sleep.” He bragged.

“You’re on Jackson.” The blonde agreed, eating a cherry before taking the stem in between her fingers.

“On the count of three. One...” He started.

“Two” She added, bringing the stem up closer to her lips.

“Three!” They both called in unison, placing the cherry stems into their mouths before beginning to tie a knot. The next few seconds were fierce, each of them working strategically to tie the tiny knot first. For someone walking in the scene it would be a funny sight to see.

“Done!”

“Done!”

“I got it first!” The male voice called, the stem now in his hand with a small knot in it.

“No you didn’t! I was first!” She defended, showing him her knot as well.

He crossed his arms as the two argue over the competition for the next few minutes. In the end Annabeth decided to settle it.

“Alright we both won! That means our bets cancel out.” She decided.

He looked at her, muttering under his breath because he was angry he didn’t get any more cookies. Annabeth rolled her eyes. She’d been doing that a lot lately whenever she was around him and she was sure she’d be doing it a lot more in the future.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11

The next few days went by like you would expect them to. School was well...school, filled with crazy assignments teachers expected their students to get done in only one night and tests that could make or break your grade. Annabeth found herself having to stay up past one in the morning to finish the work she was given. That was probably why she currently looked like a zombie with huge bags under her eyes from exhaustion upon entering the school building. Walking down the hall, her eyes feeling heavy and her body slouching from her tiredness, she had never hated school so much in her life. Did all teachers have secret meetings with each other where they decided to make students suffer by making everything due on the same day? Because she swore that's what happens behind their backs.

By the time lunch came around her stomach was growling in anticipation as she walked to her locker. She had skipped breakfast that morning simply cause she had almost slept through her alarms again. She had to keep herself from gagging when she overheard a conversation a few lockers down from hers.

"—Strong." She heard the end of a comment before another voice chimed in.

"So strong. You must work out like a lot." A high-pitched giggle broke out and Annabeth had to force herself not to cringe. She knew that voice.

Her thoughts were confirmed when she looked over from the side of her locker to see two girls, one with dark straightened hair in a cheer uniform and another with vibrant curly red hair. The redhead was currently twisting a lock of her hair as she giggled at the boy standing before them who was smiling cockily while the black-haired girl had her hand on the male's bicep muscle, a flirty expression on her face. She wondered where Drew was.

Who were these people do you ask? Well one of them Annabeth hadn't recognized but she seemed to be just another stuck up popular from the cheer squad. The other two went by the names Rachel Dare and Percy Jackson.

None of them seem to notice her standing a few feet away and she was glad. The last thing she needed was a confrontation with them or an argument with a certain redhead this early in the day. After hearing another fake laugh from one of the girls, Annabeth rolled her eyes, turning back to shut her metal locker door.

She nearly screamed when she closed the locker to see Luke Castellan on the other side, mere inches from her face. He was leaning against one of the lockers right next to hers, his arms crossed over his chest. Dark grey Nike skater shoes adorned his feet and he had on a pair of dark washed jeans with a grey zip up hoodie. His expression held a smile as a look of amusement crossed his features.

"Sorry, didn't mean to scare you Blondie." He chuckled, standing up straighter. Getting over her initial shock, Annabeth smiled in return.

"It's ok." She breathed. "Just didn't see you."

"Yeah, I could tell." He teased, getting a mock scowl in return from the girl. He smiled at her before she spoke up.

“So...don’t mean to be rude but is there any reason you’re here instead of in there?” She asked, pointing to the cafeteria doors where everyone was eating lunch.

“I just figured I’d walk you.”

“You wanted to walk me...to the cafeteria right across the hall?” She questioned, her eyebrows raised teasingly as she tried to keep herself from laughing at the idea.

“Yes! Things happen all the time. As a friend I need to make sure you get across the hall safely!” He exclaimed sarcastically upon seeing her expression of disbelief.

She laughed, shaking her head at the boy’s antics. The two of them turned to the double doors and walked into the lunchroom together, chatting aimlessly amongst themselves. The entire time Annabeth failed to notice a pair of sea green eyes following her from a few feet away, having observed the whole scene.

After she turned in her worksheet activity to Mr. Brunner, Annabeth realized she still had about ten minutes left of class before the bell would sound. She took her seat next to Piper and noticed a few other people who had also finished the history work early just texting on their phones or listening to music through their earphones. In the far back of the room still working on that day’s class activity sat Percy.

If she was being honest with herself, she didn’t know how she should treat him. They never really talked in school, it was only at practice and then that one time when he had come over to her house so they could work on their project that they talked. Were they friends now instead of acquaintances? She just didn’t know.

She must have been staring for a second too long because he looked up and caught her gaze before she had the chance to look away. When he recognized her his lips quirked up in a smile and he got up. At first Annabeth thought he was coming over to her but then she noticed the paper in his hand. He was getting up to turn in his paper to Mr. Brunner. She wasn’t completely wrong though because he then turned back from the desk and started walking towards her. For some stupid reason she started to feel nervous. What was he coming over for?

“Hey.” He said, stopping in front of the desk she was sitting at. Annabeth immediately felt Piper’s stare on them.

“Hi...” She greeted back unsurely.

“Uh...so I just thought that since we didn’t finish the project yet and it’s due tomorrow that we could work on it tonight. We can work at my place since last time we went to yours.” He offered.

She was shocked. It was true that they hadn’t finished their project, but she was just planning to finish it that night by herself. She thought he wouldn’t contribute anymore to the project than the little pieces he had done but here he was, offering her his help and a place to work on it together.

“Yeah, that sounds good. I guess I’ll just follow you to your house after practice.” She agreed, having gotten over her initial surprise. Right at that second the bell rang and everyone started packing up their things to leave.

“Cool. So I’ll uh see you later.” He waved, walking back to get his things and then leaving the room.

She shook her head. That boy confused the hell out of her.

Her last two periods of the day went by fairly quickly. Mrs. Dodd's had given their AP calculus about 30 questions to solve for homework and her physics teacher had given her another 10 on top of that. Looks like she was going to be doing lots of math that night.

Getting into her car and starting up the engine, Annabeth followed Percy on the route to his house. For the first time since she started skating at the rink she had used the small showers provided in the girls locker room to get the sweat and dirt off of her skin. Christina had them doing drill after drill and practically giving them no time for breaks in between. Whenever a competition came up her coach made sure that there was no fooling around and everyone was completely focused on the task at hand. To qualify for regionals this Sunday Annabeth knew she needed to bring her A-game to get a spot.

Momentarily lost in her thoughts, she almost missed the turn Percy makes onto a street. They soon pulled up to a small apartment building and she saw him get out of his car after parking. She followed and made her way over to him. She was surprised, she never would have thought that he lived in an apartment. It made her wonder how many other things he kept from people.

He led her inside and up the elevator until they reached the sixth floor where she presumed his apartment was. Coming to stand in front of room 6C he swiftly unlocked the door with his key and pushed it open for them to enter.

"Percy, is that you?" She heard a woman's voice ask from a few feet away. She didn't fail to notice the way Percy's eyes seemed to light up at the person's voice.

"Yeah mom, it's me." He replied while closing the door, gesturing for her to follow him further into the apartment and toward the place where she heard the voice.

A woman who looked to be about in her early forties came into view wearing plain jeans and a light blue shirt. Her brown hair cascaded down her shoulders and right away Annabeth felt a very comforting aura around her. She smiled, pulling her son into a hug.

Her deep brown eyes widened when she saw Annabeth.

"Oh! I didn't know we had company!" She apologized, taking a step back from Percy to look at her. Before he could introduce them, Annabeth stepped in.

"Hi it's nice to meet you Mrs. Jackson, I'm Annabeth." She greeted, sticking her hand out to shake the woman's hand.

She stared at her outstretched hand for a second. Instead of taking her hand the woman moved to embrace her quickly. Annabeth was shocked to say the least but eventually hugged her back. The embrace was warm and full of comfort. It was as if she was hugging someone who she'd known for years rather than a couple minutes.

"It's very nice to meet you too Annabeth, call me Sally." She smiled warmly once they separated. Annabeth found herself grinning back, nodding silently to acknowledge her statement.

It was then that Annabeth started to wonder where Percy's father was. Did he only live with his mother? Deciding that it wouldn't be appropriate to ask, she figured it was best not to say anything. After all, if that was the case she could definitely relate.

"Uh so, Annabeth and I have to finish working on a school project. We'll be upstairs ok mom?" Percy interrupted, asking for permission politely.

Again, Annabeth realized that he was acting completely different from how he acted during school. He was smiling genuinely instead of having the usual cocky smile that always played across his lips whenever he was around his friends. She could clearly see the strong bond Percy and his mother shared for each other as well.

“That’s fine. Remember my rule, keep the door unlocked.” She replied, looking him straight in the eye.

Annabeth instantly felt heat rush to her cheeks at the response. There was no way...Percy and her wouldn’t...she couldn’t even come up with a complete sentence in her head much less out loud. She noticed Percy’s cheeks turn a shade of light pink as well and he nodded sheepishly before leading her up the stairs to his room.

There was a full size bed near a wall on the right side of the room and posters of many different bands and hockey players all over the place. Several pictures lie around the room of him with the rest of the hockey team and a couple with his mother. The walls were painted a dark blue color and the room was accented with black furniture. It wasn’t overly messy like she had originally suspected it to be. As if reading her mind, Percy broke the silence.

“Don’t let the floors fool you. It was a lot messier before I put everything away. Well kind of, just don’t look in the closet.” He warned carefully. Annabeth snickered and he smiled, this was the Percy she remembered. She took out her laptop and got to work while he grabbed his from his desk.

They finished their project in about an hour and a half. They would have finished sooner if it wasn’t for Percy whining about how bored he was every ten minutes. In the end though their project looked pretty dang good in her opinion.

As she was packing up her stuff and getting ready to leave, she was stopped short when Mrs. Jackson came into view. She announced that dinner was ready and Annabeth silently laughed at the way Percy’s eyes tripled in size at the statement. She was about to excuse herself before her voice chimed in.

“Annabeth would you care to join us for dinner dear?” She offered.

“Oh, no I wouldn’t want to impose. Thank you for the invite though.” Annabeth declined, adjusting the strap of her backpack on her shoulder.

The truth was she was starving and her mom was working late tonight so she had to figure out her own dinner. She didn’t feel like cooking but that was what she was going to have to do. Maybe she could just heat up some ramen noodles and call it a night. It would have been nice to eat a home cooked meal but what if Percy didn’t want her there?

“Nonsense! You wouldn’t be imposing, I insist. We both do, right Percy?” She said, looking over towards her son who hadn’t said a thing the entire time.

Annabeth’s stomach growled. She looks over to Percy standing next to her. For a second he looked like he was having an internal battle with himself. Just when Annabeth was ready to start heading for the door again, he nodded his head surely, a couple pieces of hair coming into his eyes.

“Yeah, stay. It’s ravioli night, you don’t wanna miss it Princess.” He said, the expression on his face showing that the offer is genuine. She pondered the idea unsurely before giving an answer.

“Ok, I’ll stay. Let me just tell my mother. Thank you so much Mrs. Jac-Sally.” She corrected

herself. The woman just waved it off as if it was nothing and gave her another smile in return.

A few minutes later the table was set with plates of piping hot ravioli stuffed with cheese in a red tomato sauce. She noticed Percy practically drooling at the sight. She took a seat next to him as they all dug in.

Annabeth's taste buds savored the flavor of the dish and she had to force herself not to eat too fast. She'd never tasted any ravioli as good as the one Percy's mother had prepared.

"This is amazing Sally! You have to tell me your secret." Annabeth complimented, taking another forkful of the pasta on her plate.

"Sorry dear, no can do. It's a family recipe passed down through the Jackson women. When I became a Jackson it was given to me. Not even Percy knows it and he's been trying to get it out of me for years." Sally explained, looking over towards her son who was currently finishing up his second helping of ravioli.

"I'll get it out of you one day mom. You're gonna crack I know it." He argued.

"Mmhmm sure I will. You should've seen what I've had to put up with Annabeth. One year he was so persistent on getting the recipe he dressed up as ravioli for Halloween. I guess he thought he could use his cuteness to get me to tell him."

Annabeth nearly choked on her food as she tried to keep her laughter under control. Percy's eyes widened in terror and he briefly stopped eating as his face turned fire truck red.

"Mom! You said you'd never speak of that again!" He shouted, wanting to just die from embarrassment as the blonde next to him continued laughing hysterically.

"Y-you did w-what?" Annabeth tried to speak, her words stuttering because of her laughter.

"I was fine ok?!"

"You wanted to know the recipe that badly?" She teased, enjoying this much more than she should.

"I don't like not knowing things!" He tried to defend. A small smile managed to break through on his red face and Annabeth thought he'd never looked more adorable than in that moment.

Sally smiled as she observed the scene. She hadn't seen her son act the way he was in a long time. He wasn't as serious and distant, he was relaxed and making light-hearted jokes. She wondered if it had anything to do with a certain blonde.

"Let's talk about something else now. Mom Annabeth figure skates, did you know that?" Percy said, trying desperately to change the topic before more embarrassing things would be released about him.

It seemed to work as Sally turned her attention away from her son to focus on the girl next to him. Her eyes sparked with newfound interest.

"Is that so? You know I used to be quite the figure skater myself. Been trying to convince Percy here how hard it is and I think he's finally starting to get it." She commented.

"You used to skate? Wow that's so cool! Yeah I've been skating for a while now."

“Well it’s great to have a fellow figure skater here for once. Have you landed your triple Lutz yet? That was the hardest jump I probably had to learn.” Sally replied.

“Somewhat. I land it about half the time but I could still probably use some more practice. Qualifications for regionals are this Sunday though so I’ve got to be on my game.”

“Oh I’d love to come watch sometime!”

Percy’s head moved back and forth as he watched the two females talk amongst themselves, not having anything to contribute to the conversation. He wasn’t complaining though, as long as the subject of the conversation wasn’t embarrassing childhood stories of himself he was a happy camper.

After dinner Sally asked Percy to do the dishes. Annabeth decided to help him before she left. It’s the least she could do since they had fed her dinner. She washed the dishes while Percy dried them. They worked in silence but she surprised herself when she was the one to initiate the conversation.

“I like your mom. She’s pretty awesome.”

Percy smiled. “Yeah, she’s great. Can be a little much sometimes as you’ve seen at dinner but I love her.”

Annabeth laughed. “Oh no, that just made her ten times better in my opinion.” She teased, looking over towards the boy next to her.

“Shut up.” Percy said jokingly, taking another plate from her to dry.

They worked in silent harmony. If you had told Annabeth a month ago that she would be at Percy Jackson’s house helping him wash the dishes and actually making friendly conversation she would’ve thought you were mentally insane but here she was doing exactly that.

“So what about you?”

“What about me?” She asked confusedly.

“Your mom. What’s she like?” He asked.

Annabeth looked at him closely. She was trying to decide if it was a good idea to tell him. He seemed to be gaining her trust and it wasn’t like she was about to tell him her entire story so what was the harm?

She sighed. “Well to start, she’s no where near as loving and considerate as yours.”

“What do you mean?” Percy asked. At this point he had stopped in the middle of drying one of the ceramic plates to give her his full attention. Annabeth stopped as well, taking a deep breath as she continued.

“She’s got this idea of a ‘perfect daughter’ in her head and I’m constantly finding myself needing to prove myself to her. I just feel like nothing I do is good enough for her, you know? It’s like I’m a failure or something. On top of all that, she won’t say it out loud but I know she doesn’t like me skating. I love her but... it’s tough love I guess you could say.” Percy nodded in understanding.

“Well if you ask me, you’re not a failure. Quite the opposite actually and skating is something you love, your mom will be able to see that one day.”

She smiled, looking back down to finish the dishes. He was being so caring and considerate of her feelings. Where had the ignorant playboy gone?

“Thanks Hockey Boy.”

“There’s that name again. Just couldn’t come up with another one could you?” He teased, making her laugh as she dipped another one of the plates into the soapy water.

“Keep calling me Princess and I’m going to keep calling you Hockey Boy. Simple as that.”

“Guess I’ll have to put up with it then cause ‘Princess’ isn’t going away anytime soon.” Annabeth groaned and he laughed at her reaction.

“Can I ask you something?” She started, not being able to resist.

“Shoot”

Gathering up the courage, she finally asked the question she had wanted to know the answer to for so long. “Why do you act so different while we’re at school compared to when we’re not at school?”

His shoulders tensed and he paused in the middle of drying a plate. It was silent as he tried to come up with an answer. His eyebrows furrowed in concentration and he appeared to be deep in thought.

“You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to.” She said when she realized how hard the question was for him.

He sighed deeply, looking over at her. “It’s just... a really long story.

She nodded. “It’s ok. I get it, we all have things we want to keep a secret.”

He smiled gratefully. “Thanks.”

“So, now that you know something super embarrassing about my childhood tell me something embarrassing about you.” He asked, lightening the heavy atmosphere that had surrounded them.

“Oh yeah sure, like I’m going to do that.” She replied, finishing up the last thing for him to dry.

“What, that’s not fair!” He argued as she dried her hands and pulled on her backpack. He met her over by the door, arms crossed on his chest and looking to her for an answer.

“Life’s not fair Jackson.” She defended, a hint of a smile on her face. Why was she acting so... flirty? It was totally unlike her and she didn’t know how to stop it.

“I’ll find something embarrassing about you Chase, just wait.”

“Oh just like how you were going to find out the ravioli recipe? Yeah, good luck with that.”

“Hey!” He pouted.

She laughed. “I should get going. Tell your mom bye and thanks for the dinner.” He nodded.

“I will. Goodnight Chase.”

“Goodnight Jackson.” With that, Annabeth exited the apartment building and got into her car, thinking deeply about everything that had happened and wondering what Percy meant when he said

it was a long story.

The two wouldn't realize the significance of that night until much later. For that was the night that the figure skater and the hockey player became friends.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Sometimes I like to include what I call "song tributes" in my chapters where I'll put a song to play during a specific scene and some lyrics to read along with. You don't have to listen but in my opinion it enhances the reading experience haha they'll be more to come in future updates. If you choose not to listen just be careful not to skim over the writing in between the song lyrics!

Chapter 12

"Overall, Hestia is portrayed as an introverted character in the myths she's in. She's different from the other Gods and Goddesses because she didn't leave Olympus to go on adventures. She was happy staying at home and often consoled the Gods when they were troubled and considered it an offense to refuse hospitality to anyone." Annabeth paused, allowing her partner to take over.

"We can learn through Hestia's figure in mythology how to serve and keep community and family together through hospitality and self sacrifice." Percy finished, ending their presentation to the class.

It was quiet for a moment before one student started to clap. Eventually the rest of the class started to join in before the whole room was clapping. Annabeth felt as if a huge weight had just been lifted off her shoulders. She looked over to the boy next to her. He stared back at her, offering a friendly smile that she couldn't help but return.

"That was wonderful! I must say I'm very impressed. There was so much content that you included, some things I didn't even know! Great job you two." Mr. Brunner praised them, clapping his hands together as he walked back up to the front of the room where they were standing.

Before taking their seats so that the next pair could present, Percy turned to his partner, stopping her from walking any further. He held his hand up and she raised her eyebrows at the action.

"High five?" He asked. A hint of a grin tugged at her lips. She gave in, slapping her palm against his in recognition of their work. She didn't miss the few small whispers she heard throughout the classroom and she had a feeling Percy heard them as well. She ignored them, the things people gossiped about in high school. It was seriously annoying.

"Good job partner." She replied before she walked passed him. She took her seat next to Piper who was looking at her questioningly.

"So I assume the two of you are now friends? Unless you high five all your ex-enemies." The brown haired girl stated, looking expectantly towards her with a look, getting a laugh in return.

"Yes, we're friends. He was surprisingly...tolerable to work with on the project and I didn't do all the work like I normally have to for group projects" Annabeth responded, thinking back to the time they worked at her house and last night when she had gone to his.

"Well your presentation was great. Also, that's the best news I've heard all week. Means we won't

have to be constantly walking on eggshells around the two of you at practice. I've got enough to handle with regional qualifications this weekend."

"I know the feeling." The blonde said, being able to relate. She was absolutely terrified for Sunday. Her friends kept telling her that she would be fine but she didn't know if she believed them. She had been practicing her routine and her technique forever but there were a lot of figure skaters out there and only a small number of spots.

The two turned their attention back to the front where a new group was just starting to present their research on the God Hermes. Her mind wandered throughout the period and she only really focused when Piper and Jason went up for their presentation on the God Zeus. She noticed that whenever it was Piper's turn to speak Jason wouldn't take his eyes off of her. She smiled, she would have to talk to Jason sometime about when he was planning to ask her out because anyone with eyes could see that the two of them liked each other.

Before she knew it, the period had ended and she was headed to AP calculus. Ms. Dodds had her back facing the class for most of the period because she used every single second of the forty-five minute period writing notes and equations on the whiteboard that Annabeth could barely keep up with. She didn't understand the lesson at all and it seemed like she wasn't the only one who felt that way. One of the guys in her class even tried asking her if she could slow down a bit and she had rewarded him by giving him a detention slip. There wasn't an ounce of sympathy in her soul. The only thing that had gotten her through that awful period was Luke making funny impersonations of her while she wasn't looking, making her silently laugh but not loud enough for her to hear.

Physics was slightly better. Mrs. Angler didn't hand out pink detention slips every chance she got but she still had the class taking notes the whole time on the concepts of momentum and power. Annabeth thought her hand was going to fall off by the time the day was over. Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad thing though. She wouldn't have to take any more notes if that were to happen.

The end of eighth period could not come soon enough. After the final bell rang, Annabeth grabbed everything from her locker that she needed that night for homework and headed out to where her car was parked. Several parking spaces were already empty from students having left. That was the great thing about having a license, she didn't have to walk home and other students who had a car didn't have to ride the bus anymore. She remembered when Thalia would be at school super early because of having to catch the bus in the morning. Now she slept in and drove herself to school.

When she was home she quickly gathered her figure skating stuff together in her grey duffle bag. She had about a half hour before she had to be at the rink so she decided to knock out her biology homework quickly before heading out again. She felt like she barely had any time to breathe.

When she finally made it to the all too familiar ice rink she changed into her white skates with the other girls in the locker room. She hoped with everything in her being that Christina would let them practice separate from the hockey players. Things weren't tense anymore like they used to be but that wasn't the reason she wanted to practice apart from them. She knew the whole team wanted to practice for Sunday. Everyone was nervous, even Rachel, and she hoped Christina would see that.

She finished tying the laces on her skates, placing her belongings in her respective locker space and following the other girls out of the room. She saw her coach as soon as she stepped foot through the doors of the rink. But that was the only person she saw.

Her mind instantly connected the dots. Christina was the only skater in the big rink. As in, there were no hockey players and no Coach Hedge there with her. The arena was void of any loud noises and the only thing she could hear was the cold brisk air coming in through the vents. The woman

took notice of her skaters coming in, her eyes held a seriousness emotion in them as she finally addressed them.

“Afternoon ladies. Now to answer the question you all are about to ask me, no the Tridents team will not be practicing with us today. Coach Hedge and I managed to get different time slots for practice today and tomorrow because the younger teams are off for the week.”

Annabeth as well as some of the other skaters sighed in relief. She had forgotten that most of the time when the more competitive league teams had games or competitions the younger teams would cancel practice so as to let them practice. Not only that, but the hockey team wasn't going to be there to distract her either. Not that she found herself being distracted by any of them, that was ridiculous.

“Well what are you still there for? Let's go girls! Regional qualifications are Sunday in case you've forgotten!” Christina shouted, getting back the attention of Annabeth and the others who quickly set their water bottles down on one of the nearby bleachers before setting foot on the ice and beginning to warm-up.

They did simple drills and exercises for the first half hour of practice. After this, her coach told them what the next two practices were going to be like to get ready for Sunday. The majority of the team was going to be practicing in the big rink while Christina would take each of them one on one at different times into the small rink where they would show her their routine and she could critique them. Annabeth thought it was a pretty solid plan. She'd been practicing her jumps for her performance every chance she got during their team practices and whenever she had her turn on the small rink she would use every second of it to practice the full routine with the music she'd picked out playing from her cellphone.

It wasn't till near the end of practice that her coach called her to the small rink so she could show her the routine she had prepared. Annabeth quickly exited the other arena, leaving the others to practice bits and pieces of their own routines before making her way into the smaller but still efficient ice rink. Christina turned to her, gesturing for her to start when she was ready.

“Alright Annabeth, let's see what you got.”

“Oh come on Annabeth, stop worrying. Everyone knows you're the most talented skater here. You have nothing to worry about for Sunday.” Piper said, reassuring the blond who was currently second guessing her entire routine.

“I don't know Pipes. I mean you should've seen the way coach looked at me after I showed her my routine. There was no emotion once so ever on her face and now I feel like I skated horribly. I mean yeah she told me a couple pointers but overall I just feel like she hated it.”

“It's Christina. She's not really one to show much emotion. If she had a straight face and only mentioned a couple things to work on then I'm sure she liked it. As for me on the other hand, I've got *a lot* to work on.” Calypso added, linking her arm with Annabeth's as the three of them walked out of building and towards her car.

Annabeth was giving the two of them a ride home that night because Piper's mother needed her car that night and she had no other vehicle. She usually drove Calypso home because she didn't have a license yet. Annabeth had offered them both a ride home and they were really grateful for it.

“Well we won't know anything until Sunday. For now can we just, change the subject? You two are seriously stressing me out.” Piper admitted, opening the car door and getting into the passenger

seat while Annabeth did the same at the driver's side and Calypso hopped in the back.

"Well what do you suggest we do?" Annabeth asked, fastening her seat belt over her body and starting the car.

"I don't know about you guys but I can't remember the last time we all just blasted music and forgot about everything." The brown haired girl commented, reaching over to turn on the radio.

"That's probably because we've never blasted music together and forgotten about everything." Calypso retorted sarcastically.

"Well I say it's time to change that." Piper responded. She searched the different stations, trying to find a song that was suitable for all of them to listen to. The music changed to the chords of a guitar and Piper took her hand away from the radio.

"Gods I love this song!" Calypso shouted, instantly having recognized the familiar instrumental part of the song. It was just about the catchiest song ever. It had been released so long ago but Annabeth remembered listening to it just last week because she still liked it. She smiled as the song began to play.

[Song Tribute-Where Did Your Heart Go Missing by Rooney]

Piper, Annabeth, Calypso, All

*Love don't come so easily
This doesn't have to end in tragedy
I have you and you have me
We're one and a million
Why can't you see?*

"Come on Annabeth! Live a little would you?" Piper begged. Annabeth rolled her eyes, failing to keep the smile from coming to her face as she gave in and joined in to sing the chorus.

***I'm waitin', waitin' for nothin'
You're leavin', leavin' me hangin'
When did your heart go missin'?
When did your heart go missin'?
I treat you like a princess
But your life is just one big mess
When did your heart go missin'?
When did your heart go missin'?***

Yeah

***I meant every word I said
I never was lyin' when we talked in bed
I'm retracin' every step in my head
What did I miss back then?
I was so, so misled oh***

***I'm waitin', waitin' for nothin'
You're leavin', leavin' me hangin'
When did your heart go missin'?***

When did your heart go missin'?
I treat you like a princess
But your life is just one big mess
When did your heart go missin'?
When did your heart go missin'?

I don't understand
How could you forget what we had?
It's so wrong

I'm waitin', waitin' for nothin'
You're leavin', leavin' me hangin'
When did your heart go missin'?
When did your heart go missin'?
I treat you like a princess
But your life is just one big mess
When did your heart go missin'?
When did your heart go missin'?

The three girls bobbed their heads as the rest of the song came to an end. Annabeth looked at two of her closest friends, laughing along with them at the catchy song. It was having simple moments like those that made all the stress and worries fade away even if it was only for a little while. They continued to sing along to a couple more songs until Annabeth had gotten them both home and she pulled into her own driveway, having momentarily been able to forget about all her nerves.

The next morning wasn't too different from the night before. Annabeth had gotten up early on Saturday morning to go to practice and they pretty much worked on their routines the entire two hours without the hockey team present. It was after practice that things were different. Once all the other skaters had left Annabeth stayed behind because it was Saturday meaning it was her day to have the rink to herself, well not exactly to herself because she had to share it with someone.

She stayed on the big rink while all the other figure skaters left. She skated aimlessly around the rink, thinking of what she needed to work on for the next day. Eventually she decided to just practice her whole routine once again but with music.

She went to the locker room and grabbed her ear buds out from her duffle bag. The thermal long sleeve she was wearing that day had a slot on the side specifically for a cell phone and she was going to make use of it. She needed to be listening to the song she was skating to more closely, not just from a distance on her phone's speakers. She carefully placed her phone in the pocket, skating to the middle of the rink to begin her performance.

She started the music, turning it up loudly so it would block out everything else and then she started to skate. Little did she know that a certain Trident's player had walked in while she was in the middle of her routine.

Percy watched her, his eyes following her figure as she skated all over the rink. He saw that she had headphones in her ears so she wouldn't be able to hear him. He stepped further into the arena, moving to one side where he could see her from the other side of the glass. He was amazed at her movements. Every jump and spin was performed with such precision and accuracy and he found himself wondering how in the world some of those moves were possible.

She finished, skating back towards the center of the rink before pulling her headphones out of her ears and taking a breather. She jumped out of her skin in surprise when she heard someone clapping over to her right. Her eyes landed on Percy who was walking over towards the entrance of the arena from having been behind one of the glass separators.

“W-what...how long have you been in here?” She asked him, her eyes still widened in shock. He smiled, staying on the other side of the wall as she skated over to him.

“Long enough to see at least half of your performance Princess.” He responded honestly.

Now her old self would have been furious that he’d just come in when she didn’t want anyone watching her but instead she was suddenly very nervous and she didn’t know why.

Percy had just watched her perform at least half a routine instead of just specific jumps and she felt the need to ask him what he thought of the whole thing. She needed to get as many opinions as possible.

“So?” She asked after a beat, gesturing her arms out in a gesture as if asking the question ‘how did I do?’

“So...that was amazing. I mean it Annabeth, you’ve got a real talent.”

She caught his eyes once again, a smile coming to her lips in the process. Now she knew for a fact that the old Percy wouldn’t have admitted such a thing to her. Their relationship had truly changed over the course of a few weeks.

“Thanks Hockey Boy. Hey, why aren’t you in practice gear yet?” She asked curiously, having taken note that he was still standing outside of the ice wearing Nike high tops, jeans and a hoodie. This was after all, his private practice time as well as hers.

“I’ve decided not to practice today after all.” He supplied.

“What, why?”

He shrugged. “You’ve got a competition tomorrow. You should have the whole rink to yourself today. Besides, you *clearly* need the practice.”

She scoffed. “Hey! Just a second ago you told me it was great!”

“Maybe I was just saying that to be nice.” He teased, trying to get a reaction out of the girl in front of him.

“Wow, this coming from a guy who knows nothing about figure skating once so ever.” She retorted, playing along with his antics. Secretly, she was beyond thankful that he was letting her have the rink to herself.

“You trying to get me to back out on my offer Chase? Cause if so it’s working. I can go put on my skates and equipment and be back here in ten minutes flat.” He joked while the blonde’s face suddenly got a fearful look.

“No! No, uh that’s ok. What are you going to be doing until your practice starts though?”

“Watching you I guess.” He stated simply.

“Well that didn’t sound creepy at all.” She mumbled under her breath as he laughed. She smiled at

him, silently thanking him for giving her the space for the next hour.

“Alright well get back to work! I’m not coming to see a bunch of sloppy jumps tomorrow.” He replied, once again grabbing Annabeth’s attention.

“You’re coming tomorrow?” She asked surprised. He nodded.

“Hedge wants the whole team to come. Surprisingly none of the guys had an issue with it either. Jason was even excited at the idea, he’s clearly got a thing for Piper.” Percy explained.

A knowing smile appeared on Annabeth’s face. “Glad I wasn’t the only one who noticed. Those two are oblivious. Anyway...thank you Percy, for letting me take the rink for today. Maybe you’re not as awful as I thought you were.” She teased.

“I know. I’m awesome right? Just don’t fall in love with me Chase.” He replied jokingly, his huge ego showing. Annabeth rolled her eyes at the statement.

“Don’t think we’re gonna have an issue there Jackson.” She said coyly, moving away from him and skating back towards the center of the rink to begin her routine again. Percy smiled at her retreating figure as she put her earphones in once again to start the song.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ: There are going to be a ton of inaccuracies in this story regarding skating competitions and hockey games. The content in this chapter is not accurate. I repeat, it's NOT accurate and competitions probably aren't like this but when I used to skate I never competed so I don't exactly know what the situation is like. I don't even know if there's a competition to qualify for regionals...oops. I just kind of started writing this story one day not thinking it was going to be so popular and I like the way it's written regardless of specific facts. Again, I apologize but I hope you keep reading!

Chapter 13

Beep! Beep! Beep! Bee-

Eyes still closed, Annabeth slammed her hand down on the noisy black alarm clock positioned on the bedside night table. After another minute, her eyelids opened only to close once again when sensing the light coming in through the window. She blinked multiple times until her eyes were able to adjust to the burning bright light. Checking the time on the digital clock, she moaned wanting nothing more than to get one more hour of sleep. She knew that wasn't a possibility though.

It was eight o'clock on Sunday morning. Otherwise known as competition day.

With that thought in mind, she grudgingly sat up in bed and reluctantly removed the covers from her legs so she could stand up and get dressed. The competition didn't actually start until 3:00 but on the days that she had to compete she would spend the few hours she had before just preparing and rehearsing the routine in her head and maybe even acting some of the movements out without skates to make herself feel more confident. As she observed the clothes that she had hanging in her closet her eyes skimmed over the outfit she was going to wear later on.

If there was one thing Annabeth didn't like about figure skating it was the short dresses they had to wear along with tights. Don't get her wrong, they were absolutely beautiful with the sequins and designs on them but a little too short for her taste. Not to mention she really hated wearing tights because they were super annoying to put on and she was always afraid of them ripping because of how thin the material was.

The outfit she was wearing for the competition was a purple dress with lace along the waist up while the bottom skirt part flowed down but stopped before it even reached mid thigh. It was sleeveless but she'd worn dresses like it before so she wasn't too worried about freezing to death. The tights paired with it were a simple nude color. Her stomach flipped in both excitement and anticipation as she looked at the dress.

She was determined to move on to the regional competition. Last year she had made it to regionals but she got so nervous during her routine that she fell and unfortunately didn't make it past that. This year would be different, that's what she kept telling herself.

She picked out a pair of black yoga pants and a grey thermal quarter zip to wear but first she

stripped out of her t-shirt and boy shorts and got into the shower. The water hitting her face helped her wake up more and she thought about everything that would be happening that day.

More people than she had originally thought were coming to see them. She was surprised considering it wasn't a huge event, it was just to qualify for regionals. Most people would usually come to either regionals or sectionals, which were after regionals. She had heard a couple of people talking about it at her school and Luke had told her he was coming as well. Something about it being his 'duty' as a friend. The thing that surprised her most was that the entire Trident's team was coming to watch them. Granted Coach Hedge was making them attend, Annabeth was still a little taken aback when Percy had told her yesterday. She was guessing that her coach was going to make the figure skaters go to the Trident's first game on Friday in return. She found herself actually looking forward to the event instead of dreading it though.

Christina wanted them all there by one in the afternoon. Why they had to be there two hours early she had no idea but Annabeth knew better than to disobey the woman. She was also going over to Piper's house around noon because the girl had practically begged her to do her hair and make up until she gave in. That gave her four hours to herself to do whatever she needed to prepare. She stayed in the shower until the water became cold, simply enjoying the droplets raining down on her skin while the steam from the shower filled the room and covered the mirrors in a frosty layer of warm air.

When she was finished, she changed into the clothes she had laid out beforehand and combed out her wet blonde hair. When she went down for her breakfast she noticed that her mother had already left for work.

Her mother wasn't coming to see her skate. Athena hadn't gone to see her daughter skate for years. Sure, she'd gone to a couple practices and maybe caught the end of a routine a couple times but she'd never *really* seen her skate for a long time. Annabeth knew her mother was insanely busy with work but she wished she could come to one competition. She tried not to let it get her down. Her mother just thought of figure skating as something different than her.

She blended up a healthy fruit smoothie and poured herself a bowl of cereal. Once she was done eating it was already nine thirty. She washed her dishes and put them into the dishwasher before going into the basement of her house where she would have more space to practice her routine. It sounded weird that she would practice without ice but it was what a lot of figure skaters did and she found that it really helped. She placed her ear buds into her ears and started the routine that she'd now practiced so many times she was sure she'd be remembering it for the rest of her life.

Annabeth barely recognized the ice rink she practiced at every day. There were groups of people seated in the bleachers and the lights above the rink that were used for performances were moving around instead of being off. The thing that was the most out of place was the judge's panel off to one side of the rink. No one was sitting there yet but once the competition started in about half an hour she was sure there would be a line of people.

"Ladies, focus. This is still the same rink you've been practicing at six days a week every week. Don't let a crowd and some judges panel scare you." Christina said, addressing her skaters as they all stood in a group near the rink.

"Oh, I'm not worried coach. After all, I qualified last year. They have to pick me again this year." Rachel replied confidently, flipping her hair as she said it. Annabeth rolled her eyes.

It was true that Rachel had been another skater who qualified for regionals last year. They had competed against each other again during the actual regional competition but like Annabeth,

Rachel hadn't gotten through to the second round and she didn't get to move onto sectionals. What gave Annabeth confidence though was that Rachel had gotten around the same score as her last year even though Annabeth had fallen during her performance and Rachel hadn't.

"Yes Rachel well, there are new skaters every year. You can't automatically go in there and think you're getting a spot. You all have to work for it." Christina said. Rachel sighed, not really paying attention to the woman as she turned to Rebecca and Ashley standing next to her.

Annabeth casted a glare towards the redhead. She didn't say anything though. She needed to focus on the competition and her routine. She couldn't let herself get sidetracked by things that weren't worth her time and energy.

"Alright, I'll stop droning on. I assume I've done enough of that this morning. Take the next twenty minutes to get your skates on and finish stretching if you didn't stretch enough in the dry room earlier. I'll be inside introducing myself to some of the judges." With that, their coach left to enter the ice arena.

"You nervous?" Calypso asked, coming up to stand beside Annabeth as they walked into the locker room. Piper soon followed.

"Yeah, a little. I think a lot of them are excited nerves though. At least I hope they are." She replied, watching as a few of the skaters from different leagues walked past her.

She was happy that the competition was taking place at her rink. She knew every last inch of that ice and maybe that would give her the upper hand against everyone who had to travel to get there. Probably not, but she was hopeful. When she got into the locker room she quickly put on her skates and adjusted her hair that was up in a ballerina bun. She kept the windbreaker she had on that had a small picture of a white figure skate and her name embroidered in the corner. She was already wearing her performance outfit like all the other girls underneath but she was sure it was going to be cold when she walked through the doors to the rink.

A lot of the other skaters were dressed similarly to her and their hair was up in either a bun or a high ponytail. They wore makeup to match their outfits. Annabeth made sure not to touch her face too much. Piper had done her make up earlier and she knew if she smudged it her friend would kill her.

She checked the time as she packed up her things. T-minus ten minutes till competition time.

"Dude I swear that girl was totally checking me out!" The curly haired Latino boy claimed, nudging Percy's shoulder to get his attention as they sat in the middle section of the bleachers inside the rink waiting for the performances to start.

"Yeah, alright sure Leo. She was probably just looking at someone behind you. You do know there are about a hundred more people here right?" He replied, turning to face his jokester of a friend.

Leo grumbled, taking note of the many people surrounding him. "Whatever. Seriously, though how come we've never come to a figure skating competition before? I'm really enjoying the show."

"You mean all the skaters walking around and stretching in their short outfits to get ready? Competition hasn't started yet buddy. Though I should've seen that line coming." The boy on the other side of Percy interrupted, his electric blue eyes met Leo's brown ones. Being the immature person he was, Leo stuck his tongue out at the blonde in return.

“You’re just upset you haven’t seen *Piper* yet.” He teased, exaggerating the girl’s name. Jason’s cheeks immediately turned a shade of light pink.

“I have to say, I agree with Leo on that one. What’s up with that, you gonna ask her out man?” Percy cut in as they both looked expectedly towards Jason. Percy’s eyes shone in amusement and curiosity. After a moment he replied.

“Uh...well, yeah I was kind of hoping to ask her after the competition. She’s pretty cool. You think she’ll say yes?” He asked the two of them bashfully, looking up to them for an honest answer.

“Don’t see why she wouldn’t. It’s pretty obvious the two of you have a thing for each other.” Percy supplied. Leo nodded in agreement.

“Hey! Jackson, Grace, Valdez! You three done with your little girl talk? Competitions about to start.” Coach Hedge shouted from a few people further down. A couple of the other Trident’s players turned and laughed at the three of them who were caught off guard from the outburst.

Percy shook his head and faced forward to the ice in front of him as the speakers announced the first skater that was going to perform. As he watched the different skaters perform their routines, he couldn’t help but wonder when a certain blonde was going to take the ice.

Annabeth shuffled uncomfortably. At the moment Rachel was currently performing her routine for the judges. Annabeth was right after her and she was feeling a mix of emotions. Fear because the judges seemed to be watching the skaters very closely but also excited because there was just something about being in a competition and skating that gave her a rush.

She studied Rachel’s movements. Her landings were clean and solid. The music she chose was a slow song that matched her routine perfectly. Annabeth had taken a risk with the music she chose. Most people had chosen slow, soft songs to skate to but not her. She wanted to stand out and the best way she could think of to do that was to pick a song none of the other skaters were performing to. The judges sat off to the side writing down several notes as they watched Rachel. When she had finished there was a loud applause and she smiled smugly as she got up from her resting position and skated off the ice. On her way off, she accidentally bumped Annabeth’s shoulder as she was entering.

“Oops.” She said sarcastically. She offered her an expression that was completely fake. Annabeth shook her head and took off her windbreaker jacket to reveal her full outfit. It was her turn now and she wasn’t going to let Rachel get to her.

Piper and Calypso wished her luck as she was waiting to be called next. Both girls had already performed and done amazing.

They called her name and Annabeth smoothly skated to the middle of the ice where she would begin her routine. She took in her surroundings. The judges sitting directly in front of her, the crowd in the bleachers on all sides of her that were clapping as her name was announced and the glossy ice underneath her skates. Before she started she noticed Luke seated in the bleachers. He smiled at her and she grinned back, blaming her rosy cheeks on the cold atmosphere.

The next thing that caught her eye was the group of hockey players in the middle of the crowd. So it was true, the Trident’s team really was at the competition. Her eyes skimmed over the many guys and Coach Hedge. She stopped when she spotted three guys within the group. Jason offered her a friendly smile and Leo winked at her. She internally rolled her eyes before seeing the midnight haired boy sitting between them. He instantly met her eyes and what she saw in them

surprised her. His eyes were calculating. It was as if he was challenging her while at the same time a spark of amusement shined in his green orbs. He tilted his head as if to wish her luck before she broke eye contact with him and got into her starting position. She waited for the music to play.

[Song Tribute-On and On by Cartoon]

*Hold me close 'til I get up
Time is barely on our side
I don't wanna waste what's left
The storms we chase are leading us
And love is all we'll ever trust, yeah
No, I don't wanna waste what's left*

*And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
'Til my shadow turns to sunrays
And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
And on and on we'll go*

Annabeth flew across the ice, skating to the fast paced song and managing to keep up with it. The judges watched as she performed several different jumps starting with simple spins and twirls before working up to an axel and a Lutz. She felt the stares of everyone in the crowd, giving her an adrenaline rush as she continued.

On we'll go

*Finding life along the way
Melodies we haven't played
No, I don't want no rest
Echoin' around these walls
Fighting to create a song
I don't wanna miss a beat*

*And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
'Til my shadow turns to sunrays
And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
And on and on we'll go*

The speakers announced as she performed another double Lutz, landing it perfectly before she performed a toe loop and another axel. She added a little flare to her performance by doing simple turning movements with her skates. She smiled, feeling completely at home on the ice.

*And we'll grow in number
Fueled by the thunder, see the horizon
Turn us to thousands
And we'll grow in number
Fueled by the thunder, see the horizon
Turn us to thousands*

*And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
'Til my shadow turns to sunrays
And on and on we'll go
Through the wastelands, through the highways
And on and on we'll go*

She ended the routine with a double axel and managed to land it much to her pleasure. As the instrumental part of the song came to a close, Annabeth slowly positioned herself in the final pose of her performance.

The entire audience burst into applause and she laughed silently in joy while the judges finished writing notes on her routine. She waved to the audience but before she could turn completely around to exit the rink she saw that Percy was smiling brightly at her and clapping loudly. She grinned, exiting the ice a minute later. She didn't miss the envious look cast her way by Rachel.

There were about five performers after Annabeth so after her routine she sat with the other skaters and watched as the competition came to an end. It took the judges another twenty minutes after everyone had skated to come to a decision on who was moving on to the regional competition that would take place in a few weeks from that day. There were eight spots and about twenty different skaters had performed.

It happened so fast she almost missed it but Annabeth was ecstatic when she heard her name announced through the speakers. She had qualified. She was going to regionals. Following her name was Piper, Calypso and Rachel. There were others from different leagues that were called but Annabeth hadn't recognized the names.

She was pulled into a group hug with Piper and Calypso. Ashley and Rebecca congratulated Rachel. The two of them had also competed but not qualified. Christina congratulated her four skaters on their success before they began to exit the area where the crowd was now piling up as everyone was leaving at the same time.

They all stood together in the hallway after switching out of their skates. Christina gave all the girls a speech on a job well done that ended in all of them applauding the four girls who were moving on to regionals.

When the group dispersed, Annabeth found herself face to face with Luke Castellan. He surprised her when he enveloped her in a hug. She slowly hugged him back after getting over her initial shock. Her cheeks felt as if they were on fire.

"You were absolutely incredible Annabeth!" He complimented her after pulling away from the embrace. She bit her lip awkwardly and smiled shyly, not really knowing what to say.

"Here...these are for you." He said before turning around to the bench behind them and grabbing a bouquet of flowers that she hadn't even noticed. He handed them to her and she laughed sweetly as her cheeks flushed even more.

"Thank you Luke. These are beautiful." She sniffed the mixed assortment of flowers and sighed at the fresh scent they emitted.

"Not as beautiful as you looked skating out there." He replied softly, staring at her truthfully.

Annabeth nearly had a coughing fit at his words. That was definitely *not* something a friend would say to another friend. Before she had the chance to say anything else they were interrupted by a

familiar voice.

“Chase!” Percy called, moving through the crowd and towards her once he saw her. Annabeth looked up and smiled when she saw him.

“Hey, congratulations you did great! I guess giving you the rink yesterday paid off because that double axel was solid.” He said once he got to her. She laughed and shook her head.

“Thanks Jackson. Look at you using figure skating terms.” She teased mockingly. He shrugged, flashing her a grin. His eyes then moved to focus on the bouquet of flowers currently resting on one of Annabeth’s arms.

He hadn’t realized Luke, who was silent throughout the entire exchange, was standing right next to them until a moment later. Annabeth noticed Percy’s expression instantly change to a scowl as he turned to look at the other male who was glaring back. She could feel the tension surrounding the three of them.

“Luke”

“Percy”

Percy connected the dots to how Annabeth had gotten the bouquet of flowers and she saw his green eyes flash with something undecipherable as his scowl hardened. Luke broke the uncomfortable silence, turning to face her once again.

“So Annabeth, you wanna go grab something to eat to celebrate? My treat.” He offered.

Interrupting once again before she could answer, Percy spoke up not knowing what came over him.

“Or you could come with me and some of the guys. By some of the guys I mean Jason and Leo. We’re going to Rikki’s diner for lunch.” Percy invited.

Annabeth looked cautiously between both boys, thinking about what to do. A couple weeks ago she would’ve gone to eat with Luke but her and Percy had been on really good terms lately. They were now both her friends and she was put in the middle. Both guys looked at her expectedly for an answer.

“Uh-um...I-”

“Annie!” She heard the familiar shout of her best friend Thalia from behind her. She turned around to see Thalia, Nico and Will with Calypso and Piper close behind them. Piper was smiling like an idiot, which could only mean something happened between her and Jason. She would have to ask later.

“Congrats Annie! I’m taking you all out for ice cream lets go.” She said, taking Annabeth by the arm and starting to turn back around.

Annabeth mentally thanked the Gods that she had the opportunity to get out of the uncomfortable situation she was put in. Before leaving with Thalia she turned back to both guys.

“Sorry guys. Maybe some other time?” She asked.

“Yeah, of course.”

“For sure.”

They both answered at the same time before turning quickly to glare at each other for the hundredth time. Annabeth smiled before leaving with her friends at her sides.

“So...you gonna tell me what that was all about back there with the two hottest guys in school?” Calypso whispered when they were a safe distance away. She hooked her arm through Annabeth’s arm that wasn’t holding the flowers.

“There’s nothing to tell.” Annabeth replied nonchalantly.

“Mmmhmm”

Chapter 14

Chapter 14

Percy lightly chuckled as the group of people around him laughed while drunkenly slapping each other on the back. Music was blaring through the speakers in the house and there were couples occupying every corner, making out with their tongues down each other's throats. They had no shame whatsoever. There were beer bottles on the floor, some of them still half full. The middle of the room that was deemed the dance floor was occupied with girls grinding themselves up on guys and empty red solo cups rolling around at their feet. It didn't matter that it was a Wednesday night. Most of them probably would skip the rest of the week anyway.

One of the guys next to Percy, Michael Yew, nudged him. He stuck his hand out to offer him a cigarette. Percy just looked at the thin cylinder of tobacco rolled in paper. The air was musty around him from the puffs of smoke being released. He shook his head in refusal to the offer.

"Come on Jackson. When are you going to stop being such a coward and just smoke a cig already?" Michael insulted. A couple of the other people in the group agreed, nodding their heads and turning to Percy.

"I told you I don't smoke." Percy replied sternly. It seemed that every time he was at one of these parties all his so called friends talked about was getting him to smoke. Michael rolled his eyes.

"Yeah and you don't drink either. What are you afraid of? Scared you're going to mess up your little hockey career?" He taunted, stumbling a little in place while the others laughed around him.

"Maybe I just don't want to mess up my life. You clearly don't give a shit about yours. As for my hockey career, at least I have something I'm good at." Percy argued, glaring towards the boy. He didn't even know why he'd decided to come to the party in the first place.

"Whoa I'm just messing around Perce. Can't take a joke can you? You know you've been acting weird lately. The old you would've been on his second make out session with another girl. Speaking of which..."

Right at that moment Drew found her way over to the group. Her high heels clicked on the wooden floor as she strutted over in her skintight skirt and crop top that was way too small for her. The lipstick on her face glowed a cherry red and her hair was down.

"Hello boys." Their eyes roamed over her body as she moved saucily next to her boyfriend. She moved fast, fisting the top of Percy's black t-shirt and taking him by surprise when she pulled him down to crash her lips to his fiercely. He half-heartedly kissed her back as she took ahold of his hands to place them low on her body. He heard a couple of wolf whistles but he pulled away a moment later, detaching himself from her.

"Hey baby." She said flirtatiously. Percy could smell the alcohol in her breath. It was intoxicating. She grabbed his arm, putting it around her shoulder as she turned back to the rest of the guys.

"Mind if I steal him for a bit?" She asked innocently, hiccupping a little in her drunken state.

"Course not. The guy could use a little relaxation." Michael agreed, making way for them to walk. Drew grabbed Percy's hand before he could say anything and practically dragged him along with her. As soon as they had reached a more secluded part of the house she turned around and pulled him to her, kissing him sloppily.

“Drew” Percy protested, detaching his lips from hers. That didn’t stop her though. She moved to kiss his neck, probably to give him a hickey. Percy took hold of her arms, separating himself from her completely.

The brunette sighed in exasperation and anger. “What is it Percy?! What’s up with you? I’m practically throwing myself at you and you don’t even want to kiss me!”

He just stared at her for a moment. The next thing he said was not planned but after he said it he found himself being filled with relief on finally admitting it.

“Listen, I just...I don’t think this is working out Drew.” He said, surprising even himself. Once he said the words he realized how true they were. A couple weeks ago he would have happily given in to what she wanted but now he just wanted to go home. Besides, he had absolutely nothing in common with Drew and half the time she was lip locked with some other dude. The girl in front of him furrowed her eyebrows in disbelief, her mouth falling agape.

“Are you breaking up with me?!” She squeaked out, tears building up in her eyes. He couldn’t tell if they were from anger or from sadness but either way she was glaring at him with a look that could kill.

“I’m sorry.” Was all he said in response. He used to break up with girls practically every other week so why was he feeling guilty this time? He couldn’t mull over the thought much longer because a second later he felt a hot stinging sensation on his cheek.

“You’re a jerk Percy Jackson!” Drew shouted after slapping him, her eyes red with fury. Percy held his cheek as she stalked away angrily. *Well that went well*, he thought.

He sighed heavily, leaning back against the wall that was slightly vibrating because of the loud music. He didn’t want to be there. Why had he decided to come? Deep down he knew the answer to that question. To protect his image. The image of a playboy that didn’t give a damn about the rules and did whatever the hell he wanted.

But something had changed. He didn’t feel like that person anymore. He didn’t *want* to be that person anymore, the guy who got all the girls and broke all the rules. But the thing was, he was trapped into fulfilling that image and he didn’t know how to get out of it. High school didn’t work like that. A person couldn’t just change their status of how they were viewed by everyone else.

He stuck around the party for a few more hours, not really doing much except walking around and being roped into conversations that he didn’t even want to be a part of. A couple of girls had come up to him throughout the night. They must have seen Drew stomp off crying and figured out they were no longer an item. When everyone was pretty much drunk of their asses, Percy made a run for it and left the party. It was almost one in the morning by the time he got back to his apartment but considering how late those parties went, it was the earliest he’d ever gotten back.

He closed the door quietly behind him after unlocking it. He didn’t want to wake up his mother who was sleeping. All he wanted to do in that moment himself was crash but he had to be silent so as to not disturb her. He placed his car keys on the small key rack and headed for the staircase to go to his room. As he was walking he nearly fell in surprise when a familiar voice disrupted the silence.

“Where were you?” Sally Jackson demanded, the look in her eyes cold and harsh. She was seated at the kitchen table with a bottle of water in front of her and nothing else. She had stayed up to see when her son was going to come home.

Percy's eyes widened when he saw his mother sitting there with her arms crossed. He stuttered on his next words.

"M-mom? I was just...uh-"

"The truth" She demanded. Her brown eyes darkened as she looked at him. She knew whatever he was going to say was going to be a lie to get him out of trouble. But how many excuses could someone come up with for getting home at one in the morning on a school night?

The boy sighed, giving in to his mother's demands but also trying to downplay the situation. "I was at a party. Wasn't really a party actually, more of a group thing with a few friends."

The look on her face turned into one of disappointment as she stared at her son. "Percy. What do I have to do to get you to stop going to those parties? You smell like liquor and smoke not to mention it's one in the morning and you have school tomorrow."

He saw the mixture of fear and disappointment in her eyes and it made his heart ache. He was the one causing her to feel that way and it made him feel awful. Was his image really worth it? When he spoke again it was with complete honesty.

"I'm sorry mom. I know I say that a lot and we've been in this situation several times but I mean it this time. I...I kind of realized something tonight and I promise you I'll stop going to those parties."

Sally Jackson stared at her son. She knew by the way his eyes didn't waver from hers and the way he didn't stutter that he was telling her the truth. Her intense gaze lessened and she stood up from the table.

"Well I hope you really mean it this time. But this doesn't mean you're off the hook. You're grounded for the next two weeks. You'll go to school and then to practice but you'll come home right after that understood?" Percy nodded.

"Good. Now get to bed it's late." She scolded. He climbed up the stairs and she followed right behind him.

Percy knew that night was a significant one. It was going to be hard but slowly he was going to try to change. He didn't want to be the person he was. He wasn't happy and maybe it was because of everything that was expected of him. He was expected to be the school's playboy and the guy who didn't care. It was practically impossible to change the way you were looked at after four years in high school but he was damn well going to try.

The following day at school Percy disregarded his normal morning routine that consisted of him heading over to wherever Drew was and making out until the bell for first period rang. Instead he walked over to the hall near the cafeteria where he knew a couple of the guys from the hockey team gathered in the mornings. Percy had always been invited but never really interacted with them much during the school day. A couple times Leo had sat with him at lunch since he was all around liked with that sense of humor but he'd never really taken the time to know his team outside of the rink. He hated himself for that. They had been a part of his life for so long but he was so concerned with trying to protect an image of himself that he hadn't really given them a second thought. As he got closer he noticed there were four guys in the group talking aimlessly amongst each other. Two of them he recognized almost right away. Leo was receiving a punch in the shoulder from Jason. Knowing the curly haired boy, he had probably made some stupid joke and Jason had felt the urge to hit him. The other two guys were Matt and Liam, two defensive players on the team that Percy

had talked to once in a while. As he walked further the four of them turned around at the sound of his footsteps. No one said anything for a second.

“Oh hey Perce! Surprised to see you here. Finally come to the realization that I’m so wonderful you can’t stay away?” Leo blurted out sarcastically. Percy cracked a smile. Leave it to Leo to break any awkward moment or situation.

“Sure Leo. That’s what happened.” Percy played along, allowing Leo to shake his head smugly while closing his eyes. The five of them laughed and Percy joined their small circle near one of the walls.

“No, I just finally realized how annoying the people I hang out with normally are.” He continued honestly. The three men in front of him lifted their eyebrows up in surprise, not expecting that answer from their captain.

“So now you wanna hang out with the coolest group in school?” The Latino boy asked coyly. Jason rolled his eyes.

“Sometimes I really wonder how we’re friends when you say stuff like that.” The blonde teased. Liam and Matt nodded their heads in response to the statement as Leo faked mock hurt.

Percy laughed genuinely. “Something like that Leo.” The three guys stopped laughing and turned towards their captain. Jason smiled genuinely at him.

“Well you know you’re always welcome Perce. Glad you finally came to your senses.” He said. Percy chuckled as he came in closer to the group. He was laughing within a minute of standing there and that’s when he knew he had made the right decision.

“What? What is so important?!” Annabeth whisper shouted in annoyance. She turned from her spot next to him to stop him from tapping her shoulder relentlessly with his pencil any longer.

Percy’s eyebrows shot up in amusement. He snickered as she looked to him for an answer with a scowl on her face. Percy shrugged as she continued to stare him down.

“I’m bored.”

She rolled her eyes. Percy knew she wasn’t happy with the new seating arrangement in history. Piper had moved her seat so that she was now sitting next to Jason. The two of them had started dating just a couple days ago when Jason had asked Piper out after the figure skating competition and Annabeth didn’t want to be the one to hold Piper back from sitting with her boyfriend so she had decided to let him take her seat. Since Jason’s old seat was closer to the front of the room a different student had taken his spot so they could see better and Annabeth’s new seat had somehow turned out to be right next to Percy.

“Well you’re *supposed* to be doing classwork. Now is that all or is there more?” Annabeth asked the boy. Percy’s hands moved up into a surrender position as she continued her work.

It was quiet for another ten minutes before Percy spoke again. He realized that the blonde had finished her history work and was now reading a book.

“You know you’re very uptight.” He said just loud enough for her to hear. Annabeth sighed exasperatedly. She shut her book and looked over to him. She knew she wasn’t going to get any reading done for the rest of the period. There were other people watching them questioningly.

"I am not. You just haven't seen the other side of me." She argued.

"Well maybe I need to sometime." He teased, winking cockily.

"Gods you're such a flirt. Do you ever take a break from that?" She shot back, turning the tables on him. He tilted his head down in acknowledgement.

"That's fair. But you don't know everything about me either."

"I guess I don't." She stated, putting an end to that topic of conversation for the time being.

"So, you going to the game tomorrow?" Percy started, looking to her for an answer. He didn't know why but for some reason he really hoped that she would be there.

"Yeah. Christina wants us to go so the entire figure skating team will be there. I expect to see a good game Jackson. I don't go to games where my team loses."

Percy laughed quietly. "Well I'll try my best Chase. Glad you're coming, I'll be looking for you in the stands."

For a split second there was a feeling of giddiness that filled Annabeth as she looked into his sea green orbs but as soon as it had come it had gone. A minute later he spoke again.

"Speaking of skating. Let me know when regionals are. I'd love to come watch again."

"Really? You didn't think it was, I don't know...a bunch of ice ballerinas?" She teased, a playful smile on her face.

He chuckled, remembering when he had called the skaters that so long ago. So much had changed since that day. Never would he have imagined he'd be befriending the girl who'd constantly gotten on his nerves over the years.

"No, you were pretty great Princess honest."

Her face felt a little warm at his comment. She smiled and allowed herself to catch his eye directly. "Thanks Hockey Boy. I look forward to seeing the so called star player in action tomorrow night."

He grinned as a comfortable silence enveloped them. Percy was finding it extremely hard to tear his gaze away from the blonde in that moment. She shook herself out of it, breaking eye contact with him as she smiled downwards.

She felt the stares from people around the room became stronger. The next thing she said had been on her mind since the conversation started.

"Jackson...Why are you talking to me? I know our seats are now right next to each other but we rarely ever talk in school. What's changed?"

Percy paused. He tried to think of a way to explain his change in attitude but nothing was enough to sum it all up. She looked at him with her calculating grey eyes filled with curiosity.

"It's not a crime to talk to you outside the rink Princess. Also, let's just say, I've changed. I decided I'm no longer going to care what people think of me. I can talk to who ever I want and if people have a problem with that then so be it." He said nonchalantly.

"So what, you just woke up this morning and decided all this?" She responded in disbelief. Her mind was spinning with a bunch of questions.

“I guess you could say that.”

Percy laughed at the way Annabeth’s expression twisted into one of utter confusion. She looked like she was about to say something but right at that second the bell had decided to ring, interrupting their short conversation.

“I’ll see you later at practice Princess.” He dismissed, leaving the girl dumbfounded by her desk as he caught up with Jason who was walking out the door.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15

Annabeth cheered with the others when Leo was able to block a shot on goal and prevent the other team from scoring. She saw the familiar jersey-number 1; take the opportunity to steal the hockey puck from the opposing team and skate effortlessly down the ice. A player wearing a green and white jersey from the other team tried his best to keep up with the puck but he failed to. The crowd cheered loudly as number 1 got closer and closer to the goal, passing the other team as if it was nothing. He took his shot, the goalie moving to block the shot as fast as he could. The incredibly loud buzzer went off in the arena and the little red light above the goal lit up, signifying that a goal had been scored. Annabeth and the rest of the crowd got up on their feet, cheering in happiness.

And number 1, Percy Jackson scores the first goal of the game for the Tridents! What an exciting start! The intercom announced to the audience in the stands watching.

The game had started not even fifteen minutes ago and Percy had already scored for the Tridents. Annabeth smiled as the boy got surrounded and patted on the back by his teammates. She could see a brief smile on Coach Hedge's face as well.

She sat back down as the next play started, Piper and Calypso followed suit, each sitting down on either side of her. The bleachers were completely full with students from Goode and parents supporting their kids. Hockey was a big sport at their school. Annabeth considered it to be tied with football for the most popular sport to watch at Goode. Since the stands were completely full there were people standing all around the perimeter of the rink to watch the game. Annabeth was glad Christina had made them get there a bit early so they got pretty good seats.

"Wow Percy is really good." Calypso commented. She turned to face the two girls next to her. Annabeth was concentrated on the gameplay while Piper turned and nodded in agreement.

"I know. Oh look, here comes Jason!" Piper shouted excitedly. Annabeth peeled her eyes away from the game to laugh at the girl's clear pride towards her boyfriend.

Piper was wearing Jason's blue hockey jersey since the Tridents team was told to wear their black jerseys that night. It was definitely too big for her but she knew Piper didn't care. It must have been warm considering that was all she was wearing and it was pretty cold in the stands. Annabeth herself had on a black zip up hoodie with a plain blue shirt underneath representing the Tridents colors. It was a well-known fact that whenever a girl was wearing one of the hockey player's jerseys to a game it was for one of three reasons. Either they were together, it was the guy's way of asking her to be his girlfriend, or the guy wanted to show the girl that he liked her. In Piper and Jason's case it was for all three of those reasons. Annabeth had noticed that Piper's face literally glowed with happiness after she'd received the jersey with the number 5 and the last name Grace on it. She was happy for the two of them, they were a good pair even if Thalia had taken an entire day to process the idea of one of her closest friends dating her brother.

Annabeth turned back to the game. Hockey was definitely not a boring sport to watch. It was so fast paced and the crowds at hockey games were so lively. She'd been to a few of the Trident's games in the past years but she never really took the time to appreciate just how much energy and speed was needed to play the sport. Percy made it look like it was so easy. She knew it wasn't though considering how many times she nearly fell that day at practice when the hockey players and figure skaters had switched skates for a day.

She would never say it out loud much less to his face but Percy really was amazing on the ice. She understood why everyone considered him the star player. During the break the score was 3-0 two of the goals being scored by Percy and Jason scoring the other which Percy had assisted with. None of the players could keep up with him. He was *fast*.

He didn't even seem the least bit out of breath after all that skating. He took his helmet off while they waited for the second half to start. His hair was slightly sweaty, some of the ends sticking to his forehead as he tried to brush them aside. His hair was messy but that wasn't unusual, it was always like that. His cheeks held a reddish color because of the cold as he drank water from a plastic bottle. Annabeth could hear a ton of the female Goode students whispering and giggling amongst themselves over the boy.

"He's so hot!"

"I know right. I want a hockey player!"

"You know I heard he broke up with Drew so he's available. If only he'd notice me." She heard one of the girls above her say dreamily.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. Percy didn't even have to try half the time and he still had pretty much every girl in school wishing she were his girlfriend. She was brought out of her thoughts as someone shouted her name.

"Annabeth!" Calypso called, slightly shaking her.

"Yeah, huh? What?" She said confusedly. Piper and Calypso looked at each other knowingly.

"Well, sorry to interrupt you checking out Jackson but-"

"I was *not* checking him out!" She argued immediately, cutting her off. Annabeth stared at her intimidatingly, to which Calypso gave her a disbelieving look but didn't say anything.

"Alright, well I was just going to ask if you wanted anything from the concessions. I'm gonna grab some water." She offered. Annabeth nodded her head no and then the girl was gone after she and Piper had promised to save her seat.

"Oh, Annabeth I forgot to tell you. Jason told me he, Leo and Percy are going out for a celebratory meal if they win the game. Considering how it's going I'm pretty sure they'll be going out. Jason invited us to go. If you want to that is." Piper spoke up, not turning away from the rink as the second half of the game was starting.

"Who's us? You, me, and Callie?" The blonde asked curiously. Piper nodded in confirmation and Annabeth turned her attention back to the ice also, thinking over the offer. It seemed like a pretty good offer. She hadn't eaten dinner yet anyway so she could use some food.

"Ok. Why not?" She decided. Calypso came back a couple minutes later with a bottle of water in her hand. Annabeth filled her in on what Piper had said.

"I'm always up for food, sounds good. It's just going to be a challenge to get through the whole meal without strangling Leo."

Piper and Annabeth laughed. "I thought you two had settled your differences."

"Yeah but that doesn't mean I find him less annoying." She argued.

Annabeth shook her head and the three of them continued to watch the game excitedly. Percy had the puck again and was shuffling down to the goal. Piper, Calypso and her all stood up with the rest of the audience. Annabeth screamed as he took a shot on goal. Making it for the third time during the game. Everyone clapped in approval and some guy in front of them just randomly turned around to give them all high fives. She thought that was kind of odd but complied nonetheless.

About an hour later the game was over and the Tridents team had won by a landslide. The final score had been 6-2 with Percy having scored four of those goals. As the crowd cheered the winning team on before they exited to the locker room, Percy caught Annabeth's eye in the stands. He smiled cockily and Annabeth returned it with a small smile of her own. A couple of the girls behind her had squealed excitedly because they had apparently thought he was looking at them.

"Well I have to admit Jackson. You're not half as bad as I thought you were." Annabeth teased when the three guys had come out of the locker room with all their equipment off. They still had their black jerseys on but now with jeans.

"Why thank you. I aim to impress." The boy with the huge ego replied, smiling at her genuinely.

"Perce you were seriously on fire tonight. I mean four goals in one game! Usually it's been like two or three in the past years, which is still great but four tonight! Whatever you did keep doing it." Leo complimented, adjusting the heavy duffle bag on his shoulder.

"He's right. You skated great tonight man." Jason agreed. His arm wrapped around Piper as she leaned into his side.

"I think I know why." Calypso said mockingly. She caught Annabeth's eye and sent her a teasing wink. Annabeth glared at her after having gotten the message. The boys shared a confused look and let it go.

"So, what's this about a celebratory meal I hear?" Annabeth changed the topic. It worked as Jason started to explain.

"Oh yeah. Guys I invited the girls to come with us. That alright?"

Percy shrugged, not having a problem with it. Leo on the other hand sighed but eventually gave in.

"As long as Calypso promises not to kill me." He negotiated. The others turned to the eleventh grade girl.

"I'm sorry I can't make that promise. But I'll try my very best." She replied. That seemed to be enough for the rest of the group as they started to talk about where to eat.

"How about the diner?" Piper suggested. She didn't even have to explain which diner. They all knew she was referring to the 50's style diner that was practically everyone's go to place to eat.

Annabeth remembered when she had gone out with her friends just a couple weeks ago to eat there. You could never get tired of that place. It was inexpensive and the food was to die for. Everyone agreed to the option almost instantly.

When they got to the diner they found it to be only semi-crowded. It was almost nine o'clock so that was probably why. They found a booth in the corner of the restaurant and took their seats. Piper was next to Jason while Annabeth had been seated in between Calypso and Percy. Leo was on Percy's other side. Annabeth ordered a burger with fries and then gave her menu to the waitress

after everyone had ordered. Percy stared at her curiously after she ordered.

“What?”

“Nothing it’s just, I pegged you as the type of girl to order like a salad or something not a burger.” He blurted out. Annabeth looked at him incredulously.

“Well you thought wrong.” Was all she said in response. She did enjoy an occasional salad here and there but when she went out to eat she would never waste her time on leafy greens when she could have a burger instead.

“It seems so.” He had the nerve to smile at her.

When the food came it was mayhem. Everyone dug into their food especially the guys who must have been really hungry after using all that energy in the game. Percy ate more than anyone she’d ever seen, clearing his plate in less than ten minutes. Leo came in second, finishing only a couple minutes after him. When Jason had finished Piper had offered him some of her fries, which he gladly took after kissing her forehead.

“Gods did you three even come up for air?” Calypso said shocked. Her plate was still half full.

“Hockey makes you hungry.” Was all Leo said, wiping his face with a napkin. Calypso gave Annabeth a look as if to say ‘yeah, no kidding’.

What happened next Annabeth had no control over. She was in the middle of finishing off her burger when Percy had burped loudly next to her. But that wasn’t the bad part. The bad part was that he had purposely blown the air into her face. Annabeth stopped mid-bite, disgusted by the boy’s actions.

“You did not just do that.” She said half in shock and half in complete anger. Percy didn’t hear her. He was too busy laughing his ass off from the spot right next to her. The others at the table were watching them amusedly.

She let go of her burger and not finding any other solution, punched him hard in the shoulder all in one motion. Percy’s laughs became shouts of protest as he grabbed his arm.

“Ow! Gods you’ve got a strong ass punch Chase.” He shouted in pain.

“You deserved it.” Annabeth shrugged, not feeling at all guilty for her actions.

Jason laughed. “You two are funny.”

Not really knowing how to respond to that, the two stayed silent. A minute later Leo’s phone vibrated to show he’d gotten a text message from someone. He checked his phone and Annabeth saw his eyes light up.

“Looks like there’s an after party being held at Matt’s place. Anyone’s invited. You guys wanna go?” He asked. Annabeth noticed Calypso suddenly look up from her almost empty plate in interest.

“I should probably stay away from parties for a while. I’m grounded and I could barely get permission to come here tonight after the game. My mom would kill me if I went to a party.” Percy explained.

“I should get home soon too plus, parties aren’t really my scene.” Was all Annabeth said. A couple

here and there was alright but she found herself to just not like them much.

“Yeah and Pipes and I were planning to catch a movie or stay in for the night after we eat.” Jason added. Piper confirmed his explanation and leaned back against his arm.

“I’ll go. I’m always up for a good party.” Calypso spoke up. It was true. Annabeth had known Callie to be quite the social butterfly. If there was a party she usually went to it unless she had a prior commitment.

Leo grinned and replied to the text, probably to tell Matt that he would be there. When everyone was finished eating they paid the check and then there was the issue of how they were going to leave. There were two cars and six of them.

“I only live a few blocks from here so I can walk.” Annabeth offered.

“At nearly eleven o’clock at night by yourself? I don’t think so Princess.” Percy argued.

“Well what do you suggest we do Jackson?”

He paused, trying to think it over. He looked up a minute later after coming up with an idea. Everyone around the booth turned to look at him.

“Jason and Piper can take one car. Leo and Calypso can take the other to the party. I’ll walk you home.” He suggested. Annabeth reviewed the idea in her head.

“Well how are you supposed to get home?” She asked.

“I know a shortcut.” Was all he said. Annabeth didn’t question him and instead nodded in response to the plan. The others all agreed as well. They exited the small diner and said their goodbyes for the night. Percy had grabbed his duffle from Jason’s car and then the others had left, leaving Annabeth alone with Percy...perfect.

“You really didn’t have to walk me home you know. I would’ve been fine on my own.” Annabeth started as they began the trek to her house.

“Oh trust me, based on how hard you can punch I’m sure you would be but you know, just in case.” Percy explained. Annabeth tried to hide her smile. Half of her was annoyed that he had felt the need to come but the other half of her was thinking about how sweet it was of him.

“Well don’t think this makes up for you burping in my face Hockey Boy. I hope you know you’ve got a lot coming to you because of that stunt.”

He laughed. “It was worth it.”

Annabeth nudged his side with her own as they continued walking. It was a brisk night and the only light was provided from the streetlights as they walked along the sidewalk. Percy was the one to break the comfortable silence.

“So, honest opinion, how did I do tonight?” He asked cockily. Annabeth laughed as they walked together in synch.

“You were quite impressive tonight Hockey Boy I’ll give you that. It looks like all those years playing hockey paid off.” She saw him quietly fist pump to himself causing her to laugh lightly.

“How long have you been playing anyway?” She asked, finding herself genuinely curious as she

looked up at him for an answer. It must have been for a long time considering how skilled he was.

“Well that depends. I’ve been skating since I could walk practically but I didn’t really start playing hockey until I was six.”

“Six years old? Wow, I didn’t start skating till I was nine.”

“Nine? No way. You look like you’ve been skating all your life at least that’s what it looked like every time I’ve seen you on the ice.”

“Yup, I was nine. Skating pretty much became my life after that. It was all I ever thought about and it saved me a few times as well.”

“How do you mean?”

Annabeth sighed uneasily. She hadn’t meant to blurt that last part out but maybe she should talk about it. It had been years since she had even thought about it. Besides, she was learning to trust Percy and realize he wasn’t such a bad guy.

“My dad. He uh...left. I was fourteen at the time. Not too much to the story really. One day I came home from practice and started on my homework while I waited for my parents to get home. My mom came home from work but my dad never showed up. I thought maybe he’d needed to stay at the office late but when I went up into my parents bedroom and saw that a lot of his things were gone I knew something was wrong. I didn’t want to believe that he’d left at first even though my mom had tried explaining it to me countless times. I waited for him but as weeks turned into months and months turned into years I finally woke up and realized he wasn’t coming back for me. He was the one who really encouraged me to start skating after I’d gone to a friend’s skating birthday party. He actually supported my skating interest while my mother saw it as a pointless hobby. Anyway, skating was the only thing I did for the years following. I put all my energy, all my feelings into skating and sure I won a lot of competitions because of it but that’s not why I did it. Skating was the only thing that kept me sane, kept me from thinking that my dad left because something was wrong with me.”

When she was finished Percy had stopped in his tracks. Annabeth stopped too as he turned to face her. She felt a hot stinging in her eyes and realized that she had been tearing up while recounting her story.

“Uh...sorry you uh, probably didn’t need to hear all that.” She spoke, nervously looking down embarrassed.

“Annabeth...I had no idea. I know this is probably the last thing you want to hear but I’m so sorry.” He said sadly. She could see it in his eyes that he truly was sorry for her. She surprised herself by taking his hand from his side and giving it a squeeze. She felt a slight tingle in her hand but didn’t think much of it.

“Thank you.”

They walked in silence for a little while longer before Percy spoke again.

“You know, while we’re sharing stories, you’re not the only one with daddy issues.”

“Oh?” She said lightly as Percy nodded.

“My dad was the person who took me to my very first hockey game. I’m pretty sure I already told you at Silena’s party that night but that’s what pretty much started my hockey career.” Annabeth

noded, remembering their short conversation from the party that night.

“Anyway, he was the person I looked up to the most in the world. I thought just about everything he did was amazing when I was little. He worked for a ship company near the pier. We had a really close relationship but that all changed the summer before freshman year. I got home early one day because practice had been cancelled. It was the same day my dad was supposed to be leaving for one of his fishing trips with friends. When I walked through the door I heard two voices. One obviously belonged to my father but the other I didn’t recognize, all I knew was that it was female. I heard laughter coming from the living room and then it was silent. I took off my shoes and walked into the living room of our small place and what I saw made me the angriest I’d ever been in my entire life. My dad was on our couch lip locked with some woman I’d never seen before. She looked like she was closer to my age than his and I stood there for a second trying to take it all in. My dad, the person I had always seen as this sort of hero was cheating on my mother right in front of me.”

Percy paused for a second and then continued shakily. Annabeth listened intently.

“I’ll never forget the look on his face when he saw that I’d caught them. He looked so guilty but not once did he give me a proper explanation. When my mom came home I told her all about it and she and my dad fought for hours. The worst part was he was still planning to go on that stupid fishing trip with his friends that day. He’d packed up some things for the trip and said when he got back we would sort it all out. What I didn’t know was that the ship he was on was going to get in the middle of a terrible storm. We found out a week later that they’d found him dead in the shipwreck. The last thing I had said to him before he left was that I hated him and I wouldn’t care if he never came back.”

When she thought he was finished Annabeth had started to say something but Percy continued before she could.

“I was in a pretty messed up state of mind as you can imagine after that. I wanted to change everything about myself and start over. High school was starting soon and I saw that as the perfect opportunity. I reinvented myself. I stopped doing my homework and started going to more parties. I had somehow moved up the social ladder until I was apparently one of the most popular people in school. I’m not proud of everything I did throughout the years. I’m especially not proud of how I acted around girls. I treated them like they were objects and I couldn’t hate myself more for that. When I tried to change back into the person I used to be I thought it was too late. I was already stuck with everyone having this image of me so I kept with it. It took me until just recently to realize how stupid I was and well you know the rest.”

When he finished no one said anything for a good minute. Annabeth was trying to process all the information he’d just given her. She now knew the reason to why he had always acted the way he had. Why he used to be such a jerk and a player.

“Percy...wha-...I-”

“I know. It’s a lot to process. But at least now you know I haven’t always been this horrible person.” He said.

“You’re not a horrible person. You’re better now and you don’t realize it. Trust me, I know.” She smiled encouragingly at him and he smiled shyly back.

They continued walking, a little closer in proximity now as they reached the final block. Their shoulders brushed against each other after every pace but neither one of them seemed to mind it. Annabeth actually found it comforting to have someone to talk to who could relate to her situation

in a way.

“So where does Luke and this whole rivalry come into play?” Annabeth asked out of nowhere. She cursed herself for being so nosy. Percy didn’t seem bothered though, he laughed at her adorable curiosity.

“Ah, Princess well that’s a story for another time.” He said as they turned the corner to her house. She laughed; glad they were able to lighten the mood.

“Oh so there’s going to be another time?” She teased.

“Well I sure hope so.” He said shortly.

“Me too.” She whispered lowly, smiling up at him as they stood in front of the porch to her house.

What she did next surprised the both of them. Without a second’s hesitation, she lurched forward and pulled him into a hug. Her arms wrapped securely around his neck as she hugged him tightly, feeling the thick material of his hockey jersey. It took him a second but he hugged her back just as snugly, his arms hugging her around the waist. Annabeth felt small jolts of electricity all throughout her body as they hugged. She wondered if he felt it too. She noticed that he smelled strangely of sea salt but it was a nice scent.

“Thanks Jackson.” She said quietly.

“For what?” He asked, not letting go of her just yet.

The hug didn’t last too long after that as they pulled out of the embrace a moment later. Annabeth stayed within an arms reach of him.

“Walking me home, listening to my story, telling yours. Thank you.” She listed. She knew there was a slight blush on her face but she hoped that the darkness of the night would cover it up.

“Anytime Chase.”

“I should get inside. Goodnight Percy.”

“Goodnight Annabeth.” He said. They’d used each other’s actual names more than once that night which was a record for them.

With a final wave she disappeared behind the door. Percy turned around and started on his own route home. His skin tingled with an unknown feeling and he smiled the whole way back.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16

“Uh...M&M’s or Skittles?”

“Oh Skittles for sure.” Annabeth replied without hesitation. She finished taking a sip of cold water from her water bottle and then screwed the lid back on.

“What? No way, M&M’s are definitely better!” Percy argued, putting his own water bottle aside and turning to face the girl by his side. She shrugged as she crossed her arms on her chest.

“I disagree” Was all she said back, stating it as if it were a clear fact.

“Well we’ll deal with the whole skittles situation later. It’s your turn.” Percy said, still clearly shocked by the idea of someone liking skittles better than M&M’s.

Annabeth laughed at his expression of disbelief. She turned to look forward. Her line of vision was completely filled with the rink she had become so familiar with over the years. She had never really taken the time to sit in the hockey player’s bench and observe the ice from that angle. It was different. She was so close to the ice that it just seemed like she was skating without having to do anything. Percy sat next to her on the right hand side. Team practice between their two respective teams had finished about an hour ago and the two of them had the entire rink for their private practice on the ice now. They had taken a break about half way through the second practice and somehow they started a game where a person chose from two different options.

“Ok ummmm...books or movies?” She decided after thinking for a moment.

“Did you seriously just ask me that? I can’t even remember the last time I opened a book. Movies all the way.” He replied immediately and without question. The blonde next to him looked like she’d just seen a ghost.

“You’re crazy. Books are so much better than movies! I mean half the time movies based on books get nothing right. It’s like the director doesn’t even bother to read the book before filming it! Books can have so much more meaning. It’s like TV in your head because you’re using your mind to read the whole thing.”

Percy’s lips unknowingly turned up in a smirk as he stared at the brainiac in amusement. *She looked pretty cute when she was all worked up about something* he thought. Her arms moved around in weird gestures and she looked so lost in thought as she tried to explain to him how books were so much better.

“You done?” He said after she had finished her small rant. Her cheeks colored briefly when she realized that she’d been ranting for the last three minutes.

“Shut up. Books are better than movies. There, now I’m done.”

He shook his head, chuckling quietly to himself. She dropped the subject and then it was back to him to come up with something.

“Summer or winter?”

He realized almost right after he had said it that the answer was clear for him. She seemed to have

the same reaction because they both ended up speaking at the same time even though he had been the one to ask the question.

“Winter.” They answered in unison.

Obviously they would both pick the season that was well known for skating and playing hockey. There wasn’t a doubt in either one of their minds. Percy smiled at her and she smiled back.

“Finally, we agree on something.” Percy teased.

“That we do.”

They sat in a comfortable silence for a while but then something caught Annabeth’s attention across the rink.

“That thing wasn’t used at all last night. Does it usually get used?” She asked, pointing across the rink to the small square glass box. It was one of the penalty boxes for hockey. She had only been to a few of the hockey games but had never recalled a player being put in there. Maybe she just hadn’t paid enough attention.

“What the penalty box? Oh yeah. It’s a part of hockey. Usually used for when people get into fights with each other. I was pretty surprised we didn’t need it last night too.” He explained informatively.

“Well you already know the next question I’m going to ask. Have *you* ever been put in there?” She turned back to him.

“Yup. On more than one occasion.”

“Really? What did you do?”

He shrugged. “Got into a few fights. Hedge gets pissed whenever that happens but hey, that’s hockey.” She laughed lightheartedly.

“The next game is Friday right?”

“Yeah. Why, you wanna come see me again Princess? I knew you had a thing for me.” He supplied cockily. Annabeth scoffed rather over exaggeratedly.

“Don’t make me punch you again.” She threatened. His smile dropped and Annabeth could swear she could see fear in him.

“Ok, ok.” He said quickly. She rolled her eyes.

“I just felt like last night sitting in the stands was such a different experience. There’s so much excitement and cheering. I’m so used to being the one on the ice not in the stands. It was fun. Plus I’m sure Piper’s going to go as well and wants someone to sit with.”

Percy nodded. “Piper and Jason. Who would’ve thought? Oh wait, everyone. Just took Grace a while to finally man up.”

She laughed breathily. “They’re good together. Although I’m sure Piper’s going to have him watching chick flicks and romantic comedies in no time.”

“Ugh. Chick flicks. I never understood why girls liked those kinds of movies so much. They’re so unrealistic and it’s always the same story that ends up with someone getting into an accident but

then a miracle happens and they survive.”

Annabeth rose her eyebrows. “Well you sure sound like you’ve seen a lot of chick flicks in your time.”

“Not true! Well...alright fine but that’s only because a lot of the girls I’ve been with have made me. Especially Drew.”

“Knew it!” She teased.

“Whatever.”

They sat in silence for another few minutes just enjoying the quiet atmosphere of the ice rink. Annabeth got up after a couple minutes and adjusted her skates a little more so they fit snugly.

“Well I guess we better get back to practicing.” Percy nodded and followed the blonde out of the bench area where they had been sitting.

It was safe to say they didn’t get much actual practice done that day because of how long they had spent talking and because Percy kept trying to crack a joke every second of the last hour they had left. Surprisingly, Annabeth found herself not minding the company at all.

Annabeth gasped, holding a hand over her heart that had probably stopped beating for a second after she had closed her locker. Her next few breaths were heavy as she tried to regain her composure. She readjusted the textbook she had to one arm while the rest of her things lied safely zipped up in her backpack.

“You have got to stop doing that.” She said.

The other blonde laughed. The two of them started on their way down the hall like everyone else. They seemed to be the only two walking at a normal pace while everyone around them practically ran to the buses or their cars, happy that the worst day of the school week was over. Annabeth had a fairly relaxing weekend but now that it was over and the school week had started again she was dreading what her teachers would make her do that week.

“Sorry Blondie....again. You know you’re pretty easy to scare.” He teased. Annabeth scoffed sarcastically.

“I am not! You’re just way too quiet Luke.” She fired back.

“I’m having a hard time trying to figure out if that’s a good thing or a bad thing but since we’re friends I’m going to go with good thing.”

Annabeth smiled as they continued on the path to the school’s student parking lot where their cars were. She felt a strange set of déjà vu when they finally reached the lot and remembered the last time she had been with Luke in that very spot and he had helped her change a tire so she wouldn’t have to walk home and leave her car not to mention get a lecture from her mother.

“So, why do I get the sense you want something?” Annabeth asked.

She turned to him when they were in front of her car. He had followed her instead of going to his car so she knew there was something he wanted to tell her. Luke looked shocked for a second that she had been able to gather that but it soon turned into his carefree expression once again a moment later.

“You’re pretty good at reading people blondie.”

She shrugged. “We’ve all got our hidden talents. So what is it?”

She noticed his face get a bit red and he looked down. Whatever it was he seemed to be embarrassed about it. He spoke in a sort of quiet voice but Annabeth could still hear him because they weren’t too far apart.

“I need you to tutor me in math. I’m totally flunking Dodd’s class right now and I don’t get any of the material. I’ve seen the way you fly through the quizzes we take in record time and still manage to get an A and I know you’re really busy with skating and everything but I really need some help because if I fail the class I can’t wrestle. So... what do you say?”

He looked at her with hope filled eyes. She may have been pretty good at reading people but she definitely didn’t see that one coming. Luke wanted her help or scratch that, he *needed* her help. She tried to imagine if their roles were reversed. If she was ever in danger of not being able to skate anymore she didn’t know what she would do.

“Why me? Why not ask one of the students who actually *is* a tutor for people struggling in classes?” She asked curiously.

“I told you. You’re the smartest person I know Annabeth. If anyone is can help me change my grade from an F to at least a C it’s you.”

She pondered the idea more in her head as the two of them stood in silence still next to her car in the parking lot. She already had so much on her plate but she couldn’t just let him fail. He was a friend. Their eyes met as he waited for her answer anxiously.

She sighed. “Alright, fine. Tuesday’s and Thursday’s before school in Central Park. We start at 7AM sharp so don’t be late.”

Luke sprouted a huge smile. She had never pictured him as the type to care much about his grades but she was glad he did. He took her completely off guard when he brought her in for a hug.

“Thank you thank you thank you! I won’t be late I promise.” He assured her when they separated.

She didn’t know what to say, still a little surprised by his actions. She could also feel that her cheeks were starting to color. Clearing her throat, she managed to gather herself.

“You’re welcome. See you tomorrow bright and early then?”

He nodded. “I’ll be there.”

“Hey”

“You’re late.” Annabeth stated simply. She glared up at the boy who was out of breath probably from having to rush to make it to central park.

His blonde hair was tousled and damp from having taken a shower in the morning. His cheeks were tinged a light red color from the cool brisk morning weather. He was dressed in a red hoodie, jeans and some sneakers. He caught her stare and took his own seat at the wooden picnic table across from her.

“By one minute!” He argued, hoping the girl on the other side of the table would understand. She

sighed before looking down at the math textbook she had put in between them.

“Fine. I’ll let it go this time. You’re lucky I tolerate you.” She teased. Luke inwardly thanked the gods for that one.

“Great. So what are we starting with Blondie?” He asked.

“Not we, *you*. I need to figure out what areas you need the most help with in math and the only way I’m going to be able to see that is if you take a practice test first on some textbook questions I’ve gathered. When you’re done I’ll grade it and we can start from there.” She explained. Luke’s expression changed to one of horror as he took in the information.

“So I’ve got to just solve problems for the next, who even knows how long on a subject I’m already failing. I can assure you Blondie I need help on just about everything when it comes to math.”

“I’m sure that’s not true. We just need to figure out where to start. It’s only thirty minutes worth of math equations and then we can go over the ones you missed. I promise it won’t be that bad now get to it. The first problem starts on page 108.”

Luke sighed deeply. He knew his new tutor wasn’t going to budge. That’s one of the things he admired about her though. She was determined on just about everything and she didn’t give up until she achieved what she wanted to. She started the time a minute later and he reluctantly picked up one of the wooden pencils she’d laid out for him and started the small quiz.

Just as he’d thought, while he tried to solve the equations he found that he couldn’t. About half way through the thirty minutes he had only successfully solved two problems out of fifteen. While he had been attempting to solve these impossible math problems Annabeth had been busying herself with her own schoolwork. Knowing the kind of student Annabeth Chase was he assumed the assignment she was working on was for next week or something. He had to admit that it shocked him a bit when she’d agreed to tutor him. Obviously it was something he’d hoped she’d agree to but she had such a busy schedule in the first place and he was asking her to add yet another thing into it. That’s why he knew he had to try his hardest to understand during their tutoring sessions so it wasn’t a waste of her time. That was proving to be a hard thing to do considering he was being tutored by a blonde haired beauty.

Yes, he still had feelings for her. In fact, he didn’t know when those feelings were going to fade if at all. There was just something different about her and he hated himself for not noticing it sooner. He hated himself for missing his chance at Silena’s party. He should’ve never even grabbed a drink at all.

The timer dinged at that moment, making him jump a little in surprise. Annabeth turned away from the assignment she had been working on and faced him once again. She gently took the piece of notebook paper from under his grasp and began looking it over. Luke blushed in embarrassment at the mostly blank paper with only two final answers that had been circled. Some of the other problems he’d started but not finished because he didn’t know what the next step was and then there were also a couple that were just left blank because he didn’t know how to approach them in the first place.

His tutor looked carefully over his math calculations. Luke studied her physical features. Her blonde hair always seemed to fall in almost perfect ringlets. Her grey eyes focused on the piece of paper with such intensity and concentration. He’d known of a girl named Annabeth Chase in his class for so long but never had he taken the time to see how pretty she was.

He knew she just wanted to be friends for the time being but he was insistent on changing that to something more. Through spending time during tutoring sessions and during school he was determined to change that. There was only one thing he could possibly think of that was in his way. Percy Jackson.

He had no idea why in the world Annabeth had decided to befriend that loser. Over the past few days he'd seen the two of them in the hall together talking as if they were old friends or something. Everyone noticed that something had changed between them since before they had clearly hated each other. The bottom line was he was *not* giving up on Annabeth. He'd win her over somehow.

"Alright Luke, let's start on this problem."

Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Annabeth groaned internally when she led the rest of the figure skating team into the ice arena and immediately noticed Rachel push past her to flirt with Percy who had just entered a few seconds prior to them with the rest of his team. Instead of meeting as a group together on the ice, Christina and Coach Hedge had requested that they all take a seat on the bleachers because they had announcements to make. Knowing the coaches, the announcements they had to make were probably bad news.

She took a seat next to Calypso in the stands. Piper sat with Jason near them and Percy sat a couple rows below them looking annoyed by the fact that Rachel was practically sitting in his lap. Annabeth tried to hold in her laughter when Rachel flipped her hair and it got in Percy's mouth. He was trying his best to get out of her grasp but she had to give it to Rachel, the redhead was persistent that was for sure.

All around her Annabeth noticed how much had changed between the two teams over the past few weeks. The last time they had been forced to sit in the bleachers they separated themselves on either side but now they were sitting as one group. She noticed some of her teammates conversing with some of the hockey players. Jason and Piper were holding hands and she was telling him something excitedly while he listened to her with a smile on his face. It was as if they were in a parallel universe. Before she could get any more lost in her thoughts, Christina and Coach Hedge entered the rink and stood in front of them. Their faces were stern but that didn't mean anything, they almost always had a strict expression on their faces.

"Alright everyone we've got a few things to say so shut up and listen!" Hedge started. *Wasn't he just a ray of sunshine?* Annabeth thought as she turned her attention to the two adults. She heard the whispers and murmurs of conversation cease as everyone stopped talking to one another.

"Now, we've made a decision based on what we've observed over the past few weeks." Christina continued. Now Annabeth was curious. A decision? About what?

"Seeing as how both his team and mine have been getting along so well we've decided to open the small rink back up and not just use it for individual practice. We'll be holding skating practice the same way we used to before, on a rotating schedule for what days the hockey teams gets the big rink and which days my team gets it. However, the extra individual practices some of you have scheduled with us will remain at the same time." Gasps and excited voices filled the air. She knew the last part was addressed to her and Percy who practiced separately on Saturdays.

"That's not all we have to say you maggots!" Hedge quieted the teens again. Christina sent him a look of thanks before starting to talk again.

"Now, as my figure skaters know the regional competition will not be for a while but it won't be held here at the rink. It will be taking place at an ice rink about six hours driving from here."

"And as my hockey players know, the semi-finals are not going to be held here like they were last year either."

"After inquiring more about the dates and times of both events we've gathered the information that they're both happening on the same weekend and...in the same place, Olympus Ice Arena in Vermont. For this reason, within the next two months depending on how the Trident's team does

this season, we'll all be going up together on a bus."

Both groups took in the information. Annabeth noticed that everyone seemed to be excited by the news. She herself was pretty excited. She'd never been to Vermont before because regionals had never been that far from where she lived. The only thing that wasn't so good about the news was that she was going to be on a bus with Rachel for six hours. Not to mention, Percy was probably going to make jokes and really bad puns the entire time. Right then she caught his eye from the stands. He smiled challengingly up at her, raising one eyebrow as if to say 'ready to be stuck on a bus with me for six hours Princess?' she smiled back, shaking her head in silent laughter. He turned back around as Rachel directed his attention back to her.

"Alright everyone quiet down! Now if the Tridents team doesn't make it to the semi-finals I'll still be taking my skaters to the competition and any of the Trident's players are welcome to attend and watch."

"Oh don't worry about that, we've got Percy. We'll get to the semi-finals." Leo spoke up, lightly shoving Percy in the shoulder who was in the row right below him. Percy chuckled, doing some weird handshake with the curly haired boy a second later.

"Don't be so sure boy! Now, we've got the big rink today so get going! We've got a game tomorrow night for Gods sake!" Hedge shouted to his players.

Annabeth knew that meant they had the smaller rink next door so she and the rest of the figure skaters stood up and walked in the opposite direction of the Tridents team. Before she left Percy waved to her. She grinned and waved back.

Someone brushed passed her and almost knocked her over when she turned back around. She steadied herself and then looked over to see who'd pushed her. She'd recognize that red hair anywhere, Rachel. She walked a couple paces faster to catch up with the girl.

"Hey, what the hell was that?" She interrogated, grabbing Rachel's shoulder and turning her around so she'd stop walking. The she-devil herself put on an innocent face.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh don't play games with me Dare. You obviously didn't just shove me and try to knock me over on accident. What's your problem?" Annabeth rebutted. They stood in the space between the two rinks. Everyone else had cleared the hall and it was only the two of them.

"You are." She said menacingly.

"Excuse me?" Annabeth spoke, starting to get angry.

"I've seen the way you've been looking at Percy these last few days. Let me tell you something Annabeth. He's *never* going to be with some low life like you so just give it up. He's *mine*."

Annabeth nearly burst out laughing when the redhead had finished. "Gods you kill me Dare. First of all, Percy and I are just friends. As for the rest of what you said, do you really think he wants to be with someone so desperate, someone who's an absolute attention whore?"

Rachel clenched her fists. Before any more could be said the door to the small rink was pushed open forcefully. Christina stood in the doorway, her expression one of anger and annoyance towards the two girls. Her arms were crossed on her chest and she narrowed her eyes at them.

"You two want to explain to me why you're out here instead of in there warming up with the

others? Because I'd really like to know. Oh wait actually I've got a better idea. How about you both sit out from practice today. Get in and take a seat on the bench *now*." Christina demanded strictly.

With Rachel trailing behind her, Annabeth trudged into the small rink. She took a seat outside the glass windows that surrounded the ice and saw the other girls warming up. She wanted to scream. Rachel had been successful in not only making her angry but also taking away her skating time. When she looked over to the redhead it looked like she could care less about not being able to practice. She suddenly couldn't wait for regionals. She was going to beat her if it was the last thing she did.

"I have a dog that can do this drill faster than you lot! Pick up the pace!" Hedge shouted to his team.

Percy breathed heavily as he got back in line behind Leo. Coach Hedge had set up several lines of cones and split them up into groups of five. The drill was called quick feet and involved each of them skating back and fourth through a line of cones as fast as they could while keeping the hockey puck under control. It was definitely tiring, especially when they had been doing it for the last twenty minutes without any idea of when Hedge would decide on a new drill.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity of doing the same drill over and over again, Coach Hedge had blown his whistle for them to stop. He gave them about ten seconds to clear the cones from the ice and get ready for the next exercise. Lucky for the team, Hedge must have been in somewhat of a good mood because the next thing they were told to do was practice crossovers with their sticks around the perimeter of the rink until he told them to stop. As they skated, Leo and Jason sped up to get to Percy.

"What's up?" Percy asked lazily. He knew by the looks on their faces that they wanted to say something. He slowed down a bit so they were skating near each other.

"Meh, nothing much. But clearly something's up with you." Jason started.

"Correction, someone." Leo interrupted.

Percy's eyebrows furrowed in confusion. "What are you two going on about?"

"Come on Perce. We know there's something up with you and Annabeth."

Percy almost lost his balance when he heard Jason's assumption. Regaining his balance, he spoke a moment later. He looked over to his two good friends with a lost look.

"What? No we're just friends! You do know that a guy and a girl can just be friends right dude?" He said, addressing Jason to his left.

"So there's nothing going on there? Cause you could've fooled me." Leo added as the three of them completed their fourth lap around the rink.

"No, there's nothing going on. We're complete opposites man. We'd have to be in a parallel universe for a girl like her to be with someone like me." Percy explained, shaking his head at the ridiculous idea of them together.

"Alright. You know I heard she's tutoring Castellan in math." Jason revealed. Percy nearly got whiplash from how fast he turned his head towards the blue-eyed boy.

“You’re kidding.”

“Nope, Piper told me.”

“Gods I hate that son of a bitch.” Percy muttered lowly to himself. Leo and Jason caught his moment of anger and looked at each other curiously.

“What the hell ever happened between you guys? I swear that’s like the biggest secret around town.” Leo stated, trying to get the answer out of the boy who was currently giving a death stare to the ground.

“Doesn’t matter. I just can’t believe Annabeth agreed to tutor him.”

“Well as far as I know, they’re friends just like you and her are.”

Percy didn’t say anymore after that. Instead he tried to focus on getting the movements correct with his hockey stick as they kept skating. He saw Leo give Jason a look from the corner of his eye but he ignored it as the three of them continued skating, now in silence.

“Ow! Jeez Princess. You know I’m starting to think I’m more of a personal punching bag rather than a friend to you.” Percy complained as he rubbed his arm.

“It’s how I get out my anger.” Was all she could think to say.

“Well what did I do? That really hurt.” Percy whined as they continued walking side by side to their cars that were parked outside the rink in the parking lot.

“Baby.” Annabeth muttered after she rolled her eyes.

“Oh I see. Well if you wanted us to have pet names so bad you could’ve said so babe.” Percy teased, casually throwing an arm around her shoulders.

Annabeth immediately felt her face heat up. She grabbed his arm and took it off her shoulders, pushing him to the side after she did so. He chuckled soundly and stumbled backwards a bit. She turned to look the other way so he wouldn’t see how red her face was.

“You’re insufferable.” She spoke when they’d resumed their walk.

“Yeah, insufferably hot.”

Annabeth stopped in place and turned to face him. She crossed her arms on her chest and looked at him disbelievingly as if to say ‘really, that’s you’re comeback?’ When he saw that she’d stopped he also paused. He caught her expression and sighed.

“Alright that sounded a lot better in my head. But seriously Chase what’s up? You look a little blue.”

She nearly rolled her eyes again at his choice of words but managed to refrain from doing so.

“Well if you must know, I got benched at practice today because of you.” She supplied. They resumed walking slowly through the skate rental area of the rink.

“How did I have anything to do with that?” He questioned. He ran ahead of her to open the glass door for them to exit the building. Once they were outside they headed in the direction of their parked cars.

"I'll give you a hint. It has red hair."

"Rachel? What happened between you two? And again, how am *I* involved in this?"

"Rachel decided it would be a good idea to pick a fight with me when we split up for practice. She's apparently very protective of you and said I should stay away from you. And uh, you know...a few other things."

"Anyway, a few minutes later Christina came out and saw us arguing and just like that no practice for me today." She finished angrily.

Percy didn't say anything right away. He let the information sink in as they walked slowly closer to the rink's parking lot. Annabeth took in the cold New York night. There were several stars shining in the sky that night and it was insanely quiet. All the other skaters and hockey players had left immediately after practice was over. She liked to take her time getting home because once she was in for the night all she did was homework and studying. She was surprised Percy was still even here. She was sure she was the only one left. Maybe he'd stayed back for her? No, that was crazy thinking. He probably just ran a bit late getting changed.

"So let me get this straight, you two were fighting over me?" Percy finally said after a couple minutes. His face broke out into a crooked grin and Annabeth shook her head but before she could say anything he spoke again.

"Well I wasn't expecting this. Don't worry Chase there's plenty of me to go around." He stuck his arms out for emphasis.

"Why am I not surprised that's what you got out of my explanation?"

He chuckled. "Come on Princess when are you going to admit that I'm the total package?"

Despite the fact that just a second ago she was annoyed when thinking about how she was forced to watch practice from the sidelines today, she found herself fighting the urge to smile. Percy noticed when a small grin formed on her lips and he definitely didn't let it go unnoticed.

"And she smiles!"

"Shut up."

"Speaking of people we find annoying...I heard you're now tutoring Luke." Percy mumbled suddenly. She noticed his demeanor change to a more serious one once he mentioned his name.

"Oh, uh yeah. He needed help in math." The blonde replied rather awkwardly.

She hadn't been expecting him to bring that up. She didn't even know how he found out about it in the first place but she shouldn't be surprised. They were in high school, information got around quick. She couldn't gather what he was thinking when she confirmed his assumption but whatever it was, it probably wasn't positive considering it involved Luke.

"Listen Chase I know he's your....your-" Annabeth cut him off before he could go any further. He seemed to be having trouble with that last word.

"My friend?" She teased playfully.

"Yeah, that. Look, just be careful ok? He's not as great as you think he is." He didn't elaborate any further and Annabeth once again found herself wondering what in the world happened between the

two of them.

“I can take care of myself Jackson.” Annabeth said, a tad bit annoyed at the fact that he had felt the need to warn her. He sighed.

“I know you can. I’ve got the bruises to prove it.” He responded, trying to lighten the mood as they arrived in front of Annabeth’s car in the now empty parking lot.

They turned to face one another and Annabeth laughed lightly. Only he could make her go from annoyed one minute to laughing in the next.

“I’m serious! I think I’m going to have to report you for physical abuse!” He joked further, adjusting his hockey duffle on his shoulder.

She laughed again. She went to push his chest back for the second time that night but this time he was expecting it. He clutched her hand in his own when it met his chest so that he wouldn’t stumble back. Annabeth froze when his hand grabbed her own. She didn’t remove her palm from his chest as he held it there. Tiny zaps of electricity shot up her arm from the contact. She then made the mistake of looking into his eyes.

A beautiful shade of green with small specks of blue in them. His smile faded after a second as did hers while they continued to look at each other. They stood in the dimly lit parking lot of the ice rink in front of her car. It was probably her imagination but she could swear she felt his heart beating rapidly under her palm as she kept it there. She didn’t know what to think in that moment.

They seemed to snap out of it at the same time. She pulled her hand away from its position near his heart and blushed furiously. He cleared his throat and scratched the back of his neck nervously.

“Well, uh I should get going. I’ll see you later Princess.” He muttered before giving her a final wave and retreating to his car which was almost right across from hers.

She waved back, not trusting herself to speak because she didn’t know what to say. There was only one thought on her mind that followed her all the way home and it was sure to stay with her for a while.

Had her and Percy just shared a moment?

Chapter 18

Chapter 18

Calypso hiccupped as the tears continued to stream down her face. Annabeth was seated next to her, letting a few silent tears fall down her cheeks as well. Neither one of them could compare to the kaleidoscope-eyed girl on the other side of Annabeth who had a steady flow of tears on her face and was continuously rubbing them away. They were seated in a line on the carpeted floor of Annabeth's house. A blanket was spread over the three of them and a small box of tissues sat a few feet in front of the three girls.

"Ok, remind me why in the world we decided to watch a movie about a dog who had to die multiple times?" Thalia spoke up from above them on the couch as the credits to the movie came on. Annabeth sat up straighter from her previous position of leaning against Thalia's legs to reply. She noticed that even her best friend who was always so guarded and closed off in her emotions, had a shine to her eyes.

"It's Will's fault! He's the one who s-said we should watch a dog m-movie." Piper proclaimed shakily before Annabeth could speak. They all turned to the sun-kissed boy who was seated on the other end of the couch and currently sniffing his sobs. Nico had an arm around his boyfriend comfortingly. The pale boy didn't have a single tear in his eye but that didn't surprise Annabeth. In all the time she'd known him she had never seen him cry over anything.

"I didn't know! But you have to admit, it was r-really good." He stuttered. Annabeth nodded in agreement to the statement and then turned back to the screen where the title of the movie was displayed.

A Dog's Purpose.

"All I know is that I feel very physically and emotionally drained after watching that. I don't think I've ever cried that much from a movie. I mean it looks like I just found out my mom died or something." Calypso claimed, grabbing another tissue from the almost empty box.

"Alright I'm picking the next movie. Knowing Will, he'd probably pick *Marley and Me* or some chick flick next." Thalia teased, getting up to walk over to the glass cabinet next to the TV.

"Hey, I apologized!" The boy retorted as Nico got up to go make some more popcorn for the six of them.

It was Saturday night and Annabeth had invited her friend group over for a movie night. She was surprised that her mother was alright with all of them coming over but she assumed that Athena was letting her out of guilt for not coming to her first competition of the year.

While they were waiting for Thalia to pick a movie and for Nico to finish the popcorn, somehow the topic had changed to relationships. Will had scooted off of the couch to join the three of them on the floor. Piper was currently gushing over Jason. Annabeth smiled at the love-struck expression on her face. She was happy for her friend. When they had turned to Calypso, the brown-haired girl did not have much to say.

"Nothing much for me in the relationship department. However, Leo's been annoying the hell out of me. I don't know how much more I can handle from that boy." She commented briefly, looking down at her hands in her lap.

“Really? Then why are you blushing?” Annabeth turned and took a closer look at Calypso. Piper had been right, her cheeks were a shade darker than normal and she seemed to be trying to hide it from the others by looking down.

“Did something happen between you two at the party you went to?” Annabeth inquired, referring to the night a few weeks before when Percy had walked her home.

“It totally did! Oh I can just see it now...Caleo.” Nico’s boyfriend stated excitedly. He made a gesture with his hands to say the last part. Calypso looked up, her eyes widening at the boy.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She tried to defend herself but no one was buying the act. Something had clearly gone on at that party.

“Oh please Callie, you’re a terrible liar. Spill it.” Piper spoke, staring intently at the girl with a look of disbelief on her face.

After an awkward few seconds of silence and everyone looking for Calypso to start talking, the caramel-colored girl finally broke.

“Ok, fine!” She threw her arms up in exasperation while Annabeth, Piper and Will leaned forward in anticipation.

“It turned out I didn’t know that many people at the party that night. Leo did though so I just kind of stuck around him and talked to some new people. About two hours into the party I was drunk off my ass. My memories are kind of fuzzy from everything that went on afterwards but I do know that somehow, someway I ended up...kissing Leo.”

Will gasped so loud Annabeth had to look around to make sure they weren’t being filmed for a soap opera.

“It didn’t mean anything! We were both super drunk and I doubt he even remembers it! We haven’t talked about it since the night it happened three weeks ago!”

“Three weeks? You didn’t think to tell us sooner?!” Annabeth asked, astonished at the new information she was hearing for the first time.

“I told you, it wasn’t a big deal!”

“A kiss is always a big deal!” Piper argued.

“Well I-I don’t know! It just...happened.” She said softly. Annabeth could clearly see that it had affected Calypso.

“Well are you going to talk to him about it?” Will asked. Calypso sighed tiredly.

“I don’t know. It’s a mess and I don’t think anything good would come out of us being together. I mean I’m not even sure if I like him, I don’t know how I feel.” She admitted truthfully. Piper shot her a look of encouragement as the four of them decided to drop the subject.

“Well what about you Annabeth? Anyone you’ve got your eye on?” Will asked her promptly. Both Piper and Calypso looked at her with newfound interest and curiosity.

“No, not at the moment.” She replied simply. Calypso wasn’t buying her answer though.

“Please. Maybe Annabeth isn’t looking for anyone at the moment but she sure has a couple

admirers. You guys didn't see what I saw after the competition a few weeks ago."

"What are you talking about?" Annabeth asked confused.

"You had both Percy and Luke practically fighting over your attention! And then when we left for ice cream the two of them looked like they were going to kill each other." Calypso exaggerated. Piper's eyes rose in surprise at the information and Will sat with his mouth agape.

"Luke *and* Percy. Gods Annabeth, you're quite a popular girl aren't you?" Will joked, temporarily coming out of his shocked state.

"It wasn't like that! They just asked me to go grab lunch but since I consider them both friends now I couldn't just go with one and not the other. When you guys showed up I didn't have to make that decision and that was the end of that exchange. I swear that was all it was."

"You forgot to mention that Luke also gave you flowers. He obviously doesn't just want to be your friend Annie." Thalia interrupted from a few feet away, her back faced to them as she kept searching for a good movie.

"Yeah, and Percy gods. All you two ever do is joke and tease each other at practice. Even now that practice is back to the way it was he still finds a way to talk to you. I swear I've caught him staring at you when you're not looking too." Piper added.

"Aw that's adorable! If we're taking sides I'm all for team Percy." Will interrupted giddily. Annabeth rolled her eyes at the ridiculousness of the group of people she called friends.

Sure, maybe she'd been getting along well with the two of them but there was nothing going on with either of them. She thought back to the night Percy and her had been joking around and he grabbed her hand to steady it on his chest. And then again to earlier than that when they'd shared a hug. She was filled with warmth and something she couldn't quite explain. It was probably nothing though. At least that's what she'd been telling herself. Since that night at the rink they hadn't talked about the moment they shared, if it should even be qualified as a moment at all. In the passing weeks they'd grown closer though. He was starting to become one of her closest friends. But that was all it ever was going to be...right?

An image of Luke appeared in her mind a second later. Their tutoring sessions had been going well. He was improving his math skills and Annabeth couldn't be happier that she was the cause of that. During their sessions before school he often brought her coffee and they spent a few minutes talking before getting to work on studying. She would admit that a couple times she'd caught his gaze when she looked up from correcting his papers. He would smile at her and occasionally a tiny blush would appear on her cheeks. But again, they were friends and that was it.

"Well you guys are wrong. Percy is my friend and Luke is my friend, simple as that. There is no 'Team Percy' or 'Team Luke'. *Friends* joke around with each other and *friends* can get other friends flowers as a congratulations gift."

Calypso held her hands up in surrender as Nico walked back into the living room with a bowl of freshly microwaved buttered popcorn. He ate a couple pieces before reclaiming a spot on the couch. Will joined him a second later, grabbing a handful of popcorn for himself.

"So, what are we talking about?" He asked, shoving a couple more kernels into his mouth with a crunch.

"Annabeth's love life." Piper supplied casually.

“Ah. You mean the fight between Luke and my cousin over her?” He replied like it was obvious. Annabeth groaned annoyed.

“There’s no fight between them over me!”

Nico snorted. “Yeah and my favorite color’s pink.”

“So let me get this straight. You and the bookworm...there’s something there after all?” Leo asked carefully. He took a step to the side to grab a wrench from the toolbox.

Percy had gone over to Leo’s house that evening with Jason because his truck was desperately in need of a tune up. Leo’s garage was practically where the Latino boy lived when he wasn’t at school or playing hockey. He had a passion for anything to do with motors and mechanics. Percy came by whenever there was an issue with his car or he just needed to get something off his chest. He’d been coming over a lot more in his free time now that he didn’t want anything to do with the popular crowd. In this case, his visit had been because of both those reasons previously stated.

Percy grabbed the torque wrench from the box next to him. He started to use it to loosen up a part of the motor under the hood of the truck. It made a loud series of clicks each time he rotated it. Leo worked on the underside of the car, half his body currently being blocked from view as he worked on the engine. Jason sat over on the couch that was in the garage drinking a can of root beer. The radio was playing some popular rock song. Percy had just finished telling the two of them what happened between him and Annabeth at the rink a couple weeks ago. The only reason he’d waited so long to tell them was because he had been trying to make sense of the whole thing but found that to be impossible.

Percy sighed in exasperation. “I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know? How do you not know if you like someone?” Jason asked confusedly. He propped his feet up on the other side of the couch and got into a more comfortable position.

“It’s complicated.” Percy tried to focus his attention on the motor under the hood of the car and not on a certain blonde figure skater.

“How so?” Leo asked, rolling out from under the car and momentarily stopping his work on the engine to look up at him expectedly. Jason looked to him from his spot on the couch as well.

Percy groaned. He knew he wasn’t going to get off so easy on this one like he had at practice the previous time they’d talked about Annabeth. He sighed and paused from working on the motor. He grabbed a clean rag to wipe his hands that were now covered in motor oil from his truck. He noticed that he’d gotten some of the black substance on his clothes as well. He silently cursed himself for being stupid enough to wear a plain white t-shirt that day because now it was probably just as black as it was white. His mom was going to kill him. He leaned against the car and turned to face them.

“It just is. I mean we’re so different. She’s a straight A student who’s always got her nose in a book whenever she’s not figure skating. I’m a C’s and occasional B student who doesn’t want anything to do with books and practically lives to play hockey. It’s never going to work.”

“Well you don’t know that. I say you give it a try. I mean look at me and Piper, nothing would’ve happened if I didn’t ask her out and now we’re together.” Jason explained, a small grin appearing on his lips.

“Maybe, but that’s not the same. We all knew you two liked each other. It’s different with Annabeth and I. She clearly only sees me as a friend dude. She’s probably still got a thing for Castellan and he’s definitely into her.” Percy angrily spat out the last part.

“Do you realize how jealous you sound right now *muchacho*?” Leo asked teasingly, his eyebrows up in surprise. Jason laughed at the comment, nodding his head in agreement.

“Shut up.”

“So you admit it then?” Jason said a moment later.

“Admit what?” Percy questioned confusedly.

“That you like her.”

“I didn’t say that.” Percy brushed it off and turned back to working on his truck in the roomy garage.

“Well you certainly didn’t deny it. As a matter of fact, you implied it.” Leo added, once again distracting Percy from the task at hand.

Clearly annoyed by his friends at this point, the star player of the Trident’s team threw his hands up and sighed in annoyance.

“Alright fine, you want to know the truth?”

“Please, enlighten us.” The Hispanic boy said calmly.

“The truth is I have absolutely no freaking idea.” Before Leo or Jason could respond Percy continued.

“That girl confuses the hell out of me. Half the time when we talk it’s like I’m talking to a close friend and it’s great. She listens to my stupid jokes and laughs at them and she’s one of those people that if you’ve had a bad day you can go to if you need to cheer up.” His expression changed to one deep in thought as he continued.

“But then the other half of the time when we’re together I get this weird feeling in my stomach that I’ve never had with any other girl before. I find myself smiling more when I’m around her and it seems like in every week that passes we get closer. I mean that night at the rink a couple weeks ago I’d be lying if I said there wasn’t a tiny part of me that wanted to kiss her.”

“Sometimes I think that it would’ve been a whole lot easier if we’d just continued to hate each other.” He finished frustratingly.

He put his hands on either side of the front of the truck and looked down with an unknown expression on his face. Despite his obvious confusion towards the whole situation, Percy felt relieved after explaining everything to his friends.

“Wow” Jason said after a moment of complete silence.

“Jeez Perce that’s a lot. I can kind of relate though. You know, the whole kissing Calypso at a party thing.” Leo said, attempting to lighten the situation.

Jason did a spit take with the root beer he was drinking, getting a small amount on Leo who was standing only a few feet away. The curly haired boy grimaced, wiping away the small mist that had

gotten on him and then turning to face the boy with an aggravated look while Jason coughed violently.

“Dude, what the hell?”

“You...you and Calypso...kissed?” He said through his coughing fit. Once he’d managed to stop coughing he looked at Leo as if he’d just grown a second head.

“Uh, yeah. I told you both the day after it happened like three weeks ago. You were right ther—oh wait... if I can remember correctly you were texting someone. Now that I think about it you were smiling too. That can only mean one thing.” He finished knowingly.

“Piper” Percy and Leo said together. Jason’s face colored and he cleared his throat.

“Sorry” He stated simply.

Leo brushed it off. “It’s cool man. But yeah, Calypso and I kissed although I doubt she even remembers it. We haven’t discussed it since.”

“Gods everyone’s having girl issues.” Jason spoke suddenly.

“Except you.” Percy cut in.

“Wouldn’t be so sure Jackson. I might not be having a problem getting into a relationship but Piper’s been telling me all about her favorite movies that I’ve got to watch with her. We’re watching *The Vow* tomorrow.” The blonde boy frowned in discontent.

And just like that the serious and tense atmosphere broke. Percy laughed at the look on Jason’s face and Leo soon followed. A moment later they were all laughing. Percy was glad he had such close friends who were there for him. He chuckled lightly as he set back to work on the motor, tossing the now oily rag behind him somewhere as a new song started to play from the radio.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19

And another goal making the score 4-2 with the Tridents in the lead!

Percy grinned, coming to a halt on the ice while the crowd dressed in blue and black cheered from the stands. He loved Friday nights during hockey season. There was so much excitement, so much enthusiasm for the sport he played and he didn't think he was ever going to get used to it. He searched the crowd once his helmet was off and when his green eyes caught a pair of familiar grey ones he stopped looking. Her hair was up in a half up half down style and she was wearing a blue sweater with some black jeans and blue converse to match. When she caught his gaze she smiled. He instantly sent her a lop-sided smirk back and winked teasingly in her direction before skating over to the rest of his teammates.

Annabeth clapped along with everyone else in the stands when Percy scored a goal for the Tridents. Piper put her hands on either side of her mouth and hollered loudly, once again wearing one of Jason's jerseys' that was way too big on her. Calypso clapped along with Annabeth on the other side of Piper. The stormy eyed girl saw Percy come to an abrupt stop once the goal had been scored. He looked through the stands and a few seconds later Annabeth met his eyes. She smiled warmly when he smirked at her and felt her cheeks redden when he sent her a small wink before skating back to the others. He was such a flirt.

She continued to watch Percy play and speed down the ice rink as if it were nothing. It was a home game after all. Percy knew every single centimeter of that ice. She noticed that whenever he could in between plays, he would always find her in the stands. It made Annabeth feel giddy inside whenever he spotted her but she couldn't quite figure out why. The game was going smoothly, the Tridents were winning and the other team looked like they were going to pass out from exhaustion. It was becoming one of the best games to watch.

At least it was until the last period.

"Annabeth?" She heard a familiar voice call when the small break had ended. When she spun around to look at who'd said her name her eyes widened in surprise when she saw a familiar head of hair.

"Luke? What are you doing here?" She asked in her shocked state. It came out in a sort of rude way that she hadn't been meaning to use but lucky for her he didn't seem to hear it.

He laughed and gestured to the spot next to her that had conveniently been left empty. Annabeth shook her head back and forth to indicate the spot was still open and he took a seat next to her while the game continued a few rows below them. Calypso and Piper talked amongst each other next to them. Piper gave her a look she couldn't quite explain when Luke approached her.

"Well isn't it obvious Blondie? I'm watching the game." He voiced with sarcasm. Annabeth rolled her eyes at the boy and scoffed at his joking demeanor.

"You know that's not what I meant. I've never seen you at a hockey game before. So either you were avoiding me all those other times or this is the first one you've been to all season." She joked.

"Trust me Blondie, you're a very hard person to avoid." He winked at her and Annabeth wasn't sure what to say in response. She just kind of sat there with a grin on her face. What was with all

the winking today?

“This is the first game I’ve been to this season. I’ve been here since the start of the game but I didn’t see you. Despite what you may think, I find hockey to be a pretty enjoyable sport to watch. Not as fun as wrestling of course, but still entertaining.”

“I guess I just figured since...” She trailed off.

“You figured since Jackson is the star player I wouldn’t come watch?”

She shrugged, looking down embarrassed. “Can you blame me?”

“I guess not. You know you’re pretty cute when you’re shy.”

Annabeth felt her cheeks heat up instantly at the sudden bold comment. She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear nervously as he stared at her. She was caught completely off guard at what he did next. She felt his warm breath on her ear as he leaned closer to her.

“You know I can still see you blushing when you look down right?” He whispered in her ear. At this point her cheeks had gone way past the tomato stage and were moving on to more of a fire truck red.

She elbowed him in the stomach lightly as the two of them laughed at the situation.

...

Meanwhile, on the ice the entire conversation had not gone unnoticed by Percy. The score was still 2-4 with them leading. Two goals was a good lead to have but he thought three goals would seal the deal for sure. Both teams reset as the puck was thrown back into the game. Percy got it not even ten seconds later. A player from the opposing team was right on his tail and building speed fast. He shuffled down the ice, skating effortlessly on the familiar ice. When he figured he should start lining up for a shot on goal, he saw something from the corner of his eye.

Up in the stands, where he now knew Annabeth was, he saw Luke. Once the blonde boy had made it over to her they seemed to exchange a few words before he took a seat next to her and it was *right* next to her. An unexplainable feeling filled Percy as he tilted his head to get a better look at the two of them. He saw Annabeth laugh at something his rival had said. He laughed along with her and scooted closer to her if that was even possible.

He’d been so distracted from looking at them that it took him a full five seconds to realize the guy that had been guarding him had stolen the puck from his hold. He turned around in panic and shot down to the other side of the rink but unfortunately for him, he wasn’t fast enough. Leo had been a second too late to block the shot and opposing team had scored a goal. The crowd on the other side went crazy and Percy’s mind felt hazy as he thought about the last few minutes. He was brought fully back to reality with Coach Hedge’s yell directed at him.

“Jackson, keep your head in the game!”

He shook himself out of it. He had to focus on playing and winning the game. They were only ahead by one now which could change at any moment for the worst. He was determined to not let that happen.

“You ok man?” Jason asked, clapping him on the shoulder as he skated by. Percy nodded in silent reply, taking a sip of water before getting back on the ice.

In the next play he had used the same tactic as before, claiming the puck as his mere seconds after it hit the ice. The same guy was guarding him as before. He didn't know why he did what he did next. It was an idiotic move but he couldn't help when his gaze was drawn back up into the stands. He wished more than anything that he had resisted the urge to look into the crowd.

He saw Luke lean over to whisper something into Annabeth's ear. She was blushing a deep red and smiling at whatever he had said to her. When he pulled away he was grinning amusedly at her. Percy's blood boiled and his eyes narrowed in anger at the scene.

The guy who had been guarding him took the puck again but this time Percy wasn't going to let him take it all the way. His whole body shook with rage as he chased after the guy. He tried his best to play defense against the buff guy but he still took a shot. The shot ended up being very far off from the goal. Relief coursed through the Tridents team but Percy knew Coach Hedge was going to give him a lecture about letting the guy take another shot on goal later on. He didn't give a crap though. He took off his helmet and skated over to the bench. His good mood now ruined.

It only got worse when the player from the other team who took the shot shoved his shoulder harshly before he could reach the bench. The push almost knocked him over but Percy managed to keep his balance. His eyes were full of fury when he made eye contact with the player.

"Hey, don't take it out on me. Not my fault you've got bad aim." Percy spat out before the guy could go back to his group of teammates. He turned back around with a look that pretty much mirrored Percy's.

"Least I actually keep my eyes on the game." He taunted, his brown eyes narrowing. Percy clenched his fists in anger.

"I'd shut the hell up right now if I were you." Percy warned, skating dangerously closer to the player in front of him who had now taken off his helmet to reveal his dark brown hair.

"Oh yeah? And what if I don't pretty boy?"

Percy threw the first punch, hitting him square in the face. He'd had enough of everything that night. Twenty minutes ago he was fine but seeing Annabeth with that scumbag Luke had done something to him. It threw his whole game off and that *never* happened to him during a game.

It took only a second for the guy to throw a punch back at Percy. He tried to duck but he wasn't fast enough, getting a painful shock to his jaw when his fist made contact with it. The next minute consisted of the two males trying to pin each other to the ice. Percy ended up winning that battle, throwing jabs left and right while the other hockey player got a few good blows in as well. He didn't stop when he heard the referees blowing their whistles loudly. The image of Luke whispering to Annabeth made his thoughts blurry until the only thing he could see was red. He could hear the crowd cheering loudly at the actions taking place. Fighting was after all, one of the most exciting parts of hockey.

The Tridents captain was practically dragged away from the opposing player by two referees after it had gone on long enough. They held his arms back while two other referees took ahold of the brown haired player. Percy could feel the sting from the punch he'd taken to the jaw. The two of them were forced to each sit in a penalty box and Hedge stared coldly at him from across the rink. He was going to get hell for it later.

He didn't dare look up into the stands where he knew he'd probably see Annabeth looking at him confusedly. Unless she'd decided to ditch the game to go hang out with Luke. The idea made him clench his fists with newfound jealousy as he continued to watch the game happen without him.

Annabeth waited patiently outside the rink when the game was over. The Tridents team had won but only by one goal which was rare. Luke had left about five minutes ago after offering her a ride home that she'd politely declined. Calypso had left as well. That only left Piper to wait with her for the hockey players to finish changing. She knew her friend would probably leave with her boyfriend as soon as he came out though. Right as she formed the thought in her mind, the blue-eyed boy emerged through the locker room doors. He smiled upon seeing Piper and greeted her before turning to Annabeth.

"Oh hey, you looking for Percy?" He questioned, lazily throwing an arm over Piper's shoulder.

"Yeah, you know why he hasn't come out yet?"

"Coach kept him back a bit. But just so you know, the guy's not in the best of moods right now." He warned.

"Yeah, what the heck was that fight about?" Piper asked curiously, voicing the question before Annabeth could. Jason shrugged.

"I don't know, he wouldn't tell me. It's weird though, Percy's known to get in to some fights here and there but he's never been the one to start the fight. I don't know what happened."

Annabeth tried to process the newfound information. She had no idea what could have caused Percy to get into a fight either. He looked fine for the entire game until the very end. She remembered her conversation with Luke being cut short with the crowd going nuts over a fight on the ice. At first she didn't even realize it was Percy who was fighting until she saw the number 1 on his jersey. He was put in one of the penalty boxes and he didn't look at her for the rest of the game. She was beyond confused. It just didn't make any sense.

"You staying then Anna?" Piper asked her, interrupting her thoughts.

"Yeah, I'll try to get a ride home from Percy. You two go on ahead."

Jason and Piper smiled at her before they both turned around to leave the rink. She could vaguely hear Piper congratulating him on the one goal he made during the game before they were out of earshot. She didn't want to bother them with giving her a ride so she hoped to the Gods that Percy would be in a good enough mood to at least give her a lift home.

The boy in question came out about three minutes later. Annabeth barely noticed it was him because he was staring at the ground with an angry expression on his face as he walked out of the locker room, now changed into some jeans with his hockey jersey and carrying his worn out hockey duffle bag on one of his shoulders.

"Jackson!" She shouted his name. He lifted his head to look around and when he saw her, his facial features didn't change. As a matter of fact, when he saw her he broke their gaze and looked back down. He walked right past her. In that one moment he'd looked at her she noticed how dark and distant his eyes were.

"Hey! I know you heard me." She called, catching up to him and trying to keep up with his fast pace. The rink was practically deserted by that point. It was amazing how many people came to the games but could then all vanish in a second when the game was over.

Annabeth ran ahead and cut him off before he could exit the rink completely. She stood in front of him with her arms crossed on her chest and an intimidating look on her face. Percy sighed deeply, as if in annoyance before looking up at her again, this time with a glare of his own.

“What do you want Chase?” Annabeth was taken aback by his tone. She recognized that tone of voice. It was the one he used to talk to her with before they became close friends.

“Well for starters I want to know why you felt the need to avoid me just now and why the hell you got into a fight.”

“I’m not in the mood right now.” He said curtly. He tried to move past her but she blocked his way again, this time grabbing his arm. She wasn’t leaving until she got answers. She couldn’t help it. It was in her nature to be curious.

“Percy what happened?” He looked down at her hand on his arm. His eyes softened a bit at her gentle tone but he shook himself out of her hold.

“Nothing.”

“Yeah, ok. So you just got into a fight for no reason? That’s not like you.” She pushed on. She knew that Percy wasn’t the kind of person to always pick a fight. In the past few weeks she’d gotten to know him he’d shown her that he was almost the complete opposite of those people.

“I’m surprised you even saw the fight.” He retorted, his eyes slightly narrowing at her.

“What do you mean?” She asked, clearly confused.

“Oh I don’t know. By the looks of it I figured you would be too distracted flirting with Castellan.”

“What’s your problem?” She argued, now fed up with his attitude. She’d tried being the nice guy but he was really pushing her buttons.

“I told you that hanging around with Luke wasn’t a good idea yet the second I turn away you’re both laughing like you’ve known each other for years.” Annabeth paused. She hadn’t been expecting that answer.

“So what am I supposed to do? Avoid him just because you want me to? Well newsflash Jackson I make my own decisions!” She shouted angrily.

“Well they’re not very smart ones!” She clenched her fists in anger. It was one thing to argue with her but when someone ever insulted her intelligence that was the last straw.

“You know maybe it would help if I knew why the hell you hate him so much! So until you can tell me that I’ll get out of your life.” Percy’s expression was panicked at her last few words.

She moved to turn back around and open the door but before she could she felt his grip on her wrist. He turned her face back to his and she noticed that his eyes were calmer than before. He seemed to have a sort of fearful look on his face after she’d finished her previous sentence. Did he really value their friendship that highly? She shook her head, yanking her wrist out of his hold only for him to grab it again.

“Annabeth, please. Look I’m sorry just...”

He looked like he was trying to decide on something. She met his eyes with a questioning look but before she could say anything he cut her off. He spoke quietly but she still managed to make out his next sentence under his mumbling tone.

“Come with me.” His grip tightened on her hand and he practically dragged her out of the skate rental area leaving her to wonder where in the world he was taking her.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20

Annabeth grunted when she finally stepped over the last rung of the old metal ladder. Percy pulled himself up right behind her a moment later. He stepped onto the concrete surface while Annabeth brushed her hands off in attempt to get off any dirt collected from the ladder. When she looked back up she realized the hockey player she was with was walking in front of her over to something that looked like a heater of some sort. She thanked the Gods for there being a heater because the last thing she needed was to catch hypothermia that night.

“You know when you said to come with you I wasn’t expecting that to mean you were going to drag me up onto the roof of the ice rink. Are we even allowed to be up here?” Annabeth questioned.

She crossed her arms on her chest as she slowly made her way over to where Percy was sitting. Her hair blew behind her but surprisingly enough the night itself wasn’t as cold as some of the others they’d had. When she reached him she continued to stand after she stopped in front of him.

Percy shrugged. “Probably not but I come up anyway.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes, bending down to sit near him. She felt a rush of heat a second later from the heater next to them. Her eyes widened in admiration when she looked in front of her. Since they’d made it onto the rooftop she hadn’t even bothered to look at the view around them but now that she was she found herself feeling almost peaceful. You could see hundreds of lights down below from the many houses and cars that roamed New York. Usually it would be hard to ignore the loud noises from the city but being up on the roof drowned out a lot of them.

“Wow” She silently cursed herself for accidentally letting the word escape her lips. Percy laughed next to her.

“Pretty much my reaction the first time I came up here.”

“How long have you been coming up here?”

“Since last year. I like to come whenever I just need some time to think.” He admitted honestly, his eyes still locked on the view before them. She nodded to let him know she understood.

“So no one’s ever come up here with you?”

Percy momentarily turned away from the city to look at her. He smiled crookedly at her and Annabeth could’ve sworn she saw a dusting of pink on his cheeks.

“Nope. You’re the first one.”

Her stomach fluttered ever so slightly when he’d told her that. She had no idea why being the only person he’d ever brought up to the roof made her so happy but it did. He trusted her enough to show her when not even Leo or Jason had been there. She cleared her throat.

“Well I’m honored.” She said jokingly.

“Oh, you should be. It’s a big achievement.” Percy teased sarcastically. Annabeth laughed and then a few beats of silence passed before she remembered the purpose for him bringing her to the

rooftop.

“So, uh about...Luke. What exactly happened between the two of you?” She trailed off, looking to him expectantly and hugging her knees to her chest.

He sighed deeply, looking back at the view of the city lights as she stared at him with a curious look on her face. Just when she thought he was going to ignore her, he started speaking.

“It all started the last day of sophomore year. There was a big party to kick off the summer. The people who were there were students from Goode but there were also some other people from different schools like the private school near here I can’t remember the name of.”

“Anyway, as the night went on I got bored and tired. It happened all the time at parties. All the people I hung out with got either high or super drunk and then I’d just be surrounded by a bunch of people who weren’t making any sense. It might have seemed like I enjoyed partying but trust me, I was always bored out of my mind on the inside.”

“Wait, you didn’t drink?” Annabeth interrupted, her expression one of shock. Percy chuckled at the look on her face.

“I don’t drink or get stoned for that matter. But that’s a whole different story.” He answered mysteriously. Annabeth stared in surprise but then it all registered in her mind. When she had gone to Silena’s party she specifically remembered him not having a drink in his hand.

She shook her head back and forth. “You’re something else Jackson. Sorry, continue.” She mumbled. He grinned at her before starting again.

“Somehow I managed to escape my so-called friends and ended up in the kitchen of whoever’s house the party was being held at. The kitchen seemed to be the only room that wasn’t jam packed with people. When I walked in a few people were leaving with a new pack of beer and there was only one other girl in the room.”

“She turned around when I came in so I got a good look at her face. She had black hair and dark eyes that were pretty intimidating. Based on her slight stumble when she turned around, I could tell she was at least a little drunk. She started talking to me and since I didn’t have anything better to do, I engaged into a conversation with her too. I found myself enjoying the hours we spent talking about I don’t even remember what. It had been a long time since I’d actually been myself around a person before and she was a complete stranger. She was funny and cute and I assumed she went to the private school because I’d never seen her at Goode. Her name was Reyna.”

Annabeth noticed Percy get a faraway look in his eyes when he voiced her name but she stayed quiet, waiting patiently for him to continue.

“Now as I said, she was somewhat drunk. Not drunk enough to be making no sense but still a bit tipsy. I’m not really sure what triggered her reaction but she ended up kissing me as the party wore on. Being the guy I was, I didn’t pull away.”

“Castellan walked into the kitchen right when she’d started kissing me and normally you would think a person wouldn’t be fazed by two people making out at a party but his expression was different. I remember seeing recognition in his eyes when he looked at Reyna. Later on I found out it was because the two of them were apparently close family friends.”

“I’m not going to go too into the specifics of what happened in the following weeks but I ended up asking Reyna out. We kept our relationship pretty private from everyone. I’d been with a couple

girls before Reyna but she was different and I didn't want to bring any school drama into it. I just felt like I could be myself around her you know? I didn't have to worry about protecting this popular image of myself. The only person who knew about us was Luke. Reyna was the one who told him, she claimed that he was her best friend and he promised her he wouldn't say anything."

"We were together for the whole summer. There were moments where I felt like I was falling in love with her. She was brave and a risk taker, I think that's what I liked most about her. I didn't know what being in love was like but I knew our relationship felt so different from the other short flings I'd had with other girls."

"One day I decided to surprise her during the last week of the summer. Call me cliché but I had a picnic basket and a blanket with me so we could eat in central park. When I arrived at her house the door was unlocked which I thought was really weird but I didn't spend too much time questioning it."

"This is where it gets really ironic considering the story I told you of how I found my dad kissing another woman. I knew my way around her house from visiting a few times prior to that visit so I decided to look around to see if she was home. When I walked into the kitchen I...I found her kissing someone else. Not just anyone else, Luke Castellan. That's not where the story ends though."

He paused in his explanation and Annabeth took a moment to take it all in. What he was saying didn't sound like the Luke she knew. She never would have thought he would do something like that.

"The look on Reyna's face when I caught them was something I can't even explain. She looked sorry but it also didn't seem like she regretted anything. We broke up of course right before I stormed out of her house and in the next few days I found out Luke and Reyna were together. I was heartbroken that she'd picked him over me."

"I-I think I remember her. I saw Luke once outside of the movie theatre with some girl. I don't remember what she looked like but she had black hair and it was around the beginning of junior year." Annabeth interrupted, realization spreading across her features.

It was such a distant memory and she hadn't thought much of it until now. She certainly didn't know Percy had played a role in the whole thing. He looked over at her sadly.

"Reyna moved away about a third through junior year. I found out from a few people in the popular crowd that talked to both Luke and me. I overheard them one day saying that Luke was pretty much broken. The feeling was mutual."

Annabeth stared at him sadly. On instinct, she reached out to place a hand on Percy's. Her fingers tickled and he looked up at her dejectedly. He didn't move his hand away from hers as he continued.

"He made this book. I guess it was his way of coping with his feelings or something? I don't know. The only people who knew about it were the people in the popular crowd. The book wasn't you're typical book though."

"Annabeth...It was a notebook that had the names of just about every girl in our grade who he had slept with. He ranked them on a scale of one to ten and even me, a guy who was a pretty big jerk himself, thought the whole concept was messed up. The guy would get close to a girl just to sleep with her."

That definitely didn't sound like Luke Annabeth thought.

"I'm not saying I was completely innocent in all this because I wasn't. I never saw the book or had one of my own but I did treat girls similar to how he did and I'm not proud of that. I was more open with it than he was though. Obviously, I mean not many people knew about what he did. His various flings were always private. As you can imagine my hatred towards Castellan only got worse. After everything that happened with Reyna and now the book, I couldn't stand the guy."

"We never spoke of the summer we fell in love with the same girl and since we avoided each other I never confronted him about the book either. So, there you have it. That's why Luke and I hate each other so much."

The two of them sat in silence for a good three minutes.

"Why didn't you tell me?" She whispered almost incoherently but still loud enough for him to make out.

"I didn't know how. You and I, we don't exactly have a perfect past and I also know that you're close with Castellan. I didn't know if you would believe me."

"You're right, I am friends with Luke but that doesn't mean I wouldn't believe you. No one could make all that up."

"Do me a favor?"

"Hmm?"

"Don't tell anyone. Even talking about everything that happened with Reyna is painful and I don't want it being brought up all over school."

"Of course." His grip tightened on her hand as he met her eyes.

Percy sighed. "My life's pretty messed up Princess."

"No one has a perfect life Percy." She stared down at their hands clasped together. He nodded as they stared out at the view.

"Alright enough sad stuff, get up!" Percy announced randomly a few minutes later. He stood up and pulled Annabeth up with him. She nearly lost her balance but managed to stand up straight. He used their intertwined hands to lead her over to the edge of the roof. She reluctantly followed him.

"Is this the moment you reveal you're a serial killer and I end up getting thrown off the roof?" She teased, stopping in her spot. He laughed soundly.

"I promise you I'm not a serial killer." He said, taking a step up onto the concrete ledge and putting a hand out for her to join him. She stared in terror at him.

"Are you insane?! There's no way I'm getting up there!"

"Come on what are you afraid of?"

"Oh, I don't know...dying!" He snickered at her sarcasm.

"For once in your life take a risk and do something crazy Princess."

She stared at him unsurely.

“I’m not going to let you fall. *Trust me.*” He went on. Annabeth huffed, looking at him and finally giving in and taking his hand tightly in hers.

He pulled her up next to him and Annabeth’s breaths came out in a panicked manner when she was standing in front of him. He gently lowered them down until they were both sitting on the edge. Annabeth shut her eyes tightly, not wanting to look down.

“Open your eyes will you? You’re missing it.” He said encouragingly.

She clutched his hand like it was her lifeline before slowly blinking her eyes open. She breathed in shakily while Percy stared at her. It took her a few seconds but she slowly adjusted and smiled widely at the scene before her.

Wind blew her hair back wildly and the night sky twinkled with thousands of stars. She laughed happily as she took in the view of New York, this time at a much closer angle. It was absolutely amazing. Percy smiled in her direction as she laughed.

“Aren’t you glad you took the risk?” He said lowly. Annabeth turned away from looking all around her and her eyes met his.

Right at that second something clicked in her mind. She looked into Percy’s mesmerizing green eyes and realized for the first time how much he’d gone through in his life. He had to deal with so much yet here he was, smiling at her while they sat on the edge of the rooftop of the ice rink they both skated at. She felt genuinely happy whenever they spent time together and she was starting to understand why.

“What?” He said interrupting her thoughts.

“Nothing. I just...I realized something.” She didn’t say any more and he stared at her confusedly when she turned back to the city below them.

She knew why she always got a weird feeling in her stomach whenever she was with him. She knew why she felt a tingling sensation wherever they touched. It was similar to the feelings she would have around Luke whenever she saw him at school. She liked him.

She didn’t know when or how it happened but it hit her right then and there. She liked him and it felt good to finally admit it to herself. There was one big problem that surfaced in her mind though. She had no idea how he felt about her. If she had to guess she would say he only saw her as a friend and that was it. She shook herself out of her thoughts. Right now she just wanted to focus on enjoying the beautiful night in New York.

It was official. Percy Jackson was seriously in trouble of falling for Annabeth Chase. Their night on the rooftop had made him see everything so much more clearly. Those feelings, they had been there for a while now. He wasn’t confused anymore about anything. She was changing him for the better and he felt comfortable telling her everything about his life. Was it crazy for him to think he was already starting to fall for her? Perhaps, but he didn’t care one bit.

The whole thing made him scared out of his mind. It reminded him too much of what happened with Reyna. He never wanted to go through something like that again. There was some history she had with Luke as well. He could tell she had mixed feelings about her blonde friend and she wanted to believe he changed. And who knows? Maybe Luke had changed since he met Annabeth. Percy knew he had.

He tried to focus on the view of the city as they sat in a comfortable silence but his attention kept

being drawn back to the girl next to him. She was smiling and admiring the lights everywhere. He knew if he were to get into a relationship with her she could really hurt him. He couldn't handle any more heartbreak in his life so maybe it wasn't such a good idea to get involved with her. But then again, he wouldn't know until he tried.

When he dropped her off later that evening around midnight she turned around and waved at him with a smile on her face. He grinned widely back before she disappeared behind her door. He sat in his car for a minute trying to process his newfound realization.

He sighed in annoyance and leaned his head on the steering wheel tiredly. Why did everything in his life have to be so complicated and hard?

What the hell was he going to do?

Chapter 21

Chapter 21

Annabeth walked carefully up to the wooden picnic table with a stack of math books in her arms. As she approached the table she saw the back of a familiar person already seated. He was looking down at something on his phone but he looked up when she set her stuff down and took a seat across from him. He smiled at her but she didn't return it. Instead, she looked at him curiously. Her thoughts were filled with everything Percy had told her two nights before.

"Hey Blondie. I was a little surprised I managed to get here before you." He joked, putting his phone in the back pocket of his jeans.

Annabeth sighed. "Listen Luke, we need to talk."

He knew something was bothering her by her tone of voice. The air around them was serious and unsettling instead of the usual joking and carefree environment of their normal tutoring sessions.

"About?" He questioned. The fact that she wasn't even making eye contact with him made Luke worried. They sat in silence for a minute before Annabeth got the courage to speak.

"Percy told me...about everything."

She noticed Luke's expression change from worried to confused to recognition. His pupils widened slightly and then it was him who couldn't look her in the eye. His reaction confirmed that everything Percy had told her was true. A few seconds passed with the two of them just sitting there. Luke looked like he was figuring out how to reply.

"Annabe-"

"So it's all true then? Were you ever planning on telling me?" She cut him off, a wave of anger washing over her.

She couldn't believe that he would do something like that. She was angry but she was also a bit disappointed. A tiny part of her had wished Luke would've denied it but after seeing his guilt stricken face she knew he was admitting to it. For years Annabeth had the biggest crush on him and the one year where that crush could have turned into something more she found out how much of a player he was. Her life just didn't seem fair.

"Annabeth please-"

"I cared about you Luke! I thought you were different! But if I'm just another girl you're planning to put in your book then you can forget it." She said harshly.

She started to get up but Luke stopped her, grabbing her hand softly. For some stupid reason, Annabeth couldn't find it in her to yank her hand away. She looked at him with an expression of disappointment and he stared dejectedly back at her. She broke out of the trance, standing up and taking her hand out of his. Luke stood up as well, stopping her again by turning her shoulder to him.

"I threw the book away a long time ago! Annabeth you have to believe me, it's different with you." He tried desperately. He saw that he'd gotten her attention so he continued.

“I was in a dark place Blondie. Imagine one day you’re in a relationship and everything is going so well but then the next you find out the girl you’re in love with is moving and doesn’t even want to try to make long distance work. After everything with Reyna I wanted nothing more than to be myself again but I couldn’t. She destroyed my life Annabeth. The term heartbroken doesn’t even begin to describe how I felt. I wanted a distraction so that’s why I made the book and I promise you, it’s my biggest regret.”

“And why should I trust you?”

“I told you, it’s different with you. Being with you has changed me Annabeth, more than you’ll ever know. I never want to go back to being that guy again and I *swear* to you I would never treat you like that.”

Despite everything he had done, Annabeth felt a part of her that wanted to forgive him. She hated that she could never just walk away from him. Luke saw the thoughtful look on her face. He took a step closer towards her cautiously. He slowly lifted up one of his hands to tuck a stray piece of hair behind her ear and she looked at him.

“I really like you Annabeth. You can’t tell me you don’t feel anything between us because we both know something’s there. Listen I’ve tried, I really have but I don’t think I can just be your friend.”

“Luke-”

“I know you’re upset with me and that’s the last thing you want to hear right now but I just had to tell you. If you were to never speak to me again I would want you to know.” He said in a hushed tone. His hand rested on her cheek as he looked at her intensely. She saw him mentally decide on something. He took another step towards her and Annabeth didn’t move.

“Just say no if you want me to stop.” He whispered lowly, lowering his head slowly towards her.

She could feel his breath on her face as she stayed quiet. Her logic was telling her to walk away but her emotions were going haywire. Why the hell couldn’t she say no? She didn’t have any more time to think it over because suddenly his lips were on hers.

The kiss was short, only lasting about four seconds. His lips were warm and he kept his hand on her cheek gently. She was the one to pull away. They stayed at a close proximity for a beat but then Annabeth took a step back, removing his hand from her cheek.

“...I-I don’t know what I feel. I just need some time to figure everything out.” She admitted honestly, now more confused than ever about her feelings. Luke nodded understandingly.

“Take all the time you need. I’ll be here.”

“Wow” Thalia said.

Annabeth groaned, burying her head in her hands. She readjusted her position on the bed so she was sitting up. Thalia was sitting next to her with her legs hanging over the side of the bed. The blonde had gone over to her best friend’s house after practice and just finished explaining everything that happened in Central Park with Luke that morning and her realization when she was with Percy on the rooftop. She left out some of the details involving the super specific factors of who Reyna was. She’d promised Percy she wouldn’t tell and she intended to keep that promise.

“So I guess Will was right. There’s a Team Percy and a Team Luke after all.” Thalia joked. Annabeth responded by grabbing a pillow from behind her and smacking her over the head with it.

“What am I going to do Thals?”

“Well do you want to be with Luke?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you want to be with Percy?”

“I don’t know!” She screamed annoyed. Thalia stuck her hands up in surrender.

“Jeez it was just a question Annie.”

“Sorry I just, I’m so confused and frustrated.” She sighed in annoyance. Thalia placed a hand on Annabeth’s shoulder comfortingly.

“Well I have no experience in these kinds of situations but since you’re my best friend and I love you I’ll try. I’ve heard it’s good to list the reasons why you like each person. Lets start with Luke. What do you like about him?” Thalia began.

“Well...I like that he’s bold. He’s not afraid to tell you how he feels. He’s got a great personality not to mention he’s not exactly bad looking. He’s friendly and considerate. During our tutoring sessions he brings me coffee sometimes before getting to work, which is another reason I like him, he’s determined and hardworking. We have a lot of things in common and even though he’s had a rough past he seems like someone you can rely on.”

“And Percy?” Thalia asked once she had finished.

Annabeth sighed. “Percy’s a different story. He never fails to make me laugh even when I’m really upset. From the outside he doesn’t show it but he’s got a vulnerable side. He’s sweet and trustworthy and he’s got these gorgeous sea green eyes that can put you into a trance. Again in terms of physical appearance, he’s very attractive. He’s strong both mentally and physically. I feel like when I’m with him I can tell him anything and he’ll just listen. He’s loyal and even though we’re almost complete opposites we have similar family issues so I can relate to him on a level I can’t with anyone else.”

Thalia was about to say something when Annabeth cut off the silence that had surrounded them, still not done with what she was going to say.

“But a part of me feels like being with Luke would be simpler and easier.”

“Why?” Thalia said confused. If anything she thought her friend would have said that about Percy and not Luke.

“Well for starters Percy and I disagree on a lot of things and we haven’t exactly had the best history. And then there’s the whole thing about not knowing if he feels the same way-”

“Okay let me stop you right there. Now we both know I’m not the most observant person on the planet but I’ve seen the way Percy acts around you. He generally smiles more around you and he stares at you with this look I’ve never seen him use before. Trust me, it’s really weird considering he’s my cousin for Gods sake but he likes you no question about it.”

Annabeth smiled a little after hearing her friend’s explanation. She was glad she had confided in Thalia. She always tried to help even when she had no experience with the subject. No one else knew about her and Luke or her and Percy except Thalia.

Annabeth laughed light heartedly. "I didn't even realize how weird it must be since he's your cousin. Not to mention, Piper's dating your brother."

Thalia smiled, happy that she'd managed to somehow cheer up her best friend. She punched the blonde girl in the shoulder as she laughed.

"Shut up"

They sat in a comfortable silence as Annabeth went over everything in her head. She still had no idea what she was going to do. She thought everything was going to be easier once she'd acknowledged that she liked Percy but it just got ten times harder once Luke had admitted his feelings to her and then kissed her. She didn't even have time to process how she felt when he kissed her, it was so sudden and she was supposed to be mad at him. Having to see them at school everyday was going to be hard enough but then she also had tutoring sessions with Luke and practice every night at the same time as Percy's hockey practice.

"Annabeth... if it helps you should know that Percy really is a great guy. If you want to be with him be *sure* that you want to. He's always been my annoying cousin but I love him and he's been through a lot in his life. I'd hate to see him get hurt again." Thalia said truthfully.

Annabeth nodded slowly, taking her friend's hand and giving it a small squeeze. Thalia knew what happened with Percy and his father and she figured Percy must've told her at least something about Reyna as well. Still, something in her tone of voice made it sound like there was even more to Percy's back story than just that but she didn't bring it up.

"I never realized how close you guys were."

Thalia nodded. "Nico, Jason, Percy, and I were practically inseparable when we were younger. We did everything together and then we just kind of all made friends and grew apart. Nico and I stayed pretty close but once high school hit Percy became part of the popular group. I never thought I'd get a glimpse of the old him again but whenever he's with you I see it." Annabeth felt her face flush at the last sentence but smiled at her friend.

"Now I can't say much for Luke because I don't know him that well but from what you've told me he's already managed to break your trust twice. I'm not going to tell you who you should be with because it's your decision but be careful. I just hope that whoever it is they make you happy Annie."

Annabeth leaned over and hugged Thalia tightly. The choppy haired girl returned the embrace just as tightly. "Thanks Thals."

They stayed like that for a while but then the grey-eyed girl became curious about something Thalia had mentioned. They pulled out of the embrace.

"What was Percy like before he changed?"

Thalia smiled. "Like he is with you now. Funny, easy-going and caring."

Thalia grinned. "I remember this one time when we were kids our families got together for a dinner. After we ate Jason, Nico, Percy, and I walked to the park around the block from his house. It was Percy's idea to play Marco polo so we spent two hours climbing all over the playground equipment. When Nico was it, for some stupid reason I climbed on top of the plastic play tunnel, which was pretty high and when I went to move away from Nico I slipped and fell. I landed pretty hard on the mulch and when I tried to get up my left ankle hurt like hell. I started crying because I

couldn't walk and that's when we stopped playing the game. They all knew I hardly ever cried so they rushed over to help me and when I told them I couldn't put weight on my ankle Percy was the first one to act."

Annabeth listened intently to the story. Thalia smiled as she remembered the memory before continuing.

"He let me get on his back and for the whole walk home he carried me piggyback style. He asked me several times if I was doing ok even after I'd stopped crying. He kept blaming himself for the whole thing because it had been his idea to play Marco polo even though it was me who'd decided to get on top of the tunnel in the first place. When we got home he insisted on helping to get me ice and a bandage for my sprained ankle and he didn't leave my side for the rest of the evening."

Annabeth couldn't help it. She smiled widely after Thalia had finished the story.

"That's so sweet." She complimented, her heart warming at the cute childhood story. She tried to imagine a young Percy acting like a caring older brother towards Thalia and she found it to be pretty easy to picture.

The two girls spent the rest of the afternoon laughing and catching up about anything and everything. It had been a while since they'd had an afternoon together just the two of them. Annabeth was grateful to have a friend like her.

"I can't get her out of my head man." Percy sighed deeply.

Jason looked at him sympathetically as he finished typing up something on his laptop. Percy was laid down on his bed throwing a small rubber ball against the wall repeatedly after catching it each time. The two of them were taking a break from working on their school project at Percy's house. Being the kind of students they were, they'd procrastinated on the project and now had one day to finish the assignment.

Jason placed his computer on the desk nearby before turning to the green-eyed boy. "I'm guessing this is about Annabeth?"

When Percy didn't say anything Jason knew the answer was yes. Percy explained his night with Annabeth on the roof of the ice rink and Jason listened closely. He knew his friend was developing feelings for the girl but he didn't know how much they had progressed.

"Seeing her with Luke at the game, I just kind of...snapped." Percy began.

"That's called jealousy Perce." Percy glared in his direction before resuming his action of throwing the ball against the wall.

"And then when we were up on the roof and I convinced her to sit on the ledge I couldn't, for the life of me, stop staring at her. It was like I was in some sort of trance or something." He chose to leave out the details of when he and Annabeth talked about the feud with Luke and she'd grabbed his hand comfortingly.

Jason chuckled. "I don't get you dude."

Percy looked at him, his eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "What?"

"Well clearly you really like her yet you haven't asked her out yet. Why?"

Percy groaned. "It's not that simple I told you."

"Sure it is. So what if Castellán's also got a thing for her? You don't know that she likes him back."

"I also don't know if she sees me that way." Percy pointed out.

"That kind of thing has never stopped you before. I'm starting to think this is a lot bigger than just Luke liking her too." Jason said, grabbing Percy's attention. It was silent for a beat and then Percy sighed.

"Let's just say I've had my heart broken before and I don't know if I can go through that kind of thing again." He mumbled. Jason decided not to question him about it anymore.

"You can't live with that fear forever Perce. Annabeth's a great girl and she makes you happy so go for it."

Percy thought carefully over his friend's words. He knew Jason was right. He couldn't live with the fear of getting his heart broken forever. Eventually he was going to have to get over it and a good way to start was to tell Annabeth how he felt. He had no idea how or when he was going to tell her but it had to be sooner rather than later. The competition's weekend was coming up next weekend and since the Trident's team had qualified they were all going together. Two days filled with skating and no Luke. It would be the perfect time to tell her how he felt. That is, if he didn't chicken out at the last second like he usually did around her.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22

Annabeth hurriedly grabbed her black high top converse, pulling them on her feet and hoping up and down as she tried to lace them up. Her toothbrush hung out of her mouth as she held it there. She quickly finished putting on her shoes and then went back to her bathroom to spit out her toothpaste in the sink.

She couldn't believe she'd woken up late on one of the most important mornings she needed to be up. It was Friday morning and the day the figure skaters and the hockey team were going to Vermont for the weekend for regionals and the semi-finals. They were supposed to meet at Goode by 8:00am. It was currently 7:50am and Annabeth was still running around her bedroom trying to get ready. Thank the Gods she'd packed the night before because it saved a lot of time.

She observed her outfit in the mirror. She wore a simple white Adidas shirt with the logo in black followed by a pair of black joggers and her high tops. She pulled on a black jacket and decided to leave her hair down. She quickly grabbed her duffle bag that held her skating stuff in it and a small backpack that had her packed clothes in it.

She rushed down the stairs two at a time and saw her mother waiting for her in the kitchen. She was going to be dropped off at the school. She took a bite out of a piece of toast from the counter and then the two of them headed out to the car. She put her stuff in the back of the car and then they were off.

Percy placed another luggage into the storage area of the bus before turning around to take another one from the next person behind him. He'd offered to help pack up the bus with everyone's stuff while they got on the charter bus. Actually, Coach Hedge had made him but he knew better than to question the guy.

A few minutes passed before he found Rachel standing in front of him. She had a matching pink set of four different sized suitcases around her that were all filled to the brim. She smiled at him and batted her eyelashes but before she could say anything Christina approached them.

"Rachel we're only going to be gone for a couple days. Do you really need all that stuff?"

Rachel stared at her offended. "Yes! I would've brought more too but you said only the essentials."

This is her version of essentials? Percy thought.

He swore he saw Christina roll her eyes when the redhead wasn't looking before she gave Percy a sympathetic look for having to load all of it onto the bus. When she walked away from them Rachel went back to smiling flirtatiously towards him. Being the nice guy he was, he smiled half-heartedly back towards her and then started to load her pink suitcases onto the bus. He nearly lost his balance when he picked the first one up.

What the heck did she have in there, rocks?

Rachel didn't leave to get on the bus while he loaded her luggage like everyone else had. She stood in front of him in her red heels that were practically the same shade as her lipstick. After a couple seconds she started up a conversation.

“So are you excited for the big game?” She asked, twisting a piece of her hair in between her fingertips. Not wanting to be rude, Percy spoke.

“Yeah. Although the team we’re playing is really good. They haven’t lost a game either so it’s nerve-racking.”

“Hmm” Rachel hummed. She seemed to be uninterested in the topic, which Percy thought was weird considering she’d asked the question.

“Well I’m sure you’ll do great. I mean of course you’ll do great, you’re like the star player.” She said.

“Thanks. It is a team sport though so it’s not just me playing. We’ve all got to play together and work with each other.” He responded politely. Rachel seemed bored with his answer.

“Yeah, whatever. So I’ll save you a seat on the bus?”

Percy internally panicked. Six hours on a bus next to her would be enough time to drive him insane.

“Uh-”

“Great!” She cut him off. She quickly got on the bus before he could say anything. He groaned, what did he do to deserve that? He was now dreading the moment he would have to get on the bus.

He helped a few more people with their things before Hedge told him he’d take over and that he should find a seat on the bus. Guess he hadn’t heard that a certain redhead was saving him a spot. He reluctantly climbed up the steps to get on the bus and was met with the faces of several team members and figure skaters. He saw Jason seated next to Piper, Leo sitting by himself, and Calypso seated with...Thalia?

“Thalia? What are you doing here?” He questioned when he saw her.

“Please. You didn’t think I’d miss my best friend’s regional competition did you? Oh and your game too of course.” She added later. Percy smiled and rolled his eyes at his cousin.

“We all came.”

“We?” Percy asked again. She pointed to her left where Will and Nico were seated together in a row.

They waved to him and the green-eyed boy was beyond confused. He hadn’t even seen them when he was loading up the bus but then again, he wasn’t really looking at anyone, just taking their suitcases and tossing them onto the bus.

“How the hell did you all get permission to come?”

Thalia shrugged. “Christina and I are close and let’s just say Hedge owes me a favor. Don’t ask.” Percy decided to let it go. Annabeth sure had a supportive group of friends. He couldn’t say any more because a familiar voice shouted from a few rows near the front of the bus.

“Percy, I saved you a seat!” Her high voice rang out. He didn’t dare look in that direction because he knew he would see Rachel pointing to a spot next to her.

His eyes widened. He looked at Thalia sitting with Calypso who had also heard. Will and Nico

looked at him as well and from the corner of his eye he could sense Jason and Piper looking at him sympathetically and Leo giving him a horror-stricken face. There was one empty seat next to Leo he could take but the redhead seemed persistent as she called him again thinking that he hadn't heard her the first time. He looked pleadingly towards his friends and also Annabeth's.

He has no idea how it all happened. It was like they were all mentally connected and thinking the same thing. All he knew was one second he was trying desperately to think of a reason to not sit with Rachel and then the next everyone had moved seats.

Jason and Piper stayed together but everyone else had shifted. Leo moved up to sit with Calypso (something that made the both of them blush), Thalia took Will's seat next to Nico and Will had walked up to the front to sit next to Rachel. Nico's boyfriend was friends with just about everybody in school so he took the liberty of sitting next to the redhead and Percy had never been so grateful to Will in his life.

Rachel looked a bit confused and disappointed when Will had invited himself to sit with her but she seemed to get over it pretty quickly when Will started talking about the newest episode of some TV show they both watched. Nico on the other hand, glared at Percy for Will moving but Thalia fixed it by flicking his forehead. She whispered something in his ear and Percy could've sworn he'd heard the words 'for Annabeth'. He shook off the thought and made his way to the empty row behind Jason and Piper in the back of the bus that Leo was previously in.

Percy took his seat and as soon as he did he heard someone else get on the bus. Her blonde curls were very hard not to notice so Percy immediately realized it was Annabeth. She was practically out of breath but she still looked gorgeous even in the most casual of outfits. Percy assumed she'd woken up late because usually she was one of the first people at practice everyday. Coach Hedge must have helped her with her bags because she had nothing in her hands.

Percy's heartbeat increased when he realized that the last open seat on the bus other than the two that were reserved for the coaches was next to him. Maybe fate was finally on his side.

Annabeth smiled when she took note of the only open seat left on the bus. It had been a crazy morning and she was thankful she got to sit next to someone she knew well. At the same time, the situation made her nervous because it was Percy. The whole Luke/Percy thing was still fresh in her mind and she was still conflicted on who she wanted to be with. She made her way towards the back of the bus and took the spot next to him. On her way back she could've sworn she saw Thalia wink at her. When she sat down he flashed her his own crooked smile and she felt her stomach get butterflies. He was wearing a white v-neck shirt and some navy-blue joggers. Even wearing that he looked as handsome as ever.

"Hey." She said softly.

"Hey yourself Princess."

Their conversation was stopped short when they heard the familiar sound of Coach Hedge's whistle from the front of the bus. Everyone quieted down and faced the front where Christina and Hedge were standing side by side.

"Everyone is now here so we're ready to go. Let's get one thing straight though, there will be no funny business on this bus! We expect you all to behave like the mature adults you're supposed to be! That means no switching seats, no yelling across the bus, no throwing things and do not call Christina or I for anything unless it's super important. Now, any questions?"

He really wasn't a morning person.

Leo raised his hand. Coach Hedge pointed to him, internally dreading what the Hispanic boy was going to say because it was probably some joke or pun.

“Will we be stopping anywhere?”

Coach Hedge seemed surprised for a second that he’d asked a valid question but his expression quickly changed back into a serious one. Christina spoke before he could respond to the question.

“Yes. When we get to Massachusetts in about three and a half hours we’ll be stopping at a rest area to refuel. That’s the only stop we’ll make and it will be fairly short. Any more questions?” She answered.

When no one said anything the two coaches nodded to the bus driver to start leaving while they took the two seats closest to the front of the bus. The silence broke as everyone sparked up conversations with each other and the vehicle started moving.

“Well it looks like you’re stuck with me Hockey Boy.” Annabeth teased, turning to face the person next to her.

“Oh how will I ever survive?” He mocked sarcastically. She laughed and he followed soon after.

“You know I’ve always liked the back of the bus. I feel like there’s more space and you can’t hear everyone else’s conversations when they all talk at once. I could do without a headache right now considering I’ve had the most hectic morning.” She explained.

“Tell me about it. I almost had to sit with Rachel for the six hour trip.” He proceeded to tell her about their conversation while he was putting her bags onto the bus.

Annabeth would’ve done a spit take if she’d had water with her. She covered her mouth to stop herself from laughing at his expression of terror. Percy looked over towards her in mock hurt.

“Well I’m glad you think my almost miserable experience is funny Princess.”

“Sorry. Alright you win on the worst morning contest.” She said after she’d calmed down.

“Mmmhmm” Percy agreed.

They sat in a peaceful silence for a minute while looking out the window. Percy had the window seat but she was still close enough that she could see the road outside. He interrupted her thoughts.

“Hey Princess?”

“Hmm?” Annabeth asked, now completely used to the nickname he’d given her so long ago.

“Are you ticklish?”

Annabeth froze. She wasn’t expecting him to ask such an out of the blue question like that. She cleared her throat and tried to be cool on the outside. She hoped he didn’t catch her hesitation.

“No” She stated simply.

“You’re lying.” He turned back towards her, a mischievous grin making its way onto his face.

“I am not!” She protested even though she really was lying.

“Well there’s only one way to find out.” Annabeth panicked at his words. She had nowhere to

move to get away from him considering they were on a bus.

“Jackson I swear to God.” She warned, putting on the harshest glare she could muster. He raised his hands a second later to indicate he wasn’t going to tickle her.

“Ok, ok. I guess I’ll just have to take your word for it.”

Annabeth breathed a sigh of relief. She thought it was weird that he’d given up so quickly, that wasn’t like him. She tried not to think about it much as she readjusted her position.

She didn’t have much time to react when he suddenly poked her in the stomach. She shrieked and he laughed at her expression of surprise. He gave her a knowing look and she slapped his shoulder lightly. It was going to be a long ride.

“Alright everyone has to be back on the bus in twenty minutes. There’s a mini-mart here if you want to get some food for the remainder of the ride, a bathroom for those of you who don’t want to use the one on this bus, and a small gift shop. If you choose to stay on the bus you can.” Christina explained once the vehicle had stopped so it could refuel.

Almost everyone stood up after the announcement and stepped off the bus. Being in the last row of the bus, Annabeth and Percy were the last ones to get off. As soon as she stepped foot on the hard asphalt Annabeth stretched her arms and legs. They had been sitting for hours.

The two of them noticed Leo, Calypso, and Thalia head over to the tiny grocery store to get some food. Will and Nico walked together to the bathroom in the other direction.

“Where are you two going?” She heard Percy ask from behind her, addressing Jason and Piper who were standing nearby.

“I think we’re going to check out the gift shop. You guys coming?” Piper offered. Percy looked questionably towards Annabeth who shrugged in response.

“Yeah why not?” Annabeth agreed. They followed Jason and Piper into the small shop.

Upon entering, she saw tons of merchandise that had the name Massachusetts on it. There were key chains, pieces of jewelry, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and stuffed animals. They spread out and walked around for a bit. Annabeth stopped when she made it to the little stand with stuffed animals.

She spotted a small stuffed grey owl. She picked it up and smiled. Owls had always been her favorite animals since she was little. It was soft in her hands but she put it back a moment later and walked over to the mugs. The scene didn’t go unnoticed by a familiar hockey player who was pretending to be busy looking at the key chains. Piper had seen the whole thing as well.

Ten minutes later Annabeth exited the cute little shop with Jason and Piper in tow. Her friend was admiring the pendant necklace Jason had gotten for her. Percy came out a couple minutes later with a hand behind his back. Piper smiled giddily, taking her boyfriend’s hand in hers and heading back to the bus, leaving the two of them outside the shop. Annabeth thought she was acting strange.

She looked questionably towards Percy who still had a hand behind his back. He smiled and then revealed what was in his hand. It was the stuffed owl she had been admiring. He held it out to her and she looked up at him.

“I saw you looking at it.”

She smiled widely, taking the stuffed toy from his hand. "Percy you really didn't have t-"

"I wanted to."

She felt her cheeks heat up as she looked at the owl in her hands. She bit her lip and then looked back up at him. It was such a sweet gesture. She felt her body react before her mind could make sense of it all. She slowly reached up and planted a soft kiss to his cheek. He froze when her lips touched his cheek.

When she stepped back she was sure her face was red. She noticed a faint pink on his cheeks as well. She was never the type of person to make such a bold gesture so she'd surprised even herself.

"Thank you. I love it." She whispered innocently. Percy thought he'd never seen anyone so adorable when they were shy in his life.

He cleared his throat and scratched the back of his head. The stupid grin wouldn't leave his face no matter how much he tried to get rid of it. "Yeah, it was nothing."

She smiled back, nervously tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

"We should uh, probably head back to the bus." She offered after an awkward moment of silence. He nodded and the two of them made their way back. She hugged the small stuffed animal to her chest and bit her lip again to cover up her smile.

"Psst"

"Psst!"

"W-What...Piper?" Calypso mumbled tiredly, seeing her friend trying to get her attention. She must've dozed off when they got back on the bus.

Piper put a finger to her lips to signal her to stay quiet. A majority of the bus seemed to be asleep. It was only the afternoon but they'd been on the road for hours. After the rest stop they must've all had the same plan to try to get some shuteye. She pointed behind her and Calypso noticed the crazy happy look on her face.

"Look" She whispered excitedly.

She followed her gaze to where she was pointing. When she saw what it was she couldn't prevent the smile the spread across her face. She nearly squealed in delight as she took in the adorable scene.

Percy and Annabeth were fast asleep. His back was half turned against the window as he leaned on it, facing Annabeth. The curly-haired blonde herself was sleeping soundly snuggled up against his chest.

One of her hands was splayed across him on his chest near her head. He had one arm protectively wrapped around her body while she used him as her pillow. There wasn't an inch of space between them.

Calypso had to shush Piper to keep the girl from fangirling when Annabeth readjusted her position on his chest and his arm tightened around her in their sleep. She inwardly cooed.

Those two were meant to be together and she hoped they would just admit it to each other already.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23

The bus finally stopped at its final destination, Hestia's Hotel where both teams would be staying for the weekend. When they arrived Percy wasn't expecting to wake up in the position he was in. It certainly wasn't a bad way to wake up in his mind though.

He had his arm wrapped securely around a certain blonde figure skater. Her head was on his chest and he immediately felt his heart rate increase when he looked down at the beautiful sleeping girl. She looked so innocent and carefree. Her long eyelashes stood out against her smooth skin. Her pink lips were just the slightest bit parted and she looked like she had the tiniest of smiles on her face. The fact that she had fallen asleep on him made him grin in happiness as he continued to look down at her.

He really didn't want to disrupt her slumber but he knew at any moment their coaches were going to go over the ground rules for the hotel arrangements and then they were going to have to get their room keys and luggage. Reluctantly, he used the arm that was around her to poke her lightly.

She mumbled something incoherently in her sleep and scrunched her eyebrows together. She made a cute little whining sound before nuzzling her face further into what she didn't know was Percy's chest. He chuckled, his chest rumbling as Annabeth readjusted her position so she could be even more snuggled into him than before.

He could see other people starting to wake up in the rows in front of them. He doubted Annabeth wanted to be woken up by Coach Hedge's yelling so he tried again, this time trying something else.

"Rise and shine sleeping beauty." He whispered lowly near her ear.

He heard her grumble but it was louder this time. Her eyelids slowly fluttered open, getting used to the bright light shining in from the window. She felt someone staring at her and rubbed her eyes sleepily. She kept her head on what she assumed was a pillow and tilted her head up. It took her a full five seconds to realize what she was sleeping on, or more specifically *who*.

Her grey eyes met his sea green ones as they stared at one another. Percy's smile slowly faded as he kept his gaze locked with hers. Her grey orbs captivated him. In that moment time seemed frozen. Their faces were incredibly close and he smelled like a fresh sea breeze. She noticed that his hair was messier than it usually was due to him sleeping and she couldn't deny that it made him even more good looking. It was infuriating. She felt his arm around her, making tiny electric shocks run through her.

"Hey" He whispered, not breaking eye contact.

"H-hi" She stuttered out, getting lost in his sea green irises.

Everything around them felt like a blur to her. She tuned out the many different conversations people were having as they started to wake up and she knew they were within eyesight of her closest friends but it didn't matter to her in that moment if they were looking at the two of them. Percy's gaze flickered from staring into her eyes to her lips before going back to her eyes. Her breath caught in her throat. Was he going to kiss her? Did she want him to kiss her?

"Alright everybody listen up!" Coach Hedge shouted, blowing his whistle loudly to get their attention.

Annabeth and Percy jerked away from each other. He blushed but she was sure it was nothing compared to the shade of red on her cheeks. Immediately she realized how much she missed the warmth he gave off. He scratched the back of his neck nervously and she faced forward to listen in attempt to distract herself from her racing heart.

“We’ve arrived at where we’ll be staying for the next two nights and in a few minutes we’ll be going in but first we have to establish some ground rules.” Christina started.

“It’s three people per room. Hedge and I will be checking but for every room we expect there to be three girls or three boys. The only case in which we will make an exception is for Thalia, Will and Nico who agreed to share a room and are here to support both teams. We’ve reserved a whole floor of rooms and they’re all the same. Hedge and I will each have our own rooms and we’ll be checking in on you all from time to time so don’t try anything. Alright, with that said, everyone off the bus!”

Once again, Annabeth and Percy were the last two off the bus. She refused to look at him, knowing that if she did she’d immediately start blushing again. She hoped the awkward air surrounding them would go away soon but in the meantime she would have time to think about what happened. Would they have kissed if their moment hadn’t been interrupted? What if she’d just imagined it and Percy hadn’t switched his gaze to look at her lips? She was brought out of her thoughts when Calypso and Piper walked up to her after she got off the bus. They were both smirking at her weirdly but she didn’t want to question it right now. The last thing she wanted to deal with was teasing concerning her and Percy.

They agreed upon sharing a room together and followed everyone else into the hotel after getting their bags. Annabeth caught a glimpse of Percy standing with Jason and Leo not too far ahead of them. He caught her gaze and she smiled shyly back at him before quickly turning away.

She stared in awe of the place when she entered. It was absolutely beautiful. Whoever had been the architect to design the place had done a very nice job. Their footsteps echoed as they walked through the hotel lobby on the marble flooring. There were nice patterns along the walls and a chandelier that hung above them. The place was very well lit and there was plenty of space for them to wait in the seating area while their coaches checked them in. It was like they were in a ballroom. She couldn’t believe they were staying at such a nice hotel but it was better not to question it.

When all the groups of three were formed and the room keys were given out, everyone practically rushed to the elevator to get up to the eighth floor where they would be staying. If the lobby was that nice Annabeth couldn’t wait to see what the rooms looked like.

She wasn’t disappointed when she unlocked the door to the hotel room she would be staying at with Piper and Calypso. It was very spacious having two full size beds and a pull-out couch. She thought they were going to have to share beds but apparently not.

“Wow, this is nicer than my bedroom!” Calypso said excitedly.

“I could get used to this.” Piper exclaimed, sighing and falling back against one of the clean well-made beds. Annabeth rolled her eyes at her friends, setting her stuff down near the couch.

“I can take the couch.” She offered. Piper sat up from the bed and Calypso turned towards her.

“Are you sure Annabeth? I’ll sleep there if you want one of the beds.” The caramel-colored hair girl said.

“No it’s ok. It’s a couch bed anyway. I’ll be fine.” She waved her off, smiling thankfully at her and exploring the room more.

Behind the white sheer curtains on the other side of the room was the window. They had a nice view of the small town they were surrounded by. The bathroom had plenty of room for the three of them to get ready in the mornings and there was a mirror by the two sinks. There was a full-length mirror outside the bathroom as well so they would be able to see their whole outfit. The color scheme of the room as a whole was light shades consisting of white, black and brown.

Before she could admire the room any longer, there was a series of knocks on the door. Realizing that Piper and Calypso were too occupied ogling the room, she slowly walked over to the door and twisted the handle.

Because of the position she had woken up in on the bus and their moment, she felt her cheeks slightly warm at the sight of him standing in front of the door. His green eyes stared at her for a few seconds and he smiled. She noticed that his hair was messier than usual from what she assumed was their sleep and she couldn’t help but think about what it would feel like to run her fingers through it.

“Well I guess we’re neighbors for the weekend Princess.” He said. She crossed her arms on her chest and looked at him suspiciously. She didn’t believe that he had just randomly chosen the room next to hers.

“Why do I feel like you meant for that to happen so you could annoy me all weekend?” She questioned. He laughed, leaning against the doorway.

“Alright it wasn’t an accident, I’ll give you that. But it wasn’t me I swear. Jason practically shoved Leo and I into the room right next to yours when he saw Piper walk in.”

This time she laughed, breaking her composure as she tried to imagine Thalia’s brother aggressively pushing the two of them inside a room. She didn’t notice Piper and Calypso slowly getting up from the comfy mattresses behind her.

“Perce, stop flirting with the blonde and get to the point already!” She jumped when she heard the familiar voice followed by Leo and Jason coming out of the room next door and standing beside Percy.

“What’s going on?” Piper inquired from behind her. Again, Annabeth jumped when she heard her speak, not knowing the two of them had gotten up.

Piper smiled when she saw Jason and he returned it. She even noticed Calypso get a nervous look on her face when she noticed Leo standing in the doorway. Not wanting to disrupt other guests at the hotel with all the commotion, Annabeth opened the door a bit wider and invited the three males into their room. Once they were all seated and comfortable, Leo was the first one to speak up.

“What Percy was supposed to ask you all before he got distracted was if you wanted to check out the indoor pool with us before the team dinner at 7.” He said, staring pointedly towards Percy who had a tinge of pink on his cheeks.

“Yeah that sounds fun. Meet back here in ten minutes?” Piper announced, speaking for the three of them. Everyone nodded in agreement and then the three boys left their room to go change.

Annabeth was glad Christina had told them ahead of time there was going to be a pool at the hotel they were staying at. They had all brought swimsuits. If she was being honest, going to the pool

hadn't been something she was that excited about. It wasn't that she didn't like swimming, she did. It was the fact that when she was packing the only swimsuit she had that still fit her or wasn't ruined was her dark grey bikini. She never wore bikini's, only one-piece swimsuits but that one had been a gift from her aunt. She was really self-conscious so she'd never worn it but she packed it because she had no time to go out and buy another bathing suit. Besides, who would be selling them in the winter? She hesitantly pulled on the swimsuit and stared at her reflection in the full-length mirror. Piper walked up a second later in her red bikini that had been covered with some shorts and a shirt.

"Annabeth, stop fussing would you? You've got an awesome body, you need to show it off more!" Piper scolded, smacking her hand away from covering her stomach. Calypso nodded in agreement.

"Percy's going to love it!" The younger girl squealed. Annabeth stopped looking in the mirror, spinning around to face Calypso with wide eyes.

"I-um I...listen, what happened on the bus was...nothing?" She said, not even convincing herself at that point. She knew they had seen her asleep on Percy. Who knew how long they'd been sleeping like that.

The two girls sighed in exasperation. "I feel like we have this conversation too often. Annabeth we know you like him, he likes you too. And he's not going to be able to keep his eyes off of you when he sees you in *that*, trust us."

Annabeth blushed at the thought. She didn't know how to respond to that. She grabbed a loose tank top and some shorts to go over her swimsuit. Right when the three of them had slipped into some flip-flops the guys knocked on their door. They stood in the doorway dressed for the pool in flip-flops, swim trunks and t-shirts.

"Shall we go to the pool ladies?" Leo said sarcastically in a weird accent.

The pool was practically deserted when they got there. The only two people there seemed to be a couple around the same age as them. Annabeth wondered if they were staying at the hotel for the same reasons they were. The girl had a light brown complexion and curly brown hair while the boy next to her had a strong figure and short black hair. When the six of them had walked in she hadn't been expecting them to come up to them and introduce themselves after they had put their stuff on lounge chairs.

"Hi, I'm Hazel. This is my boyfriend Frank. Are you guys here for the game too?" The African American girl asked nicely.

"Yeah. Well actually we're here for the skating competition tomorrow but also the game on Sunday. We're skating and they're playing in the hockey game." Calypso explained, gesturing to the three of them and then pointing towards the guys.

"Ahh so you're part of my competition then." The male next to Hazel commented jokingly, looking towards Percy and the others. Now that they were standing in front of them, she could see their features much better.

Hazel had warm inviting eyes and a kind smile. She practically radiated friendliness and positivity. Frank had a distinct muscular form from the neck down while his facial features looked more childish and young. In other words, he had a baby face. He seemed to be at least part Asian and based on the way he was standing protectively beside Hazel you could tell he really cared for her.

“You’re playing on the Bears team Sunday?” Percy asked.

Frank nodded. “Yeah. The whole team’s staying here like you guys. Hazel’s just here for support.” He smiled down at her and she blushed. They were an adorable couple.

While the others got into the pool with Hazel and Frank, Annabeth decided to just relax on the lounge chair with her towel. Piper gave her a look when she saw that Annabeth hadn’t even taken off her cover clothes to show off her bikini. Smirking sarcastically, the blonde went back to reading the book she had brought in the chair by the pool’s edge. She heard her friends talking to Hazel and Frank in the background.

Her peaceful relaxation lasted all of two minutes before a certain hockey player decided to disrupt her.

“Hey Princess, why aren’t you in the water?” He asked, lifting himself over the edge of the pool to get out.

Annabeth sighed, stopping mid sentence in her reading to look over at him. Her breath hitched when she saw him. She hadn’t seen him get into the pool in the first place but now she could see him up closely. He was soaked from head to toe, shirtless with water dripping on his skin. He had a six pack and strong bicep muscles. She tried to look him in the eye but as soon as she’d looked over her eyes were immediately drawn to his muscular stature. First the gorgeous eyes and hair and now he had to go on and have an amazing body too.

Percy noticed her staring. He smirked at her, his eyebrows lifting teasingly but stayed silent. She drew her attention away from him and back down to her book, not looking up at him as she answered.

“Don’t feel like it.” She stated plainly. Percy wasn’t having that answer.

“Come on. When else are you going to get to go to the pool when it’s snowing outside?” He begged, referring to the fact that there was snow on the ground in the small area of Vermont they were in.

“There are indoor pools in New York too Hockey Boy. I’m sure one day I’ll swim when it’s snowing outside.” She replied, not giving in to his begging and trying to continue her book. She’d now read the same sentence at least five times.

“Well this is Vermont. Either you get in or I throw you in Princess.” He said in a playfully but totally serious kind of way. This caused Annabeth to look up again from her book. She managed to refrain herself from staring at his chest again, but it was *very* difficult.

“You wouldn’t”

“Oh I think we both know I would.” He said, taking a step towards her.

Annabeth sighed in exasperation. “Fine. I’ll get in for a few minutes and that’s it.” Percy smiled in triumph, turning back around to jump into the water himself.

Annabeth hesitantly took off her shorts and top after putting her book away, revealing the bikini underneath. As soon as she’d turned around to the pool she felt a pair of eyes on her. She nervously held her wrist with one hand over her stomach in attempt to hide her skin as best she could. She knew if Piper or Calypso were next to her right now they’d slap her hand away but they were preoccupied talking with Hazel near the shallow end of the pool.

Percy's heart stopped when he saw the blonde strip from her tank top and shorts. Dear Gods she was wearing a grey bikini. It fit her perfectly, showing off her nice curves and long legs. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't stop himself from giving her a once over. He was a guy after all. All that figure skating was certainly paying off. She was absolutely flawless in his mind.

"Perce close your mouth, you're drooling." Leo whispered from next to him in the water before diving back under the water as Annabeth turned around to face the pool.

He must've been staring for a while because right after Leo's comment her eyes caught his. He blushed, clearing his throat as she got closer to the waters edge. It was taking a lot of self-restraint for him not to look at her.

Annabeth hesitantly dipped her toe into the water by the edge. She immediately took her foot out when the icy cold water made contact with her skin. She had no idea how everyone was swimming in water so cold.

"That's freezing!" She screeched. Being the only one close enough to hear her, Percy swam closer to where she was outside the pool.

"Well it's not a hot tub Princess. Besides, you get used to it pretty fast." He said. Annabeth shook her head back and forth, staring down at the boy in front of her treading water in the deep end.

"No way. I'm not going in." She decided, turning back around to the lounge chair with her stuff. Percy was out of the water faster than the speed of light once he'd heard her.

"You said you'd go in!"

"Jackson it's like ice water. There's no way I'm going in there." She tried to look anywhere but at his muscles when he was standing in front of her again.

"Well I did warn you." Percy said in the next second.

Annabeth's eyes widened in alarm. She knew exactly what he was referring to. Before he could take another step she increased the distance between them. She ran on the concrete area outside the pools edge, just barely escaping his grip. She heard him running after her.

"If I slip I'm blaming you Hockey Boy!" She yelled, passing another sign that said specifically no running. She heard him laugh at her comment from behind her.

"You're getting in one way or another Chase!"

His voice got closer to her and before she knew it a strong pair of arms wrapped around her bare stomach from behind. She felt goose bumps on her skin when the cold pool water on his skin transferred to hers. She yelped in protest.

"Jackson! Let go of me right now!" She demanded, looking down at the deep end of the pool that was just a couple feet in front of them. He chuckled and tightened his grip on her while she tried to ignore the rush of electricity shooting through her body.

"Hmm I don't think I will. We're jumping together Princess."

"Percy" She warned in the most intimidating voice she could muster.

He didn't pay her any attention, instead going against her protests and lifting her over his shoulder fireman style. She struggled to get free but couldn't. She screamed before they made contact with

the water.

When they resurfaced she saw Percy laughing at her expression. She narrowed her eyes, currently feeling numb all over from the pool as they treaded water across from each other.

“See that wasn’t so bad was it?” He asked her. Her response was to splash him aggressively. He had the nerve to smile at her and for some stupid reason her angry expression was replaced with a smiling face.

“Aww how cute. Those two make a great couple.” Hazel cooed as she watched the whole scene unfold before the two of them jumped into the water.

“Yeah, only they’re not together.” Calypso said, observing the scene herself.

“Really?” Hazel asked astonished. To anyone who didn’t know them they sure acted like a couple. The way he looked at her and her blush said otherwise.

Piper nodded. “It’s so obvious they like each other yet they’re both scared to tell the other person.”

“Oh I hear that. Frank and I were just like that before he asked me out. I’m sure with a little time they’ll be together.” She said, looking over towards her boyfriend who was in the middle of a conversation with some of the other guys from the Trident’s team.

“Yeah, I hope so...Annabeth deserves to be happy.” Piper said, turning away from the scene of the blonde and the green-eyed boy in the middle of a splash war.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

“Pipes will you chill out? You’re making me nervous now.” Calypso said, fiddling with her hands in her lap. Piper stopped pacing back and forth and sat down on the bench, shaking her leg up and down rapidly. Annabeth sighed, turning to face the two girls sitting next to her.

“You guys will do great. I’ve seen your routines and they’re solid.” She encouraged, momentarily putting aside her own nerves to encourage her friends.

They were changing into their skating outfits with about an hour to go before the start of the regional competition. They were all nervous that was for sure but they always were right before they got on the ice. Annabeth being the somewhat leader of the team, always tried to make the others feel more confident instead of focusing on herself. The same couldn’t be said for Rachel who was probably changing up in her hotel room and caking her face in makeup for the judges.

“Thanks Annabeth. You’re going to do great too. Everyone knows you’re the strongest skater on the team. Hell even Rachel and her minions know it they just don’t want to admit it.” Piper spoke up.

Annabeth blushed, looking down at the floor modestly. She didn’t like to think of herself the best skater. In her opinion they were all good figure skaters with some of them being stronger at some things than others. Calypso and Piper had been trying to convince her otherwise for years.

“Thanks guys. Now come on, we should probably start heading out.” She helped the other two girls up and grabbed her duffle bag to sling over her shoulder.

All three of them had black Adidas track pants on as well as their zip up jackets with their names sewn into them and some comfortable slides as a cover up for the short dresses they had on underneath to skate in. Calypso’s hair was tied up in a ponytail while Piper left hers down freely and Annabeth had a bun with some strands of hair framing her face.

As the three of them walked out and towards the ice rink they bumped into Rachel who was dressed in a super short pink sparkly uniform. Even though the two had a strong hatred towards one another, when Annabeth saw her she couldn’t deny that she looked pretty with her hair in an up-do and flawless makeup that went with her outfit. She wasn’t wearing anything over top of her uniform and Annabeth found herself admiring the girl for not being afraid to walk around in anything. She could only dream of having that confidence with how insecure she was. Rachel so much as glanced at them before walking right past them and into the ice arena.

Annabeth turned her head back around and smiled when she saw who was coming up to them. Walking in between Leo and Jason, Percy approached her slowly. He was dressed in some dark washed jeans, a fitted dark green t-shirt and his black converse with a jacket. His hair was slightly messy like it always was and he was laughing at something Jason had said, a lopsided smirk making its way onto his face. How did he manage to make even the simplest of clothes look good? Annabeth was seriously starting to think it was unfair how good-looking he was. It certainly hadn’t gone unnoticed by the other girls competing today who were staring at Percy as if he were a God or something.

When the three guys reached them, Jason greeted Piper with a quick peck on the cheek, which seemed to ease her nerves at least a little. Leo and Calypso talked quietly next to them. She was

blushing as the Latino boy ran a hand through his hair and made a cheesy joke to lighten the mood. The scene was quite adorable. Annabeth gave them a week if not less, until Leo asked the caramel-colored girl out.

“Hey Princess” Percy greeted, taking a step forward so that he was in front of her.

He flashed her a smile that she couldn’t help but return it as they stood at a fairly close distance from each other. Annabeth didn’t miss the wistful sighs from a few skaters around them. They must’ve thought Percy and her were together. The thought made her blush and she broke eye contact with the boy in front of her.

“Hey” She replied shyly.

“You nervous?” He asked her sincerely.

It was so sweet how much he cared. He knew something was up because by this time she should’ve been making some smart remark towards him but she was quiet. He observed the way she was staring shyly at the ground. They were surrounded by a bunch of girls who were competing today and that was just outside the arena, there were probably more skaters inside as well.

“A little” She shrugged like it wasn’t anything to worry about. Percy had been around her so much in the last few weeks that he knew when she was lying. He gave her a skeptical look and when their eyes met again she caved in.

“Fine...I’m really nervous ok Jackson?” She sighed.

He chuckled lightly. Before he had time to think about what he was doing, he reached out and took her hand in his. Annabeth looked up in surprise as his hand encased hers. She couldn’t help but notice how perfect her hand felt in his. There was her girly side acting up again.

“You’re going to be great Princess. Just pretend you’re skating alone with no crowd in front of you. That always seems to work when I’m trying to take a shot on goal.” He reassured her.

She smiled thankfully at him. His advice was pretty clever. She might just have to do that. His sea green eyes stared hopefully at her and she suddenly didn’t feel as panicked as before. She’d been practicing all the jumps and performing them in sync with the music of her routine. She wanted to be a finalist more than anything.

They must have been standing there a lot longer than she thought because the sound of her best friend’s voice brought her out of whatever trance she was in.

“Kelp Head stop hogging Annie will you? Other people want to wish her luck too you know.” Thalia teased her cousin, coming towards the two of them in her usual clothing attire which consisted of everything black.

If Annabeth hadn’t been blushing before she certainly was then. Leave it to Thalia to make embarrassing remarks. She unlatched her hand from Percy’s as her best friend brought her into a hug.

“You’ve got this Annie” Thalia reassured her comfortingly when they separated from the embrace. Annabeth squeezed her arm in thanks before turning so that she was looking at both cousins.

Before she had the chance to say anything else, Christina emerged through the doors of the ice rink looking for the three of them. She saw Calypso and Piper rushing to meet her near the doors.

Annabeth shared one last look with the two people in front of her.

“We’ll see you out there Princess.” Percy gave her another perfect smile before she turned to her coach, running to get to the door and enter the arena.

“Skating next on the ice is Annabeth Chase.”

Annabeth shakily stepped foot onto the ice, making sure she had a smile on her face for the judges. Her short red figure skating dress flowed in the wind behind her as she skated towards the center of the rink. She was the type of girl that despised dressing up in dresses, skirts, and heels but when it came to skating she tried to ignore it because although the outfits were insanely short, they were a part of the sport she loved so much. That was why she tolerated wearing the sparkly short outfits with tights when competitions came around.

She took her starting position, holding her head high and trying not to focus on the table of judges in front of her who would be taking notes while she performed her routine. She stood in place like a statue until the music started.

[Song Tribute-Clocks by Coldplay]

As soon as the music began she started her routine. She focused on simple jumps at first, not wanting to give too much away. The audience soon became a blur to her like it usually did when she was skating.

*The lights go out and I can't be saved
Tides that I tried to swim against
Have brought me down upon my knees
Oh I beg, I beg and plead, singing*

*Come out of the things unsaid
Shoot an apple off my head and a
Trouble that can't be named
A tiger's waiting to be tamed, singing*

You are, you are

The song she had chosen was one of her personal favorites and the judges could definitely tell because she was skating so comfortably. Annabeth got lost in the song, now starting to perform a toe loop followed by a double axel.

*Confusion that never stops
The closing walls and the ticking clocks gonna
Come back and take you home
I could not stop, that you now know, singing*

*Come out upon my seas
Cursed missed opportunities am I
A part of the cure
Or am I part of the disease, singing*

You are, you are

After gathering up enough momentum and speed, Annabeth performed a Lutz and later a triple Lutz, coming down with a crisp landing each time. She smiled genuinely, enjoying the cheers from

the crowd around her.

You are, you are

She came down from landing a flip jump, skating backwards as she smiled towards the judges and the crowd. Her movements were perfectly in sync with the music as she continued to glide along the ice.

You are, you are

She performed another toe loop before attempting another axel. She crossed her skates in front of one another as she changed directions on the ice. She felt the stares of everyone on her but her nerves were completely gone.

And nothing else compares

And nothing else compares

And nothing else compares

She made various movements with her skates so that it looked like she was dancing along with the song. Feeling a high level of confidence, she performed another double axel that hadn't been a part of her routine originally. Christina would probably lecture her for it later but she was having way too much fun. She landed it perfectly.

You are, you are

Home, home, where I wanted to go

Home, home, where I wanted to go

Home, home, where I wanted to go (You are)

Home, home, where I wanted to go (You are)

As the song came to a close she performed a last small series of jumps and spins before skating back towards the center and taking her finishing stance.

The audience cheered deafeningly when the song had ended. Annabeth noticed one person in particular cupping his hands around his mouth to cheer for her as loudly as possible. She smiled when their eyes met as he stuck two fingers in his mouth and whistled loudly. She laughed breathily at his actions as she skated off the rink with the biggest smile on her face.

She was tackled into an embrace by Piper and Calypso as soon as she stepped off the ice. The two of them were in their own skating outfits. Piper wore a soft lilac colored outfit with nude tights and Calypso wore a maroon colored jeweled outfit with nude tights as well. The two of them had performed their routines right before Annabeth. The blonde skater hugged them back tightly, thanking the people around her who were commenting on how well she had skated.

The three girls sat and watched the rest of the skaters perform including Rachel who didn't stumble once. Her performance was near flawless and Annabeth knew by the expressions on the judges that the redhead had secured a spot to the state competition.

It was all over before she knew it. Skaters sat with their coaches nervously awaiting the results of the handful of skaters who would go through to the next round. Christina sat with her four regional skaters as they waited, now wearing their jackets over their outfits and Ugg boots instead of skates because of the cold temperature. Rachel seemed to be overly confident that she was going through meanwhile Annabeth was trying to calm her now beating heart. The silence was killing her and she knew the audience was getting restless as well.

She was so lost in her thoughts that hearing her name being called was like hearing someone speaking while underwater. It was faint and distant. Her whole world stopped when she heard the speakers announce *Annabeth Chase*. Screams from the audience around her brought her out of her shocked state as Piper and Calypso pulled her in for a bone-crushing hug, proud of their close friend. She could vaguely hear the names of a few more people being called, one of them being Rachel Dare. Christina congratulated her next. The whole thing felt like a dream. Never had she gone to states. Last year she'd had the chance but she fell. This season would be different, she was going to make sure of that.

Annabeth knew Piper and Calypso were disappointed when their names hadn't been called but the proud smiles on their faces showed that they had done their best and were glad to have gotten as far as regionals. They were happy for her and Annabeth didn't know what she had done to deserve such amazing friends. They each looped an arm through one of Annabeth's as the three of them walked out together.

Percy fought his way through the crowds of people walking, searching for a specific blonde with a smile on his face. He eventually made it to a bench that was unoccupied, Leo and Jason chasing after him. Using his logic, he stepped up onto the bench to look over the crowds. He laid eyes on her not even a second later. She was walking towards them and had her arms looped through Piper and Calypso's. She was laughing with the biggest smile on her face. She looked absolutely beautiful.

"Jeez Perce. We know you want to see your girl but give me a little warning next time you decide to take off." Leo said, panting exaggeratedly while holding a hand to his heart dramatically.

Percy rolled his eyes, jumping down from the bench. "I wasn't going that fast and she is *not* my girl."

"Not yet" The Hispanic boy coughed under his breath.

Percy rolled his eyes but he couldn't stay annoyed for long because the three girls he had seen making their way towards them suddenly broke through the line of people. They stopped when they saw them.

Piper released Annabeth's arm as Jason pulled her into a comforting hug and pecked her temple after making sure she was ok. Leo surprised everyone when he took ahold of Calypso's hand gently. The caramel-colored girl blushed as did Leo but it was a sweet moment.

Annabeth barely had a second to breath before Percy had practically engulfed her into an embrace, chuckling lowly in her ear as she giggled softly. Since when did Annabeth Chase *giggle*? This boy was clearly affecting her. She felt the familiar feeling of butterflies in her stomach as he lifted her slightly off the ground so that she was an inch taller than him.

"You were great out there Princess" He stated simply as they pulled out of the tight embrace. Annabeth smiled brightly, feeling as if she couldn't form a coherent sentence at the moment because of how close they were. She could smell the natural pine-ocean like scent he gave off and it was making her senses go haywire.

"Thanks Hockey Boy" She finally managed to get out after another moment when they had separated. Percy congratulated Piper and Calypso on their performances as well before all three girls had to go back into the locker rooms to change.

"Dude, you've got it bad." Jason commented once the girls were out of earshot, addressing Percy

whose smile still hadn't fallen from his face.

The hockey player snapped out of it, looking towards Jason who was staring at him knowingly. He punched the blonde boy lightly on the shoulder, still grinning like an idiot.

"Shut up. Like you're not completely wrapped around Piper's finger." He teased, earning a glare from the boy as his cheeks dusted with the color pink. Leo laughed next to them.

"You two are hopeless." The Hispanic boy said. Jason and Percy raised their eyebrows.

"Oh are we? Correct me if I'm wrong Jason but I seem to remember Leo here being the color of a bright red fire truck both before the competition and after when he was with Calypso. Am I wrong?" He sarcastically asked Jason, a hand placed under his chin as if he were thinking.

"Oh no Perce, you're most definitely right. Not to mention he also grabbed her hand a few minutes ago." Jason added.

"Mmm yes how could I forget that?" Percy continued. Both boys faced Leo who was refusing to look them in the eyes.

"You guys are so annoying" He spoke lowly, running a hand through his hair as his face turned red for the third time that day. Percy and Jason relished in their victory of embarrassing their friend. They laughed.

"What's so funny?" Percy heard a familiar voice speak as Annabeth and the others approached them again.

They had changed into normal clothes consisting of joggers and sneakers. He noticed Annabeth had on blue sweats, black low top converse and a plain white t-shirt with her hair in a ponytail instead of a bun now. She had on no makeup once so ever. It was possibly the plainest outfit ever. It showed she was a simple person who didn't care about wearing designer clothes or jewelry all the time and Percy admired that about her.

"Oh nothing" Jason responded suspiciously as he casted a glance towards Leo.

Annabeth let it go. She had no idea what was in the guys' heads nor did she ever want to know.

The six of them decided to find a place to eat for lunch near the hotel to celebrate Annabeth's achievement even though she told them they didn't need to. Before they left, Annabeth, Piper, and Calypso had to go back up to their room to put away their duffle bags filled with figure skating stuff.

The boys followed them up and when Annabeth was distracted, Percy took the duffle bag right off her shoulder and carried it himself. He was surprised at how heavy it was. Annabeth insisted that she was fine carrying it herself but Percy didn't listen, insisting that it was the 'gentlemanly thing to do'. She huffed but eventually gave in and let him take it for her, secretly smiling at his cute behavior.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25

Percy grinned at the girl coming towards him. The hockey gear weighed down on his frame but it didn't bother him because he was used to it. He carried his hockey stick in one hand and his duffle bag in the other. He was with Jason and Leo who were busy talking to Piper and Calypso respectively. They were inside the same rink where the figure skating competition was the day before only now it was split up with two crowds on either side of the stands. The left side was filled with people wearing red and white for the Bears team while the right side was a blur of black and blue representing the Trident's fans. The game would be starting in about a half hour but Annabeth couldn't help fighting her way through the crowds of people in order to see Percy before the game started. Piper and Calypso had the same idea while Thalia, Will, and Nico stayed behind to save their seats since they'd already wished the boys luck.

"Just can't stay away from me can you Chase?" He teased once she had stopped in front of him. He smiled in triumph when his remark managed to make her blush.

"Don't flatter yourself. I was just on my way to grab a drink from the concessions when I bumped into you." She tried to explain. Her words may have said one thing but her eyes said another.

Percy was not convinced. He gave her a look of disbelief to which she broke eye contact with him to stare at the ground shyly. Percy laughed at her excuse, which made her look back up at him.

"I'm hurt! But I should have known. When does the guy ever get the beautiful girl when it's not in a movie?" He stated boldly without thinking. Immediately after the words left his mouth he realized how true he believed the statement.

Annabeth nearly had a heart attack. Had Percy Jackson just called her beautiful? She could feel her cheeks getting redder by the second as he just stared at her like he didn't know what affect his words had on her. She couldn't form a coherent thought. She probably looked like a fish out of water. Her eyes widened and her mouth was open just the slightest bit. It was super embarrassing. She had no idea now long the silence lasted but soon she heard the sound of the announcer saying it was time for the teams to line up.

"That's my cue. I should probably get out there." Percy spoke up, breaking the silence but keeping his eyes locked with hers softly. There was just something about those stormy grey eyes that made him want to stay talking to her for hours.

Annabeth felt a rush of emotions overcome her, her mind still stuck on what he'd said a few seconds ago. He thought she was beautiful and hearing him indirectly tell her made her feel so warm and fuzzy inside. With that in mind, she slowly leaned up and placed a light kiss to his cheek. She could tell she'd taken him off guard because when her lips touched his cheek he froze in surprise. She managed to look him in the eye when she returned to her normal stance and he had a Cheshire smile spread across his handsome features.

"Good luck Hockey Boy." She mumbled as she bit her lip and a smile started fighting its way onto her face.

He looked like he wanted to tell her something. He had this look in his eyes that told her he was conflicted. Right when she thought he was going to say something, Jason and Leo came up behind him and practically dragged him backwards. Annabeth couldn't help it, she laughed as they pulled

and shoved him away from her while he kept his eyes on her.

“Come on lover boy. We’ve got a game to play!” Leo shouted as the two boys pulled their captain away from the blonde.

Piper and Calypso made their way towards Annabeth. She tried to ignore the knowing looks her friends were casting her as she smiled at the ground, her lips still tingling from her bold gesture. The three of them walked back to their seats in the bleachers and Annabeth took her seat beside Thalia who was in the middle of making fun of Nico.

They announced all the starting players for each team a few minutes later once most of the crowd had found a place to stand or sit. Annabeth noticed Frank was one of the starting players for the Bears team. She was sure Hazel was somewhere in the bleachers on the other side cheering him on. Even though she had only met the pair a couple days ago, they had become fast friends with the rest of the group and it was going to be sad seeing them leave.

Annabeth and Thalia cheered loudly when Percy’s name was announced through the speakers and the captain of the Trident’s team skated onto the ice. She could’ve been imagining it but Annabeth swore she saw Percy wink in her direction when they made eye contact. His signature smile made its appearance upon his face like it always did right before a game. She blushed again for probably the thousandth time in the last hour. She blushed way too easily whenever she was around him and she hated it.

When Jason’s name was announced Thalia cheered loudly again for her brother and Piper shouted as well. She of course was wearing his hockey jersey again. There had been an incident earlier before the game started when a girl had been checking out Jason. Annabeth had to physically hold Piper back from attacking the girl but when they’d walked past her and she’d gotten a good look at what Piper was wearing, she had scoffed jealously before walking away. Jason hadn’t seen any of it because they were warming up before the game. Needless to say, Piper was very pleased with the outcome of the situation.

The six friends waited excitedly for the game to begin as the first whistle was finally blown and all eyes were on the ice skating rink.

Will and Nico practically spilled their entire bag of popcorn on the people in front of them when Percy scored a goal for the Trident’s team. Lucky for them, the strangers hadn’t noticed the kernels that were now all over the backs of their clothes and in their hair. Annabeth laughed as she cheered with the rest of her friends in the stands. She had no idea how into the game Will and Nico were.

The two of them had been practically attached at the hip for the entire trip. Annabeth had to hear about their “gag-like behavior” from her best friend every few hours. Thalia’s words not hers. The grey-eyed girl couldn’t help but take note of how much Will had changed Nico. He wasn’t as quiet and reserved with everyone like he had been before. He smiled more and even cracked jokes with everyone when they were together. Of course, no one could beat Leo in that department but it was those small changes that made Annabeth realize how great it was that her friend had found someone like Will Solace.

The score was 2-1 with the Trident’s leading by one. It was an exciting game to watch, probably the most exciting of the season yet. Frank was a strong player for the Bears team and had gotten the first goal for the opposing team which was something Annabeth was guessing Leo wasn’t happy about considering he was the goalie for the Trident’s.

Percy was on fire, skating across the ice like he was practically a part of it. He always managed to impress her when she saw him play. He had such a huge love for the sport anyone could see that by looking at the wide grin on his face and observing the swift movements with which he skated. He knew when he needed to focus on playing defense and when he needed to look for opportunities to score.

Whenever there was a time-out and in between periods, Annabeth could see him talking to his teammates like a proper captain should. He was giving them pep talks and describing strategies that they could use to score on goal. She liked that he wasn't one of those leaders who was self centered and wanted to do everything himself. She used to think he was that kind of person but since getting to know him she realized how wrong she had been. He genuinely cared about his team and passed the puck to them whenever he saw one of them was open. It was a team sport after all but it was just the way he encouraged his teammates and supported them that she found so admiring. They were his second family.

His brow furrowed in concentration as he talked to the rest of the team, strategizing with them. His eyes focused on the others as he listened to their ideas. He ran a hand through his sweaty hair after taking off his gloves and helmet. His sea green eyes showed determination. Annabeth couldn't deny that she found him extremely attractive in that moment. Gods why had she developed feelings for him? A few months ago everything was so much easier when she'd hated him.

Like there usually was in hockey games, two fights broke out between the two different teams. Percy hadn't been in either one but he had gotten annoyed at one point with the captain of the Bears team who Annabeth found out was named Octavian. Percy had ended up knocking him into one of the walls rather harshly but luckily hadn't been called out for it. Annabeth figured he'd deserved it. She couldn't have been a hundred percent sure but it looked like he was taunting Percy and some of the others on the Trident's team.

She spotted Hazel a little more than half way through the game on the other side of the bleachers. She was standing with the rest of the crowd and wearing Frank's red and white number 7 hockey jersey. Her hair was up in a ponytail and she looked adorable grinning down at her boyfriend proudly as she watched him play. She could tell Hazel didn't know much about the sport but she was still there to support him.

Annabeth herself hadn't known much about the sport before she started getting closer to Percy, Jason and Leo. She had initially thought it was mainly of game of speed but it also required a large amount of skill and strategy. She respected the sport more now that she knew how many components it was made up of. It was very different from figure skating but at the same time both sports had a lot in common.

Obviously there was the similarity of the sports being held on the ice but they were also similar because of the brainpower they required. In hockey you had to figure out ways to score on goal and get around the goalie as well as other players using strength and speed. In figure skating you had to think deeply about the routines to perform and fit them with the beat and lyrics of a song. Both sports also had timing as an important factor. There may only be a second long time window to score in a hockey game and in figure skating the landing had to be perfected down to the last millisecond so that the skater would be balanced.

Much to Annabeth's pleasure, the Trident's team won with a final score of 2-3. They were moving on to the state championship game, which would take place in three weeks. The stands erupted into screams when the final buzzer went off. Annabeth couldn't hear herself think. She screamed along with Thalia before the players all shook hands with each other. She noticed Frank congratulating Percy, Jason and Leo specifically on a good game. The teams skated off the ice while Annabeth

and the others exited the arena.

“Jackson!” Annabeth shouted when she saw him a few minutes later outside the locker room now wearing jeans and converse with his hockey jersey still on and no padding.

He smiled, half heartedly responding to the pats on his back and words of congratulations from people as he made his way towards her rather quickly. His eyes shown with happiness at their victory and when he got to her he immediately dropped his duffle bag and hockey stick and lifted her up in his arms. He spun her around once and she laughed in delight and surprise, hugging him back just as tightly as he gripped the material of her blue cotton t-shirt.

“Congrats Hockey Boy” She said sweetly so that only he could hear. His arms tightened ever so slightly around her.

When he put her back on the ground he kept his arms around her. Annabeth felt like a million shockwaves were flowing through her. She knew that Thalia and the others were looking at them but she felt so comfortable and secure in his arms that she didn’t care. He smelled like the ocean and she could feel his breath near her ear as he laughed happily.

They pulled away slowly but Annabeth still kept her hands on his shoulders while he held her steadily with his hands on her waist. She was smiling and so was he. They stared at each other and Annabeth felt like everything around them vanished. Her grey eyes looked deeply into his sea green ones. He pulled her a little closer and she complied. He spoke softly, his thumbs rubbing soothing circles on her waist while she tried desperately to not go weak at the knees.

“Annabeth...I-”

“Wooo! Victory is sweet!”

“States here we come!”

Leo and Jason yelled loudly. Percy was pulled away from her when they practically tackled him. He barely managed to stay upright. He was mad at them for interrupting them but seemed to get over it pretty quickly as he managed to get Leo in a headlock. Annabeth rolled her eyes but smiled at them. Boys will be boys.

Piper pecked Jason’s lips while Calypso hugged Leo sweetly. Thalia and Nico walked over to congratulate their cousin on winning while Will congratulated Jason and Leo first.

“Perce you killed it! Don’t even try to deny it because you were great out there!” Jason complimented once everyone had calmed down a bit.

“Thanks Grace. We all played well though, it wasn’t just me.” He replied modestly as the three of them shared a series of fist bumps.

“Seriously though. You’ve got to show me what your trick is. This is your best season yet!” Leo added.

Annabeth suddenly felt his eyes on her. He grinned and she smiled back. She wasn’t expecting him to say what came out of his mouth next.

“Maybe it’s because this season I’ve got a good luck charm.” He said, staring straight at her.

Dear Gods she just about melted right then and there. Annabeth knew the others had heard him

because Piper was currently trying not to squeal at the way Percy was staring at her. Annabeth's heart fluttered at his words and the way he was looking at her with his perfect smile.

"Well if that's the case then Annabeth you *need* to be at the state championship game." Jason said, hugging Piper to his side.

"I wouldn't miss it." Annabeth said, still looking into a familiar pair of sea green eyes.

Rachel stopped in her tracks, glaring murderously towards the scene a few feet in front of her. Rebecca and Ashley almost bumped into her, not having noticed that their leader had stopped walking. Standing a little ways away from the three girls was Percy and Annabeth along with the rest of their annoying group. The redhead noticed the way Annabeth was blushing while Percy was smiling at her.

What the hell did he see in her? Rachel just didn't understand it. Over the past few weeks she'd noticed how close they were getting and she didn't like it one bit. It wasn't like there was much to like about the blonde. She always wore t-shirts and those ratty old converse sneakers. She never wore makeup, which was a crime in itself and she was probably the biggest nerd in their school. She knew that Luke Castellan had also developed a liking to her. The whole thing just blew her mind.

"Looks like they're getting pretty close" Ashley stated, like it wasn't already obvious. Rachel scoffed loudly. She knew her idiot of a friend was right but she wasn't about to tell her that.

"Please. Percy just needs a reminder of who he was before all of this. He could do so much better than *her*." She spoke in a voice filled with venom and annoyance.

"You mean like you?" Rebecca asked from behind her.

"Of course Becca what did you think I meant!?" She said rudely, internally face palming at her airhead friends.

"Well how are you going to do it?" Ashley asked curiously.

"Don't worry girls. Everything will work out just fine. Castellan can have her for all I care but Percy will be mine. I've got a plan." She crossed her arms over her chest and smiled to herself creepily.

"Oh I love your plans! What did you have in mind?" Rebecca spoke up excitedly.

"Yeah at least give us a hint!" Ashley added, practically jumping up and down.

"Let's just say...it's time to go shopping for party dresses." The redhead finished mysteriously.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26

The smell of liquor and sweat filled Annabeth's nose. There were half empty bottles of beer and red solo cups everywhere. Over in another room the shouts of her fellow classmates could be heard yelling "chug!" Girls could be seen grinding up against complete strangers on the dance floor as they held their hands up in the air freely. The lights were dimmed and music was blaring loudly from the speakers. Couples were making out quite aggressively in more secluded areas of the house. Some of them weren't even couples but Annabeth was sure they wouldn't remember making out the next morning. Now I know what you might be thinking.

How had Annabeth Chase found herself at yet another high school party?

That was a long story but to make things short, when the entire school had found out the Trident's hockey team was going to states everyone celebrated. Silena had opened up her house again for a victory party the Friday the teams had gotten back from Vermont. More than half the school was there. A few days before the party was announced Annabeth had seen Rachel talking to Silena about it. The redhead seemed to be more in charge of the whole affair than Silena was which was odd.

The only reason Annabeth had agreed to come with her friends was because she figured she should support the Trident's team on their grave accomplishment. Especially one player in particular.

She hadn't seen Percy yet but she knew he was in the huge house somewhere. She'd seen his parked car outside. He'd also texted her earlier explaining that Jason and Leo had practically dragged him to the party against his will and that if he didn't go there would be no one to make sure Leo didn't do something stupid.

She was dressed for the occasion. Piper had completely destroyed her closet in search for something good enough but ended up having Annabeth wear one of her dresses in the end. It was definitely not the blonde's type of style, but Piper was just as stubborn as her if not more, so it was best to not bother arguing. The dress was an emerald green colored tight dress. It was covered in sequins and had half sleeves. Piper had paired it with a pair of old Adidas sneakers, which Annabeth was thankful for. If she had to be wearing such a short, tight dress she was glad her friend had at least let her wear comfortable shoes instead of heels.

As soon as they got inside the now incredibly messy house they split up because they each wanted to do different things. Will and Nico had gone straight to the kitchen for some booze Annabeth was guessing. Piper and Calypso moved to the dance floor being the more social extroverted girls that they were. Jason and Leo were probably also somewhere near the dance floor as well so that made sense. Thalia and her stuck together.

"So, pick your poison Annie. Stupid games like seven minutes in heaven or the horror that is mingling with our fellow classmates." Her best friend said as they stood observing the scene before them.

Thalia wasn't really much for parties either. They shared that in common but Annabeth knew the blue-eyed girl also wanted to be there to support the Trident's team that included her brother and her cousin. She would never admit it to anyone but Thalia had a big soft spot for family.

"Neither" The blonde shuttered. Thalia sighed in agreement.

“Well if I’m gonna get through this party I’m going to need something strong. Come on.” She grabbed Annabeth’s hand and led her through the crowds of people that now occupied the house.

They made it to a drink table and Thalia happily poured herself some vodka in a red solo cup. She offered some to Annabeth but she declined. She searched the room curiously, her eyes going from face to face. Thalia noticed right away how distracted her friend was.

“Go”

“What?” Annabeth said confusedly, turning her attention back to Thalia. She laughed at her friend’s expression.

“Go, I know you’re trying to find Percy. He’s probably looking for you too.” The statement made Annabeth flush a light pink color.

“But what about you?” She didn’t want to leave Thalia who not only hated parties as much as she did but also was not completely sober now that she was on her second cup of coke mixed with vodka.

“I’ll be fine Annie. High tolerance, remember?” She gestured to the cup in her hands and nodded her head to reassure the girl it would be fine.

Annabeth smiled thankfully at her best friend and then turned around, a smile now unconsciously making its way onto her face. She fought through the line of people and slowly made her way towards the staircase. She didn’t think he was on the first floor because she probably would’ve seen him unless he was on the dance floor. She doubted that though.

A house as big as Silena’s and she was looking for one person out of who knows how many. That was probably the equivalent to looking for a needle in a haystack but that didn’t mean she wasn’t going to try.

“Congrats man!”

“Yeah Perce!”

“Here we come States!”

Various people congratulated Percy as he walked down the long halls, patting him on the back and holding their cups and beer bottles up to him. He thanked them all but his focus was on finding one girl in particular that went by the name Annabeth Chase.

He’d gotten to the party with Leo and Jason about half an hour ago. He didn’t really want to go but figured it wouldn’t look right for the captain of the hockey team to not go to his own victory party when the rest of the team was there. Jason had practically shoved him to go look for Annabeth when he’d noticed Percy was in his own world. After making sure Jason was going to keep an eye on Leo and his partying ways, the green-eyed boy went off on his search for the blonde bookworm. He knew she was here because Jason had told him Piper texted him telling him so.

He couldn’t take it any longer. Tonight would be the night he would tell her how he felt. He had been so close a few times but always ended up getting interrupted or chickening out. He wasn’t used to being such a nervous wreck around girls. What was she doing to him?

After another few minutes he bumped into Ashley. His immediate thought was that it was super weird for her to be by herself and not with Rebecca and especially not with Rachel. She had on

heels and a short skirt like she always wore. She smiled almost creepily when he'd crossed paths with her. It was almost like she had planned for him to bump into her. He knew he was just being paranoid though.

"Looking for someone?" Ashley said questioningly while twirling a piece of her hair in her fingertips.

Percy shook his head. It was better not to get that girl involved with anything considering she'd most likely report it back to Rachel and he really didn't feel like talking to the redhead right now.

"It's nothing." He brushed her off, continuing to walk further down the hall.

"I saw her you know." Ashley spoke up before he was out of hearing distance. He stopped in his tracks, turning back around to face the girl.

"What?"

"Annabeth, just a minute ago actually. She was headed to the bathroom at the end of the hall last I saw her." Ashley said clearly with no hesitation in her voice.

Percy made the awful mistake of believing her. He nodded his head slowly and then started walking to the bathroom at the end of the hall. When he made it there he saw that the door was cracked open a bit. The lights were off as well. It didn't look like anyone was in there but he figured it wouldn't hurt to go in.

His hand fumbled for the light switch but he couldn't, for the life of him find it anywhere. He sighed, taking another step forward into the pretty giant bathroom. If he had to guess he would say that the bathroom was probably as big as his bedroom. It was so dark that only the outlines of objects could be seen through all the black.

"Annabeth?" He called out. He probably looked stupid because it didn't look like anyone was in there.

He nearly jumped out of his skin when he felt a hand place itself on his shoulder lightly. He turned around but couldn't make out the facial features of the person standing in front of him. It was a girl that's all he could make out. He didn't register the door of the bathroom closing.

"Hey Hockey Boy" The girl whispered softly. Percy smiled and relaxed at the familiar nickname. He took a step closer towards her as she placed her hands around his neck.

Next thing he knew, she was kissing him like there was no tomorrow. He had definitely not been expecting that from her but he wasn't complaining. He placed his hands on her waist as she tilted his head to deepen the kiss in an eager response. He slowly walked her backwards until she hit the back of the countertop. She pulled him flush against her as her hands moved to tangle themselves in his hair. In one swift motion he hoisted her up onto the bathroom counter. She smiled into the kiss and wrapped her legs around his waist.

Annabeth sighed. There was no way she was going to find Percy in this huge mess of people. She thought about texting him but then realized Piper had taken all their phones earlier so that they could 'enjoy the experience' of being at a high school party.

She was now walking through the halls on the second floor of the house. There were not as many people on the second level as there was on the first but still a good amount. Most people just walked right by her. She wasn't exactly known as miss popularity at their school. That's why she

was surprised when Rebecca had suddenly cut in front of her, stopping her from walking any further.

She was shocked by a number of things. One, the girl was smiling at her. Two, she wasn't hanging around some random guy. And three, she was alone. As in, Ashley and Rachel were nowhere to be seen.

"Hey Annabeth" She said like the two of them had been friends for years.

"Um...hi" Annabeth tried to get around her but Rebecca sure wasn't making it easy. She had this really unsettling smile on her face and it was seriously starting to creep Annabeth out.

"Where are you headed?" She asked curiously.

"Nowhere" Annabeth supplied broadly. That girl reported just about everything to Rachel and the last thing she wanted was more drama with that redhead.

"Oh come on A. I know you're looking for Percy. I know where he is and I'll even take you to him if you'll let me." Annabeth hesitated. She wondered if Rebecca was actually telling the truth or not.

"Why would *you* be doing something nice for *me*?" Annabeth crossed her arms on her chest as she stared at the girl.

"I just feel like we've been enemies for so long. It's getting too cliché if you ask me. I think we should start over you know?" Rebecca said, staring at her nails before looking back up at her.

Annabeth knew she shouldn't trust her. It wasn't normal for the girl to even be speaking to her without Rachel and Ashley. That's why she had no idea why on earth she'd nodded her head and allowed Rebecca to lead her further down the crowded hallway. Maybe she felt like it was worth a try after looking for Percy for so long.

The two girls made it to a door at the end of the hall. Rebecca stopped short, which almost made Annabeth fall at the sudden motion.

"They're right in here." Rebecca said creepily.

They? Annabeth thought to herself confusedly.

Before she had time to think about it any longer, Rebecca twisted open the unlocked door and flipped the light switch on that was placed outside of the room. What Annabeth saw made her catch her breath and stay frozen in her tracks.

Inside the bathroom was Percy kissing another girl. It wasn't just any old girl though. It was Rachel Elizabeth Dare. She couldn't mistake that hair for anyone else. She was kissing him and he was responding hungrily right back. Her legs were locked around his torso as he held her atop of the counter. There wasn't an inch of space in between them and they were both so engrossed in each other that they hadn't even noticed the lights turning on or the door opening.

Annabeth's eyes watered. She could physically feel her heart aching as she watched the two of them. She felt like she couldn't speak, like she couldn't move. She was numb everywhere. It felt like she had been standing there watching them for hours when in reality it had only been about five seconds.

"P-Percy?" Her voice cracked when she spoke. Anyone near her could practically see and hear her heartbreak.

The male instantly pulled away from the redhead. He turned his head and his eyes widened to the size of saucers. He looked like he'd just seen a ghost. His mouth widened in horror as a tear slid down Annabeth's cheek. His eyes locked onto hers. They were filled with panic and guilt.

"Annabeth" He said desperately once he'd regained his speech.

He took a step towards her and she flinched. She finally felt her body regain movement as another tear fell down her face. She shook her head. She couldn't be there anymore. She needed to get out of there. For that reason she ran.

"Annabeth, wait!" She heard him call. She didn't stop.

She ran as fast as she could, pushing and shoving people as she went. She completely missed the smiles of triumph on Ashley, Rebecca and Rachel's faces. She thought he had changed. She thought he wasn't the egotistical playboy who made out with every girl he met. She was even more stupid for believing that he possibly might return her feelings.

She should've stayed away from him. They never should have become friends in the first place. She was hurt, more hurt than she could've ever imagined. How could he do that to her? She was wrong about everything. Silent sobs racked her body as she made it down the stairs. She needed some air. The events that had just taken place mixed with the huge number of people in the house made her feel like she couldn't get air into her lungs.

She eventually found the front door and ran out to the side because more people were still entering the house. She gasped for air and didn't see the person in front of her until she crashed into something hard.

She lost her balance but as quick as lightning, two arms reached out to keep her upright. She was breathing heavily in uneven patterns. Her eyes were probably starting to get red and puffy. She looked like a mess but looked up to apologize to who ever she'd crashed into.

She was met with the familiar face of Luke Castellan. He stared at her concerned as he held her firmly. His eyes were worried as he searched her face.

"Annabeth, hey are you ok?" He asked concernedly. He looked her up and down to make sure she wasn't injured or anything before looking up to meet her eyes that were filled with pain and suffering.

The blonde female shook her head violently, replaying the events that had taken place only a few moments ago. She was shaking as tears continued to pool up in her grey eyes.

Luke pulled her into a hug and she cried loudly into his chest. She wrapped her arms around him as he held her tightly to him. There were only a few people around them seeing as how the outside was the least crowded with people. She had no idea how long they stood there. She was crying into his shirt while he shushed her and whispered soothing words into her ear. She briefly told him what happened through her crying and he rubbed her back comfortingly in response. She was beyond grateful for him in that moment.

"Annabeth!" Her body tensed when she heard his voice. She broke away from Luke's embrace to face the direction of the voice.

Percy approached them slowly, his eyes only on hers. Luke took a step closer to her with an angry expression on his face as he looked at the hockey player. Percy didn't bother to look at him, still keeping all his focus on her.

“Annabeth, please. Let me explain.” He was out of breath as he pleaded for her to let him speak and not run off again.

“I think you’ve done enough Jackson. She doesn’t want to talk to you so why don’t you just leave.” Luke spoke for her. His words came out sternly.

Percy finally broke his gaze from her to look up at the blonde boy. His eyes flashed with something vicious as he glared at him. Annabeth didn’t fail to notice that the people around them were starting to notice the tension filled atmosphere.

“She can speak for herself Castellan. What the hell does it matter to you anyway? This doesn’t concern you.” Percy retorted coldly.

“Well seeing as to how I was the one just comforting her because of the mess *you* made I’m pretty sure it does concern me.” Luke took another step forward, putting himself closer to Percy.

“Let me talk to her.” Percy’s words came out like venom as he stared at Luke.

“No. You don’t deserve to even be around her.”

“Oh and you do? Last time I checked you weren’t the most innocent guy out there either.” Percy fired back.

“Watch it Jackson.” Luke’s eyes flared with fierce anger as his hands formed fists at his side. Percy looked just as mad if not more. By this point the two boys had gathered an audience that was slowly getting bigger.

“Or what?” There was a very limited amount of space between the two boys. Each one of them looked like they wanted to kill the other.

Annabeth didn’t know who threw the first punch. It all happened so fast and the next thing she knew both boys were on the ground in the middle of a fistfight on Silena’s lawn. The crowd of people around them was a lot bigger now. People were cheering on both Percy and Luke.

It was captain of the wrestling team vs captain of the hockey team. Both males knew how to fight and pretty violently. There were moments where Luke had tried to pin Percy down but the hockey player was too fast for him. Each one of them was successful in getting punches in though. For the first few seconds Annabeth just stood there with her eyes wide wondering how in the world one party had turned into such a mess.

“Stop!” She cried out after a minute, coming out of her shock. They didn’t listen. They probably couldn’t even hear her over the loud crowd chanting.

“Stop it please!” Annabeth yelled. She saw Percy take a hard hit to the jaw from Luke as she desperately shouted for them to stop.

Suddenly she spotted Jason and Leo making their way to the front of the crowd. When they reached the fight they split up. Jason pulled Percy away from Luke while Leo grabbed Luke to hold him back. The two males tried to lunge at each other again but Jason and Leo managed to contain them.

“What has gotten into you two?!” Annabeth yelled, anger replacing everything else she was feeling.

They stared at her shamefully, no longer being restrained by Leo or Jason. Luke had a puffy red

eye that was sure to turn into a black eye along with a bloody nose. Percy was sporting a giant bruise on his jaw and his lip was split. It was silent for a few seconds before Percy admitted something that no one was expecting.

“Annabeth, listen I...I really like you. This isn’t exactly how I wanted to tell you but it’s the truth. I can’t get you out of my head. Your laugh, your smile, your passion for skating, all of it. I’m sorry it’s taken me so long to realize it but I needed you to know. As for what happened with Rachel, it was not what it looked like I swear. Give me a chance to explain and I’ll tell you everything. I just want you to be happy Princess.” Percy told her truthfully. He could’ve said so much more but practically everyone was staring at them. Luke spoke up next.

“You know how I feel about you Blondie. You’re the only girl I’ve ever felt completely myself around. I would never hurt you because I care too much about you. I know you feel some kind of connection between us like I do.” Luke admitted honestly.

Annabeth stood frozen in shock. She still had no idea how she got into the whole situation in the first place. She was just Annabeth Chase, possibly the biggest nerd in their school who figure skated. Now she had two of the hottest guys at her school fighting over her. Normally any girl would die to be in the situation she was in but to Annabeth the whole thing made her as confused as ever.

“Come on Annabeth. Don’t let this playboy get to you like he has for every other girl. I mean he’s already broken your trust. We should be together.” Luke insisted, taking a step closer to her.

“Playboy huh? Says the guy who kept a book of the girls he slept with.” Percy argued.

“I told you. That was the past. I’m not proud of it.” Luke growled, turning back around to face Percy angrily.

“Yeah well at least I’ve owned up to my mistakes Castellan.”

“And who says I haven’t? Why can’t you understand that Annabeth would never want to be with some dumb hockey player?”

“Why can’t *you* understand that she would never want to be with some poser and liar?” By now the two were shouting at each other once again, only a few feet apart.

Annabeth had now had it with the two of them. She stood in between them and pushed them further apart before they started fighting again.

“Enough! You’re acting like little kids!”

The two males looked at her again. She looked exhausted. The whole night had taken a toll on her both physically and emotionally and she was done. The both of them were acting immature and weren’t even letting her speak. They stared at her apologetically but she was having none of it.

“I don’t want to be with either of you right now!”

“Anna-”

“I-”

“Just leave me alone, both of you!” Annabeth shouted. She knew everyone was still watching but it didn’t matter.

She gave them both one last look before shoving past them and into the crowd that was now dispersing. Thalia found her as soon as she was away from everyone. Annabeth knew she'd seen the whole thing. Pretty much everyone at the party had seen it.

Thalia didn't say anything but instead wrapped a comforting arm around her best friend as they walked away from the party. Annabeth didn't look back but if she had she would've seen a pair of sea green eyes staring longingly at her retreating figure.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27

Percy approached the goal, shuffling the hockey puck back and forth with his stick. He slowed down when he got within a few feet of the netting. His defender kept up with him, following the same movements he was doing. After another minute, Percy took the shot. The black puck went sliding too far to the left of the goal, missing it completely.

Percy sighed exhaustedly. The Trident's team was practicing a one-on-one drill. That had been his fifth missed shot on goal. His teammates were shell shocked that he'd missed that many shots. Some of them hadn't even been close to the goal. His heart just wasn't in it. He was playing like he had no idea what he was doing and he knew it was affecting the rest of the team. Coach Hedge wasn't looking too happy with him either.

"Alright break for water! Jackson at this point, you'd be better off watching practice from the bench!" Coach Hedge blew his whistle and then all the boys skated over to their bags with their water bottles. Percy said nothing and instead stared at the ground deep in thought.

"Hey man. You alright?" Leo asked, skating up beside him and clapping a hand on his shoulder. Percy shook him off, trying to give him the message that he didn't want to talk.

It backfired because a second later Jason came over to his other side. He took a sip from his water bottle and then spoke. His eyes were filled with pity and Percy absolutely hated it.

"Perce come on, you have to at least talk to us." Jason tried, casting a concerned glance his way. Percy stopped, anger now filling his veins as he looked at the two of them.

"What do you guys want me to say? Oh I'm just dandy thanks for asking!" The raven-haired boy shouted sarcastically.

"We're worried about you dude. You haven't been yourself lately. Don't you want to talk about what happened?" Leo asked.

"There's nothing to talk about. I made the stupidest mistake ever and she hates me and never wants to see me again. There's nothing more to it." Percy drank some water from his plastic bottle before hurriedly skating away from them and towards the bench.

Jason sighed. "He's really hurting. I've never seen him so unhappy and unfocused playing hockey."

"I don't think anyone has. Annabeth must really mean a lot to him." Leo added. Jason nodded in agreement.

"If I didn't know any better I'd say the dude might even be in love with her. He just hasn't figured that out for himself yet."

"We've got to figure out a way to get them together." Leo suggested. Jason nodded but then chuckled silently.

"You're starting to sound like Piper man." Leo shoved his shoulder.

"Like you don't have plans of your own. I asked Piper, she told me it was your idea for the two of

you to ditch Calypso and I at Silena's party."

"Well it worked didn't it? You scored a date with her this Friday."

"That doesn't mean it wasn't super awkward when you both left all of the sudden!" Leo's cheeks colored and Jason laughed at his embarrassment before they both skated back towards their coach who was calling them all back.

Annabeth groaned in annoyance, bushing off the snow from the ice on her clothes before standing up. She started her approach again, gathering up speed before attempting a triple Lutz this time. When the time was right she jumped, spinning in the air for a couple seconds before placing her skate on the ice. The blade of the skate fumbled, making her lose her balance and fall forward against the hard ice once again. The cold surface brushed her cheek and she sighed, frustrated with herself.

Piper and Calypso stood off to the side in the bleachers of the small rink watching their friend practice for the state figure skating competition. Practice was over but Rachel and Annabeth were spending extra time on the ice in preparation for the state competition. Piper stared sadly at the blonde, watching her fall for the fourth time in the last five minutes. She knew the girl had too much on her mind. Christina looked disappointed in Annabeth as she watched her skate. She gave her pointers each time but nothing was working.

"I hate seeing her like this. We've seen her land those jumps a hundred times Pipes." Calypso said tiredly.

"I know. She's just got too much on her mind. The only thing we can do is be here for her when she needs us." Piper replied.

"I guess. But she doesn't even want to talk about it. It's like I'm talking to a wall whenever I'm with her. She doesn't look happy to be skating like she usually is, she can't land her jumps and she just looks...exhausted."

Piper placed a comforting arm around Calypso. "She's stressed and confused right now. I mean who wouldn't be? Two guys admitted to practically the whole school that they like her and then proceeded to fight over her...quite literally. She doesn't know what to do. I know I wouldn't."

"I just hope she can skate for the state competition. Skating is her life and I know how broken she'll be if she can't skate her best on the day of the competition." Calypso sighed, leaning in to her brown-haired friend as they watched Annabeth shout in anger when she fell again.

"Me too Callie. I also have this feeling something else happened at that party we didn't see."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. She looked pretty upset before Percy and Luke started fighting. It could be nothing but she won't talk about anything from that night."

"You're right. Something else did happen."

Piper and Calypso jumped when they heard a voice to their right. They looked over to see a familiar girl dressed in all black with short choppy hair and electric blue eyes. She walked over to take a seat next to Calypso. Thalia had watched a couple of Annabeth's practices before. She knew she should be there for her best friend while she was so out of it so she'd decided to pay a visit to the rink.

“What?”

Thalia took a deep breath. She faced Annabeth attempting to land another jump instead of looking directly into the eyes of the two girls staring intensely at her for an answer. It was silent for a few seconds and just when Piper was starting to think Thalia hadn't heard her, the girl with a punk rock style took a deep breath and spoke.

“Well...I wasn't there so I can only go off what Annabeth told me when we caught a cab home after the party but when she went off looking for Percy...”

Thalia trailed off, leaving Calypso and Piper as curious as ever. The choppy-haired girl had a painful expression on her face. It looked as if she was having trouble trying to process whatever information she was about to share.

“Annabeth found Percy but when she did it wasn't exactly the best way to find him.”

“What do you mean?” Calypso instigated further.

“She found him making out with Rachel in one of the many bathrooms in Silena's house.” Thalia finished exasperatedly. She finally turned to look at the two of them.

Calypso and Piper's reactions were very similar to what Thalia's was when Annabeth had told her about the incident. Their pupils widened and their mouths opened in shock. There was once again a minute of complete silence with the only noise being Annabeth's skates on the ice in the background.

“Gods. Oh gods that must've killed her.” Piper finally said to break the silence. Calypso nodded in approval and Thalia sighed.

“I-I just don't get it. There's no way the Percy I know would do something like that. There has to be more to the story. Annabeth was changing him into the person he used to be when we were kids. The guy who stayed incredibly loyal to everyone he got close with. The guy who made the dumbest jokes that you couldn't help but laugh at and most importantly someone you could depend and trust for anything. It just doesn't sound like Percy.” Thalia explained. She held her head in her hands, starting to get a headache from the whole thing.

Piper placed a hand on her shoulder comfortingly. She herself couldn't believe Percy would do such a thing either. Ask her a few months ago and she might have told you that making out with Rachel at a party was something Percy Jackson would definitely be caught doing but everything had changed. Everyone had noticed how different he was now. More specifically, everyone had noticed how he acted around Annabeth. There was never a moment he wasn't smiling when he was with her. He genuinely liked her and because of her he was this fun-loving, caring guy. There was more to the story, she was sure of it.

“There's no way Percy would do that to her. There's got to be a catch. I mean this is Rachel Dare we're talking about guys. Anything involving her is bad news. She must've manipulated him in some way.” Piper voiced her thoughts.

“Maybe. But that doesn't change the fact that he was kissing another girl and Annabeth saw them. She must've been heartbroken. It's so obvious she's falling for him. Its gone way past the crush stage at this point.” Calypso added, staring out towards their blonde skater friend with a troubled look plastered across her features.

Annabeth pushed and shoved her way through the crowds consisting of her classmates. Only two

more days and the school week would be over and it would finally be the weekend. Luckily she'd managed to avoid talking to Luke and Percy for the past three days. Even in math, which she shared with Luke and history she shared with Percy she'd avoided them by sitting as far away from their desks as possible. She felt their stares on her but didn't dare to look up. Both of them had tried to approach her and talk to her a few times but whenever they started walking towards her she made up some excuse to leave. It sounded kind of pathetic but she just didn't feel like talking to either of them.

The party at Silena's was something she wished more than anything that she could forget.

She couldn't get the images of Percy kissing Rachel out of her head. They made her stomach churn. Then watching Luke and Percy practically trying to kill each other after admitting they liked her. She hadn't had time to fully process the idea of Percy actually liking her before the two males were insulting each other again. The party felt like one giant mess she was never going to figure out how to clean up. Thank the Gods that Thalia had been there for her after everything went down. Without her best friend taking her home she didn't know what would've happened.

It was Thursday during the lunch period. She was meeting Piper, Calypso, Will and Nico at their usual table in the cafeteria. Occasionally Jason, Leo and Percy would sit with them but for the past few days they hadn't been and she was sure it was because Piper had told Jason Annabeth needed time to think and deal with everything.

She opened her locker and replaced her books from her morning classes to those of her afternoon classes. She felt eyes on her as soon as she shut her locker door. She knew she shouldn't have looked but she couldn't help it. Her eyes searched for the culprit and soon caught the gaze of a familiar head of blonde hair.

He was pretty far away from where she was standing but that didn't mean she couldn't see the hurt look on his face when she broke the stare and turned around to walk in the other direction towards the cafeteria. She didn't feel like confronting Luke at that moment and she didn't know when she would feel like it. He'd been sweet to comfort her at the party but the Luke that had insulted and physically fought Percy was someone she didn't know. It was a different side to him that she didn't want to see more of. She sighed, shaking her head to clear her thoughts and tightening her grip on the books in her arms.

She'd barely walked twenty feet when she felt a hand grip her upper arm. She was too surprised to even scream before she was being pulled into a room.

There were brooms, mops and brushes leaning against the wall. The room had the faintest smell of lemon-scented floor cleaner. It took her about a second to realize she'd been dragged into a janitor's closet.

It took her another second to realize that the person who'd pulled her into the room was Percy Jackson.

Immediately her eyes widened and she felt her stomach twist into a knot. She may or may not have blushed against her hardest attempts not to. She didn't want to talk to him but what made her blush was the thought of where they were.

It may seem like something that one would only hear about in movies or TV shows but Goode High School was full of clichés. A common hook up spot in a specific janitor's closet was one of those clichés and she was currently standing in that janitor's closet with Percy.

She'd seen several people from the popular crowd walk into the janitor's closet down the hall from

the cafeteria. Not to mention, walking past it at the wrong time definitely scarred someone for life. More than anyone, she'd seen Percy take girls into the room and then walk out with messed up hair and disheveled clothes.

Obviously Annabeth had never been in the janitor's closet and wanted more than anything in that moment to leave but she couldn't because Percy was standing in front of her with his back to the door.

She pursed her lips and tried hard not to notice how attractive said male looked wearing jeans, high tops and a navy tight-fitted t-shirt that showed off his muscles quite nicely. She was infuriated with him. He'd hurt her badly and all she wanted to do was leave.

"Move Jackson" She said coldly, glaring angrily towards him. Those had been the first words she'd spoken to him since the party.

"Annabeth you haven't given me the chance to explain what happened. You don't know the whole story. I've been trying to talk to you all week." He said tiredly.

His eyes weren't as bright as they usually were and there were bags under his eyes from lack of sleep. In other words, he looked pretty similar to how she was feeling. She held her ground.

"I don't want to listen to anything you have to say Jackson. After all, actions speak louder than words so I hope you and Rachel are very happy together." She said harshly. She noticed his expression sadden even more as she moved to get past him and to the door.

"Annabeth...Princess, *please*" He begged, gently grasping her arm again.

She didn't know if it was because of the use of her nickname or because of the emotion behind his voice but whatever it was made her pause. She looked into his sea-green eyes and felt herself crumble. He made her vulnerable and that scared her more than anything. She breathed deeply, feeling herself give in.

"You've got thirty seconds. Explain."

"I didn't know it was Rachel who was in the bathroom. I believed Ashley when she told me to follow her. The lights were all off in the room and I couldn't find the light switch. When I walked in there I didn't even know there was another person in there with me until another minute went by. The girl-Rachel- she called me Hockey Boy and she whispered it so I didn't know it was her. The next thing I knew she was kissing me and I responded because I-..."

He looked at her with a painful expression on his face and she furrowed her eyebrows in confusion.

"What?" She asked lowly.

"I thought she was *you* Annabeth. I know, I'm the world's biggest idiot or believing that but I guess I just couldn't take in any longer. I wanted so badly to believe it was you and I actually did. When I saw you a few seconds later I'd never felt so horrible in my life. And then catching you with Luke after you ran off...I just cracked."

It was quiet for a beat as Annabeth tried to process all the new information he'd just told her. Even though he thought it was her he was kissing, he'd still kissed Rachel and it killed her. They weren't even dating but the affect he had on her was strong. Since they weren't together in the first place, Percy had a right to kiss any girl he wanted to but she felt as if she'd been led on and her heart had been stomped on. What if he wasn't telling the truth? He'd still gotten into a fight with Luke. She just didn't know if she could put all of her trust in him. She was scared. Scared of being broken

beyond repair.

“Thanks for telling me but...it doesn’t change the fact that you were kissing another girl. I know we were never together but I just don’t know if I can forgive you. I-I don’t know if I can trust you.”

Percy’s hopeful expression turned to one of heartbreak as he looked into her eyes.

“Annabeth, please. You’re the one I want to be with.” His voice broke and a lump formed in Annabeth’s throat.

“I’m sorry.” She whispered through her cracking voice before finally getting around him and exiting the janitor’s closet. A silent tear fell down her face as she continued her route to the cafeteria.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28

“Is it time to leave yet?” Annabeth complained. The loud ringing of bells accompanied by the screams of people on rides was already starting to give her a headache. All she felt like doing was taking a long nap in her bed.

“Oh come on A, the carnival’s in town! How can you not be happy surrounded by all this food and all the prizes!” Calypso said excitedly, gesturing to the scene before them as they walked further along the busy pathway where people were playing the carnival games and winning cheap stuffed animals.

In attempt to make their blonde friend feel better, Piper, Calypso and Thalia had decided to take her to the carnival that was only in town for the weekend. The truth was, if Annabeth’s head had been clear of all the Percy, Rachel and Luke drama then she probably would have been laughing hysterically with her friends on the tilt-a-whirl ride and eating cotton candy like there was no tomorrow. However, unfortunately she was still confused and frustrated beyond belief with everything.

She couldn’t stop thinking about her conversation with Percy a few days ago. The encounter made her even more confused because Percy thought he had been kissing *her* at the party. She didn’t exactly know what to do with that information. She didn’t even know if he was telling the truth. Did he really want to be with her? And even if he was telling the truth, he still kissed Rachel and that really hurt her. Her brain felt like a bunch of cords jumbled together in one giant knot that was practically impossible to unravel. Her feelings were everywhere. She missed him desperately. She hated how much he affected her, made her feel weak and sensitive.

As for Luke Castellan, Annabeth still hadn’t spoken a word to him since the party. She wanted to believe that he’d changed but picturing his aggressive stance and harmful words towards Percy during their fight stopped her from confronting him. He looked so defeated and guilty whenever she brushed him off at school and a part of her wanted to forgive him so badly but she just didn’t know if that was the smart thing to do.

“I’m sorry guys. Thanks for trying, really, but I just don’t feel like doing anything. I’ve got too much on my mind.” Annabeth admitted honestly. She sighed and wrapped her plaid shirt tighter around herself.

It was a nice day with the weather not being freezing or hot. They were getting closer and closer to spring in New York. Annabeth was wearing a pair of light washed ripped jeans, black converse, and a red long sleeve plaid shirt with a plain black fitted shirt underneath. Her hair was down and she had an owl pendant hanging around her neck. She had a black jacket wrapped around her waist incase she got cold.

“And that’s why we need to ride *that*.” Thalia said, pointing and smiling mischievously at a ride called ‘The Claw’ about twenty feet in front of the four girls.

Annabeth had seen the ride plenty of times before but had never dared to actually go on it. The ride consisted of four different claws connected so that they made a giant circle. Each ‘claw’ held four people and it swung back and forth while twisting in the air. It didn’t flip you over but it went super high so that it felt like you were about to flip over.

“Yes, I second that idea!” Piper agreed, staring at the ride before them.

“Well you guys have fun because there’s no way in hell I’m getting on that.” Annabeth said immediately. She watched as people screamed and laughed as the ride started up again.

“Wha-Annabeth! You have to go!” Calypso argued. Piper and Thalia agreed, taking her by the arms comfortingly.

“It’ll be fun I promise. I bet it’ll even make you forget, at least for a little while anyway. Please?” Thalia begged. Annabeth sighed, looking straight into her best friend’s pleading eyes.

Finally, she nodded hesitantly. Maybe Thalia was right. Maybe doing something thrilling would make her feel a little less miserable. It was worth a shot anyway. With that in mind, the four of them got in line to wait their turn.

After watching countless people go on the ride, the girls were finally at the front of the line. They would be on the next ride and Annabeth was now wishing more than ever that she hadn’t agreed to the crazy idea. She could deal with smaller rides like the tilt-a-whirl or the Scrambler but this was another story. What had she been thinking?

“Uhh guys? I-I think I’m gonna wait for you on the side. I change my mind.” Annabeth said shakily as the claw slowed down again and the people before them got off.

“Oh no you don’t. We’ve been waiting for the past half hour. We’re all going on it together.” Thalia stated, taking Annabeth’s hand and practically dragging her past the worker collecting their tickets and to a seat on the ride next to her. Thalia was fearless when it came to thrill rides. It was ironic considering she wasn’t a big fan of heights but just being on the ride and moving super fast gave her a high.

Piper and Calypso laughed, following behind them and finding their own seats on the ride.

Annabeth heard the sound of the harnesses around them locking as the ride started up after everyone had found a seat. She could feel herself shaking in nervousness as Thalia waited next to her excitedly.

“I hate you, you know that?” Annabeth said through her fast breathing while turning to face her best friend. Thalia smirked.

“Love you too.”

[Song Tribute- *Feel So Close* by Calvin Harris]

Before anything else could be said, the ride started. Annabeth gripped her harness like it was her lifeline as they swung from left to right, getting higher and higher with each passing second. Thalia started laughing next to her and she could see Piper and Calypso smiling as they gathered more speed.

The grey-eyed girl screamed after another few seconds. The claw started spinning around as they started swinging back and forth faster. She closed her eyes, wanting the ride to just be over already. Piper and Calypso were screaming excitedly and Thalia now had her hands in the air and was laughing happily.

“Open your eyes Annie! You’re missing all the fun!” Thalia nudged her.

She moved like a snail, forcing her eyes open just the slightest bit. Her grip on the harness hadn’t

softened. Finally, she blinked her eyes open and screamed loudly when they swung down at full speed.

“This is insane!” Annabeth yelled, a horrified look on her face.

“Live a little will you! Here, put your arms up like this.” Thalia ordered, showing her what she’d previously been doing.

Annabeth hesitantly released her death grip on the harness and did what Thalia told her too. Her breathing was fast and her hands were shaking.

“Now just...look around you.”

Annabeth observed everything she could in her line of vision. She could see the other people on the ride next to her and across from her laughing hysterically and screaming at the top of their lungs. She looked far into the distance and realized that each time they reached the high point in the swinging of the claw she could see the entire carnival. There were hundreds of people followed by thousands of lights and noises. She didn’t realize it until a moment later, but a smile started to appear on her face.

She started laughing, surprising herself and Thalia. Once she started she couldn’t stop. She laughed harder than she had in a long time, feeling the cool air whip across her face and the adrenaline coursing through her veins. Her hair flew in the wind and she put her arms up higher, now enjoying the experience.

And for a few minutes nothing mattered. She forgot about everything that had happened in the last week at Silena’s party. She forgot about the state skating competition coming up and about how much homework she had been assigned. For a minute nothing mattered. It was just her having fun with her friends. She felt happy, she felt free.

The moment ended all too soon as the ride came to a close and the four of them got off. She never thought she would actually miss being on that crazy ride but she did.

And that’s why in the following two hours, all four girls rode practically every ride at the carnival together. For some of them they even ended up going multiple times. Annabeth couldn’t remember the last time she’d had so much fun and wasn’t bothered by the stress of school or any drama once so ever. Being with her friends in such a positive atmosphere put her in a really good mood. It had been forever since the four of them had all hung out together. She missed hanging out with them.

“You should be an actress Pipes because that scream sure sounded like one from a horror movie!” Calypso teased once they were off another ride.

Annabeth laughed along with Thalia as the four of them linked arms with each other and walked down the pavement together in a line. Annabeth was sandwiched between Thalia and Piper as they walked.

“I wasn’t that loud! ...Oh look, cotton candy!” Piper shouted in attempt to change the subject. Thalia rolled her eyes while Piper broke away from them to go to the cotton candy stand and buy some of the pink fluffy sugar on a stick.

“Stop trying to change the subject Piper. The scream could be heard for miles and you know it!” Thalia argued once Piper had come back and resumed her position in between Calypso and Annabeth.

“Shut up! At least I wasn’t the one who nearly fainted on the drop tower earlier!” Piper shot back.

Thalia's smirk turned into a scowl as she shot a glare towards her friend.

"I didn't think it was going to be that high up!"

Annabeth and Calypso laughed light-heartedly as the four of them continued to walk past the various different carnival games and food. Annabeth was so busy talking to the others and laughing at their teasing remarks that she didn't notice a pair of blue eyes staring at her from a few feet away.

It wasn't until she crashed right into him and he put an arm out to steady her that she finally saw him. He had a couple of friends with him. His hair was windblown and he was wearing a quarter zip sweater with some jeans. He smiled shyly when he saw her. It was as if he was afraid of what her reaction would be to seeing him.

She knew she was going to have to talk to him at some point but why did it have to be on the one day she was trying to forget about it all and spend time with her closest friends? The world hated her.

"Luke?"

"So please Blondie, forgive me." Luke finished his well thought out speech and stood before her with eyes full of hope.

Annabeth sighed deeply. Bumping into Luke was not something she had planned. He had pulled her aside after she'd crashed into him and explained how sorry he was and proceeded to say a bunch of sweet things that made Annabeth blush. She didn't quite know what to do.

"I-I don't know Luke." She said honestly, making eye contact with her three friends across from them who were staring at her concerned. She shook her head to tell them she was ok before looking back at Luke whose expression was saddened.

"I promise you I'm still that same guy you know. The one you spend countless hours trying to teach math and keep focused. The one that's always going to be there for you when you need him. Please just, give me another chance." He pleaded.

Annabeth stood conflicted in front of him. She could tell by looking into his eyes that everything he was telling her was true. He could tell how troubled she was with the whole situation.

"Let me make it up to you. Spend the rest of the day with me at the carnival. I'll show you I'm still the Luke you remember. It doesn't even have to be a date, just as friends." He added a minute later.

"Luke- I came here to spend the day with my friends. It's not like I can just drop everything to spend the day with you. And what about your friends?" Annabeth replied, gesturing to the two guys standing awkwardly far behind them and trying to make conversation with Thalia, Piper and Calypso.

"Trevor and Justin were just about to head home. Are you sure your friends couldn't spare you just for a few hours? I mean I'm not that revolting am I?" He teased.

Annabeth laughed despite her hardest attempts not to. She focused her gaze upon her three good friends. They had been out for hours and it was starting to get a bit dark outside. She knew Piper was secretly dying to call Jason and Thalia didn't look too interested in walking any more than the many miles she already had. Calypso was the most understanding person she knew so Annabeth knew she wouldn't have a problem with it. She looked back to Luke who was staring at her

hopefully.

She supposed a couple hours couldn't hurt. It wasn't like he was some complete stranger and besides, he'd already explained that it didn't have to be a date and could just be as friends.

Finally after spending who knows how long fighting a mental battle in her head, Annabeth sighed and walked over to her three best friends. Just as she'd thought, they were all very supportive of her decision even though she could sense a little hesitation in Thalia's eyes as the edgy girl looked between her best friend and Luke Castellan. She reassured them that she would be fine and with one final hug, they were gone.

She walked back over to Luke who had finished saying goodbye to his friends. He had the largest grin on his face. Annabeth noticed how his smile was perfectly straight and showed his pearly white teeth that shined brightly. She couldn't help but compare it to a certain sea-green eyed hockey player who had a slightly crooked smile and dimples that made her swoon. Wow, where the hell had that come from?

She shook it off. She couldn't think about Percy any more than she already had that day. She was taking a risk letting Luke spend some time alone with her at the carnival but she needed to start somewhere if she wanted to clean up this big mess right?

"So I'm guessing since your friends just left you're taking me up on my offer?" Luke asked, still smiling widely.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. "No funny business. This is just as friends. Don't think I've forgotten about all the other stuff that's happened."

Luke put his hands up in surrender. "Ok, ok I promise. Just as friends. Jeez Blondie don't interrogate me."

Annabeth punched his arm jokingly as the two of them continued walking down through the various carnival games and rides.

"Well I have to admit. Tonight wasn't horrible." Annabeth teased as Luke followed close behind her to the front porch of her house.

"Well I aim to please Blondie." Luke replied once they stopped in front of the door to Annabeth's house. She turned to him and smiled. It was nearly ten o'clock at night. If it hadn't been a Saturday night her mother would've killed her.

"Thanks" She said suddenly.

"For what?"

"For...everything. Getting me to forget about the stress of senior year, driving me home when Thalia didn't answer, winning me this stuffed animal. All of it." She explained, holding up the small cat plush toy he'd won from a ring toss carnival game.

It kind of reminded her of when Percy had bought her that small owl plush toy from their road trip. She mentally cursed herself for letting him into her mind yet again.

Before she could think about it any longer Luke surprised her by leaning in close. She hesitated and widened her eyes in question at what he was going to do. He settled for placing a light peck on her cheek. Annabeth stood in place when he pulled away. There was an awkward silence.

“I’ll see you soon Blondie?” Luke asked after another second.

“Uh...yeah. Night Luke.” She said lowly.

“Night Annabeth.” He turned around and started the trek back to his car.

Annabeth twisted the doorknob and stepped inside her house. She closed it and then leaned against the wall after taking off her shoes. She stared at the plush in her hands.

She realized something that night that she’ll never forget.

That evening had been a lot of fun. She liked hanging out with Luke and talking to him. He was a nice guy and she knew he’d changed from the person he used to be. His flirty comments and gestures were sweet. He was a pretty perfect guy and Annabeth didn’t think he would hurt her if they were ever together. It was all so *easy* with him but...

She didn’t like him. Not in the way Luke liked her.

She didn’t feel insane butterflies when she was around him. She didn’t feel sparks whenever they touched. She didn’t see him as anything more than a friend. She realized that she liked the *idea* of him, the idea of someone who wasn’t super complicated and confusing. She didn’t see him the way he saw her and that was because of something she’d been trying to avoid happening. Something involving Percy Jackson.

Everything with the captain of the Trident’s team was complicated and difficult. There was just so much drama. She was terrified but attracted to him all at once. She knew if she got too close he could break her heart. She didn’t need that in her life right now but she couldn’t help it.

She liked Percy Jackson. Hell, she was falling in love with him and she didn’t even know it.

He was the one she wanted.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29

“Dude please tell me you’re kidding.” Leo’s look of astonishment explained everything his words couldn’t as he stared at Jason in shock.

The blonde boy sighed seriously. “I wish I was. But we can’t tell Percy. If he ever found out it would kill him.”

The two of them were standing across from one another near a set of lockers. The final bell for classes had just rung meaning yet another Monday was over and done with. Jason had waited for Leo to get his stuff from his locker so they could head to the car since they were carpooling. Jason had just finished recounting to Leo something that Piper had told him over the weekend. Apparently rumors were spreading all around the school that Luke and Annabeth had gone out on a date. Piper had told Jason that in Annabeth’s mind it wasn’t a date but she knew Luke thought of it that way, even if he’d told her it was only as friends. It was only a matter of time before Percy started hearing stuff. It was honestly a miracle that he hadn’t heard anything yet considering high school gossip spread like wildfire.

“Tell me what?”

Jason squeezed his eyes shut and mentally face palmed himself for being so stupid once he heard the familiar voice of his best friend. He hesitantly reopened his eyes and turned around to find the all too famous Percy Jackson staring back at him. His green eyes were wild and curious as he waited for Jason to explain.

“That...Leo’s finally managed to get an A on a writing assignment...?” Jason tried, not sounding believable at all.

Percy raised an eyebrow in disbelief as he switched his gaze to the curly-haired Latino who was now standing next to Jason and looking pretty nervous about something. Percy looked back towards Jason and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Yeah and I just won the lottery. What’s really going on that I shouldn’t know about?” Percy stated sarcastically, looking in between his two closest friends.

For someone who wasn’t always the sharpest crayon in the box, Percy was very smart when it came to reading people and right at that moment he knew Jason and Leo were hiding something from him.

“It’s nothing really.” Jason brushed it off, looking back towards Percy nervously.

The guy had been in a pretty depressing mood since the week before when he’d talked with Annabeth. Jason didn’t dare ask about the details of the encounter but what he did know was that Percy looked completely broken whenever her name was even brought up. He was really hurting which was why he really couldn’t find out about the rumors circulating that involved Luke and Annabeth. Curse him and his inability to whisper or check behind him before speaking. Percy wasn’t the type of person to just let something go that easily.

“Yeah man it’s nothing.” Leo added nonchalantly. Percy still wasn’t buying it.

“Well if it’s nothing then it shouldn’t be that hard to just tell me now should it?” The hockey

captain pointed out. Leo and Jason shared matching looks of panic before Jason finally felt his resolve crumbling.

“Look bro, Saturday night I met up with Piper at the carnival and well she kinda told me Luke had asked Annabeth to spend a few hours with him at the fair. She went off with Luke and later that night Piper and I saw the two of them together and it looked kind of like...a date. The last we saw of them was Luke offering to give her a lift home. I’m sorry dude.”

“It could have been nothing though! Annabeth’s a nice girl and she probably just didn’t want to make Castellan look bad by rejecting him.” Leo offered, trying to lighten the atmosphere.

“Yeah? Like she rejected me?” Percy muttered angrily. It was barely audible but there was venom in his hatred-filled words.

Percy’s facial features were contorted into those of both hurt and betrayal. He was upset and furious at the same time. He couldn’t believe it. Annabeth had forgiven Luke and even gone out with the blonde male but she could barely even say a word to him? He felt like he’d just been kicked in the gut a hundred times. The thought of Luke and Annabeth together made his stomach churn.

He tried to see everything from Annabeth’s point of view. While Percy had both made out with another girl and gotten into a fistfight with Castellan at Silena’s party, Luke had only done one of those things. Annabeth must have found it easier to forgive him but again, Percy technically hadn’t done anything horrible. He felt awful about the whole kissing Rachel incident but Annabeth wasn’t his girlfriend and Luke had the fight coming for a long time. Annabeth was shutting him out even after he’d apologized and expressed his feelings to her. The least he deserved was some type of closure.

“Perce? You alright buddy?” Jason asked concerned.

He placed a comforting hand on Percy’s shoulder. Leo shot the hockey captain a worried glance and Percy snapped back to reality. He hadn’t realized how long he’d been spaced out but it must have been for a while because the only people left in the school seemed to be the students staying for after school clubs or sports. Everyone else had quickly exited the high school after a long and boring day. It was raining outside which didn’t make things any better. The weather pretty much matched how he felt.

“I need to talk to her.” Percy mumbled finally after a long pause of silence. His eyes focused themselves on the ground angrily.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea man?” Leo asked hesitantly.

“Yeah the last time you two talked it didn’t end so well. Maybe she just needs some space.” Jason added.

“I just need some closure on this mess. I mean did she ever see me as something more than a friend or was she always into Castellan? I’m tired of feeling so defeated and upset over a girl. It’s like when I’m around her I can’t breathe and I hate it!” Percy shouted exasperatedly.

After another few minutes of arguing, Leo and Jason managed to convince Percy to head home rather than to speak with Annabeth while he was so fired up. Percy had agreed to head home knowing that hockey practice started soon and he would most likely see her at the rink.

Annabeth let out a sigh of relief once she got off the phone with her figure skating coach Christina.

Her and Rachel were excused from their training sessions that afternoon due to the heavy rain that was falling outside. Coach Hedge had cancelled the hockey practice for the day as well. The blonde had never been so glad to not be skating. Apparently the teachers had decided to all give a lot of homework on the same day so Annabeth needed the extra hours to get through it all.

It was close to ten o'clock when she finally managed to get through the whole workload. *Only four more days until the weekend* she thought as she changed into her plaid pajama shorts and a solid black colored tank top. The rain was still coming down hard. She could hear it as the raindrops continuously hit her windows and the roof of the house. She found the noise quite soothing and went to the bathroom to brush her teeth and comb her hair before kicking off her slip-on shoes and getting underneath the warm covers of her bed.

[Song Tribute-*I Won't Give Up* by Jason Mraz]

She closed her eyes for a grand total of ten minutes before she jumped at the sound of something hitting her window. At first she thought it was just rain but then it happened again and Annabeth was sure it was something hitting her window.

Thirty seconds later another *ping!* of the glass on her window made her get up out of bed and walk towards the sound. She hesitantly kneeled by the windowsill and lifted the glass up, careful not to get too wet from the rain in the process.

"Annabeth!" She heard a voice call from down below. At first she didn't see anything and she thought she might've been going crazy but after looking around for another minute she spotted the source of the call.

She froze in shock as she observed the boy standing on her lawn looking up at her by the window. His hair was dripping water and his clothes were soaking wet. He had a raincoat on but it didn't seem to be helping much. In his hand were a few small pebbles and she realized that he must've been throwing rocks at her window to get her attention.

"Percy?!" She shouted once she regained her speech. She was starting to wonder if she was dreaming or if he was really outside in the pouring rain in front of her house at 10pm.

"No it's Beyoncé." He shouted back sarcastically. Leave it to him to crack a joke at a time like this. She rolled her eyes, typical Percy.

"What are you doing here?!" Annabeth whisper yelled. The last thing she wanted to do was wake her strict mother up.

If Athena found out a boy was at her daughter's window late at night in the rain Annabeth would be in for a tough scolding that was for sure.

"Just listen, I-I need to get this out." Percy started. Annabeth furrowed her brows in curiosity, getting into a more comfortable position by the window as she looked down at him.

"I was mad at you. I was *so* mad at you when I found out from Jason that you forgave Castellan and went out with him. I wanted to stay angry with you because things were just so much easier when it was like that between us. But I couldn't. I spent the whole afternoon trying to come up with ways to distance myself from you but it didn't work because I went out to clear my head and ended up dragging my ass to your house in the pouring rain to see you."

Annabeth felt her heart skip a beat. She didn't know what to say other than to just stare down at him from her window with butterflies erupting in her stomach.

"I-I need to know if you have feelings for Luke. I need to know if you ever felt anything between us or if it was all in my head. I need closure Chase and then I promise I'll never bother you again." Percy finished, staring up at her expectantly.

Annabeth didn't say anything. She was too busy trying to not grin at all the sweet things he'd said. She felt like she was in a movie or maybe even a romance novel. He was staring at her with those gorgeous eyes and she was staring right back. Standing out in the rain at 10pm and soaking wet, Annabeth thought that he'd never looked more attractive.

Finally after another second of silence, Annabeth made a motion with her hand. "Stay there" She said before closing the window and quickly exchanging her pajama shorts for a pair of sweatpants.

The smile never left her face as she quietly rushed down the stairs and out the door with an umbrella handy. When she made it outside she could barely see ten feet in front of her. The rain was coming down in sheets. She opened her umbrella but it lasted about 2 seconds because the wind ripped it out of her grip and into the night. So much for trying to keep dry. It probably hadn't been a good idea to go out in sweatpants and a tank top either.

She found him a minute later by nearly bumping into him. He steadied her and she felt tingles where his hands gripped her arms. He stared at her through the rain and saw that her blonde curls were now wet but she didn't seem to mind it.

"Hi." She started out pathetically.

"Hey." He chuckled and replied back. He smiled at her but his eyes looked a bit guarded and hesitant.

There was an awkward moment where neither one of them talked. Then Annabeth realized that Percy was waiting for her to say something. He'd practically expressed an entire speech and she'd barely said anything.

"I-I don't have feelings for Luke. Not romantic ones at least. I realized the other day that I only seem him as a friend and that's all it'll ever be." Annabeth shouted through the loud noise of the rain.

Percy's eyes shot up from the ground to stare right into her grey orbs. His expression was a mixture of relief and hope. His hands were still holding her upright and his touch was driving her crazy. He looked like he was trying to figure out where to start in his words.

"Annabeth I'm so sorry, about everything. I know I messed up but is there any chance at earning your forgiveness? Because if there is I'll do whatever it takes. You're too important to me to just forget about. I need you in my life Princess."

His words made her feel like a pile of mush. If this was some dream she was having she never wanted to wake up. Here he was, Percy Jackson, the hottest guy at their high school, telling her that he needed *her*. Who needed Annabeth Chase in their life? She never would've guessed this would be happening in a million years.

Her clothes were now soaked, her hair flattened from the water. But her stare didn't waver from Percy's. He was persistent she'd give him that. Most guys wouldn't risk getting hypothermia out in the rain to see you. Percy Jackson wasn't most guys. She'd learned that a long time ago.

"I forgive you." She whispered quietly. Percy looked confused for a second and she realized he probably hadn't heard her.

“What?” He shouted as the loud droplets of water fell around them.

“I said I forgive you!” Annabeth said louder this time.

Percy’s reaction made her laugh. First he was shocked, then his features contorted to those of pure joy and then the biggest grin spread across his lips. His smile was contagious because Annabeth was soon smiling as well. They stood there for a minute, just smiling stupidly at each other.

It was his turn to surprise her. He surged forward and picked her up in an embrace, spinning her around as her arms encircled his neck and she held on tight. She shrieked at his actions and he laughed lightly in her ear before placing her back on the ground.

“So we’re friends again?” Percy asked, still grinning like a madman. Annabeth laughed and nodded her head in response.

She felt like she was floating on air. Her hands were now resting on his shoulders and his were placed on her waist. She realized that being there with Percy and listening to everything he had to say further confirmed her feelings towards him.

It started to rain harder all around them.

“Shit, here get under!” Percy yelled. He took off his rain jacket and held it above his head so she could step under it.

Together, the two of them ran to Annabeth’s front porch where there was a small roof to stand under. They laughed at their soaking wet selves and Annabeth moved all her hair to one side and squeezed the water out of it. Percy shook his hair like a dog and Annabeth let out a high-pitched scream when the droplets from his hair got all over her. When he looked back at her his damp hair was messier than usual and Annabeth smiled.

She had no idea what had gotten into her but something possessed her to step closer towards him. Her hand had a mind of its own as she slowly ran her fingers through his hair to push the wet strands away from his face. Percy held his breath as he looked at her from their close proximity. She was focused on his raven locks but she saw him staring from the corner of her eye. Finally, she met his gaze and her breath hitched at how close they were.

Her mind was swirling with thoughts of what it would be like to kiss him. She knew how he felt about her and the ball was in her court now. It felt like they were in that position for hours, neither one of them making a single movement. Annabeth then noticed Percy’s gaze move from her eyes to her lips and then back up again. Her heart rate increased and she felt the space between them get smaller. There was no one there to interrupt the moment this time.

She could feel his breath on her face and she was sure that he could feel hers as well. It was like everything was going in slow motion. She didn’t move away but she didn’t lean in either. She was frozen in place as she felt Percy move closer and closer towards her, testing her limits to see if she’d stop him. She didn’t stop him.

After another second, Annabeth managed to unfreeze. She felt herself leaning towards him. She closed her eyes and then after a beat his lips grazed hers delicately. His touch was feather-light leaving Annabeth wanting more. She used the hand that was still in his hair to pull him back down towards her, letting him know that it was ok.

Percy complied happily. His lips met hers once again, this time more firmly. His lips were soft against hers. Kissing in the rain, talk about clichés.

Annabeth's not going to tell you that when they kissed fireworks erupted like the fourth of July around them or that sparks flew in every direction because that stuff just wasn't reality. What did happen though was that she felt...light. Like she didn't have a care in the world and was content beyond belief. She felt like she could face anything and all her problems left her mind.

His hands gripped her waist comfortingly and she placed both of her hands on his shoulders. She was the first to pull away, gently pushing his shoulders back to break the kiss and increase the space between them. Percy stared at her curiously to see her reaction.

"I um, I-I should get back inside. I'll see you tomorrow?" Annabeth said nervously. She nearly stumbled into one of the potted plants on the porch but managed to stay upright.

Percy eyed her confusedly before clearing his throat. "Yeah, great. See you tomorrow."

With a final nod Annabeth fled inside and placed her back against the door breathing heavily. She raised a hand to her mouth. Her lips still tingled from the kiss.

The last thing she remembered was biting her lip to keep herself from smiling like a lovesick girl before she went back up to her room to change and go to sleep.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30

Annabeth walked into school the next day unsure of where she stood with a certain captain of the Trident's hockey team. Don't get her wrong, the night before had practically been a fairy tale and she still felt butterflies fluttering in her stomach whenever she thought about the whole ordeal but she was now super confused as to what they were. If she was being honest with herself, she didn't know if she was ready to get into a relationship. She didn't know if she *should*. Annabeth knew she kind of left Percy in the dark when she rushed inside after their kiss, barely saying anything before closing the door on him. She felt bad but there was a reason she'd done so. The thought of being with someone who she cared about so much and giving them the ability to break her heart scared her.

Annabeth was so deep in thought, she almost ran straight into Thalia who was busy talking to Piper, Calypso and Nico about something near a set of lockers. She approached her group of friends and they all smiled when they saw her.

"Hey Annabeth. Maybe you can settle this debate for us. Nico claims that black is a color but isn't it like, no color?" Piper asked, turning towards her blonde friend for an answer.

Annabeth's eyebrows shot up in amusement. "You guys had nothing better to talk about than trying to figure out if black was a color or not?"

"Just answer the question. These two are giving me a headache." Thalia mumbled, massaging the sides of her forehead. Annabeth found it odd that her best friend was at school earlier than the bell for first period but she didn't question it.

"Well technically Piper's right. Black is considered the absence of color just like how white is considered all the colors of the rainbow combined." Annabeth explained after another minute. Piper grinned triumphantly, shooting Nico a cocky look.

"What?! Then why do we have black and white crayons? I swear I will never understand the world we live in." Nico stated dramatically.

"Dramatic much? You've been spending way too much time with Will." Calypso joked. Annabeth laughed along with her.

Before anything else could be said, the person Annabeth had been thinking about since she woke up that morning emerged through the front doors of the high school. She couldn't help it, her eyes drifted to where he was.

Walking in between Jason Grace and Leo Valdez, Percy Jackson stood laughing at something one of his friends had said. He looked undeniably attractive as he did pretty much every day. He was wearing his usual black scuffed converse and a pair of dark washed jeans from the waist down. From the waist up he had on a grey t-shirt with a black leather jacket hoodie over top with the grey hood sticking out of the leather. He was holding only one of the two straps from his backpack on his shoulder as he walked down the crowded hallway.

Annabeth wasn't the only one who turned around when she saw him. Practically every girl within a mile radius was fixing their hair or smiling flirtatiously towards him. She really couldn't blame them.

Percy didn't hang out with the same people he used to before but that didn't mean he'd lost any of his popularity at Goode High even though that's what his goal was. If anything his popularity had *increased* since he'd left those people.

He was nice to just about everyone he came across. He tried getting to know anyone he could, especially the people he used to disregard when he was with the stuck up populars. Annabeth had even seen him helping a few freshmen with their stubborn lockers and defending a grade ten boy who was getting bullied by his former 'friends' last week. People adored him because of that and he didn't even know it. Not to mention, he was the captain of the school's hockey team that was now going to states. If that didn't make him popular Annabeth didn't know what did.

As the three males got closer to Annabeth and her group of friends, she saw Piper wave to her boyfriend. Jason waved back and then nudged Percy and Leo, gesturing for them to follow him to the group. Annabeth felt nerves building up in her stomach. Percy hadn't spotted her yet. He was busy talking to Leo about something while blindly following Jason.

She turned back around to her friends, not wanting to look like she was swooning over Percy even though she had been. She noticed for the first time that Will had joined them. Wow she must've really been spaced out to have completely missed him joining the group. He was standing next to Nico, an arm draped around his boyfriend lazily.

"Morning Pipes." Jason greeted his girlfriend sweetly, lacing his fingers with hers and pecking Piper's forehead. She smiled and leaned into his touch.

Annabeth noticed Calypso walk up to Leo who grinned and wrapped an arm around her waist smugly. The two of them had become an official couple a few days ago and everyone was happy for them. Piper had even come up with a couple name for them: Caleo. Calypso despised the idea of their names combined but Leo seemed to love it.

The grey-eyed girl felt someone staring at her. When she moved her gaze from the ground up to the culprit she wasn't surprised when her eyes met a pair of sea green ones. His lips parted to form a smile and Annabeth couldn't take it anymore. She grinned just as widely back.

"Hey" He started.

"Hey yourself" She replied teasingly.

His gaze never left hers. Throughout the short exchange Annabeth failed to notice Will Solace staring wide-eyed and gawking at the two of them. None of the others seemed to be paying attention to the fact that the blonde girl and the raven-haired boy couldn't stop smiling at each other but he'd noticed. Something had definitely changed between them and he would damned if he didn't force Annabeth to spill the beans.

With that objective in mind, the sun-kissed male cleared his throat rather loudly before speaking.

"Well first period starts soon so we should probably start walking! Come on Annabeth!" Nico's boyfriend shouted loud enough for Annabeth to come out of her trance and stare at Will confusedly.

"But the bell hasn't even rung yet. And you're not even in my first per-"

"See ya later!" Will said, cutting Annabeth off and taking her arm, practically dragging her along with him down the hall.

When they were out of sight from the others, Will unceremoniously tightened his grip on the

blonde and pulled her into an empty classroom. Annabeth, now confused out of her mind, stared wide-eyed at the boy in front of her.

“Spill. Now.” Will ordered, crossing his arms over his chest and moving to stand in front of the closed door so Annabeth couldn’t leave.

“What?” She said, clearly lost with the whole situation.

“Oh don’t you ‘what’ me missy! What the hell happened between you and Percy?!” He yelled insistently.

Annabeth blushed, further confirming Will’s suspicions.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She claimed stubbornly.

“Oh please I wasn’t born yesterday. You two couldn’t keep your eyes off each other this morning. Not to mention you completely spaced out when I said hi to you this morning because you were too busy undressing him with your eyes!”

“Will!” Annabeth smacked his arm, blushing harder after hearing his words.

“What? I mean I don’t blame you. The guy’s practically a God. If he were gay Nico would definitely have some competition. Don’t tell him I said that though.”

Annabeth looked down, rolling her eyes at her friend’s sassy attitude. They stood there for a few seconds without saying anything. She knew he was waiting for her to say something. She hadn’t told anyone about the kiss yet. She pondered the thought of telling Will. It didn’t seem like that bad of idea and it wasn’t like he was going to leave her alone until she said something.

“Fine! So maybe something did happen. We, well we kinda sorta...”

“Spit it out Chase!”

“We kissed.” She said quietly, biting her lip to hide her smile as she looked at her shoes. There was a moment of silence. Will’s reaction was priceless.

“WHAT?!”

“I said-”

“YOU AND PERCY KISSED?!” Will shouted, taking hold of Annabeth’s shoulders.

“Shhhhh! Announce it to the whole school why don’t you?”

“Wha- When did this happen? Where did this happen?! I need details!” He added, shaking her shoulders and staring intensely into her eyes.

Annabeth sighed. “It happened last night, he-”

“Last night?!”

She shot him a look before continuing. “Yes, last night. I was getting ready to go to bed and I heard someone throwing rocks at my window. I opened the window and saw him there-”

“But it was raining last night. He went to see you in the pouring rain?!” Will cooed excitedly.

“Do you want to hear the rest of the story or not?” Annabeth said, faking annoyance because she herself was being reminded of how sweet of a gesture Percy made.

“Ok, ok. I’m sorry. Shutting up now.” Will stated, pretending to zip his mouth shut and throw out a fake key behind his back.

“Anyways, I saw him standing below my window. He started saying all these incredibly sweet things about how he couldn’t distance himself from me even if he wanted to. Eventually it got to the point where I felt the urge to see him from closer. So I joined him outside in my sweats and forgave him for everything that happened at Silena’s party. It started raining harder and even though we were both soaking wet we ran under my porch. Then there was a...a moment between us. Next thing I knew he was leaning in to kiss me and I let him.”

When she was done she wasn’t the only one who had a cheshire smile on her face. Annabeth could see that Will was practically dying of the urge to speak so she gestured for him to talk after she was finished.

Before speaking the boy in front of her made possibly the most high- pitched sound Annabeth had ever heard and jumped up and down a few times happily. She was starting to think Will was more invested in the situation than she was.

“You kissed in the rain?! Dear Gods my Percabeth heart! You two are killing me right now. It’s like you’re living some type of romantic fantasy!” Will squeaked out. He was in total fangirl mode.

Annabeth laughed. “Yeah...maybe.” She said unsurely

“Whoa, wow, wow. What do you mean by *maybe*? Percy Jackson aka the school’s number one hottie kissed you in the freaking RAIN! Why do you sound so unsure of something? Oh no was the kiss bad? Do you not like him like that? Did he-”

“Will slow down!” Annabeth said, cutting him off from his rant.

“Sorry, sorry. It’s just...why the conflicted face? I thought you liked him.”

She sighed again. “I do.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“I just...I don’t know if it’s such a good idea. I’ve only had one other boyfriend in my life and it was just a fling back in grade nine. With Percy it’s like everything’s different. I can see myself falling in love with him and that scares the hell out of me. We only have half of senior year and the summer left before college. I-I don’t know what I’m going to do Will.”

He shot her an apologetic look before placing his hands on the sides of her arms comfortingly. She smiled sadly at him and waited for him to say something.

“Look this is going to sound super cheesy but if you want to be with him Annabeth then be with him. He clearly wants to be with you. You can’t live your life if you’re always afraid of the future and what’s to come. Live in the moment and follow your heart because it makes life so much easier.”

Annabeth furrowed her brows. She had no idea who the person standing before her was. One minute he was freaking out over her kiss with Percy and the next he was all serious and wise. Who knew Will Solace had a way with words.

“Did you get that from a Disney show or something?” She finally said.

Will laughed and shook his head. “Just think about what I said ok? I’ve seen the way you act around Percy. You two would be great together so don’t let something as small as fear get in the way of that.”

Annabeth smiled warmly at him, surprising herself by bringing him in for a hug. She was glad she told him, she felt like a small weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

She thought deeply about what he said to her. Maybe he was right, she shouldn’t let fear control her life. Right at that moment the bell for first period went off.

What a morning.

The rest of the school day went by like normal. Since the rain had stopped there was skating practice that day for both teams like usual. Even though Rachel and Annabeth were the only two girls moving on to the state competition the team still had practice together year round. The only thing that had changed was the fact that Rachel and Annabeth got their own private practice each day at a certain time.

They practiced various jumps and cross over drills during the team practice in the small rink that day. For her individual practice afterwards, Annabeth continued working on her routine with the help of Christina. Her coach had told her that picking a song and then relating it to something personal to skate to made for an incredible performance. That was why Annabeth had decided to dig deep into her past for her performance. She had to have hope that she could handle the routine without getting lost emotionally.

When it was Rachel’s turn to practice her routine Annabeth changed into her street clothes and started her trek over to her car in the parking lot of the rink. As she was shouldering her duffle bag and getting her keys out to unlock the car, someone shouted from behind her.

“Annabeth wait up!”

She knew the voice all too well. She stopped and turned around to find the one and only Percy Jackson jogging towards her, hockey duffle bag resting on his shoulder. When he caught up to her the two smiled at each other before starting to walk again. Annabeth blushed and kicked the ground with her foot nervously. Percy placed his hands in his pockets.

“Hey” She said quietly.

“Hey yourself” He replied, repeating their encounter from this morning. Annabeth smiled shyly.

When they got to her car she saw that Percy was parked in the spot right next to her. Had that been a coincidence or on purpose? She would never know. He turned towards her once they were stopped in front of the vehicle.

“Did your practice run late today?” She asked. All the other Trident’s players were no where to be found and usually they got out when the figure skating team did which would have been an hour ago.

“No I just thought I’d wait till you got out.”

Annabeth smiled, feeling more heat rush to her cheeks. She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear nervously and looked up at him.

“You didn’t have to do that.”

“I wanted to.” He said honestly.

There was a moment where neither one of them said anything. Annabeth lent against the door of her car and then Percy took a deep breath.

“So listen, I wanted to ask you something.” He said, running a hand through his head and scratching the back of his neck.

“Y-yes?” Annabeth stuttered out. She had a feeling she knew what he was going to ask her. He cleared his throat.

“Would you uh, maybe want to um... go out sometime...with me?” He stumbled on his words.

“Like on a date?” Annabeth teased. He was adorable when he was insecure.

“...Yeah. I mean it doesn’t have to be if you don’t want it to be! I just- you know I thought since because of last night and the whole you know *moment* that you-”

Annabeth laughed, cutting off his nervous rant. Percy shyly looked down at his shoes.

“You’re laughing at me”

“I am not!” She argued even though she was laughing silently.

“I’d love to go out with you Percy” His gaze shot up to meet hers excitedly.

“You would?”

She nodded. “Yeah. But its just-”

“Oh no there’s a *but*.” He said in a defeated tone.

“I just- I’m scared...” She whispered just loud enough for him to hear. She hated being vulnerable in front of anyone but she knew he deserved to know the truth.

He looked confused at first but after a few seconds he started to understand what she meant. His eyes shined with something unknown. He adjusted the strap from his duffle bag on his shoulder and took one of her hands in his, rubbing his thumb over the back of her hand delicately before speaking.

“Annabeth I’m not the guy I used to be, I’ve changed. *You’ve* made me into a better person. I know the old me was someone who dated a new girl every week and hung out with the wrong crowd but you have to believe me when I say everything is different with you.” He started.

“You’re so unlike any other girl I’ve met and I would never want to hurt you. I’ll be honest... I’m scared too. I’ve never felt this way about anyone. No one can predict the future but if there’s one thing I’m sure of it’s that I want to be with you.” He took a step closer to her.

“I’m not saying that we have to make anything official right away. Just go on a date with me this Friday and then we can go from there.” He said lowly.

“So what do you say Princess, take a risk with me?” He kept ahold of her hand and interlaced their fingers.

At that point he was looking at her with so much honesty and intensity that Annabeth found herself being completely captivated by him. She felt the nerves in her stomach disappearing as she stared right back at him. She thought about what Will had told her this morning and what Percy had just finished telling her.

“Ok.” She said at last.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31

“Annabeth stop squirming, you’re gonna make me smear your eyeliner!” Piper scolded, lifting up the black pencil liner before the substance got on the blonde’s skin.

“You know I don’t like too much makeup unless it’s for a competition Pipes.” Annabeth huffed, trying her best to stay still so her friend could finish up.

“I promise I’m not doing much. Just some concealer and a few things to make your eyes pop. That’s all.” Piper swore.

When she was done, Annabeth opened her eyes to look at herself in the bathroom mirror. She smiled when she saw herself. She hated to admit it but Piper had really done a great job doing her make up even with a limit to how much she could use. Her skin looked clearer than usual and her grey eyes appeared to look huge with the addition of black eyeliner and mascara.

Piper had also turned her hair from frizzy blonde waves to perfect ringlets with the use of a curling iron earlier that evening. It was Friday night otherwise known as the night of Annabeth and Percy’s first date.

After Percy had asked her out a few days prior, Annabeth felt that it wouldn’t be right not to tell her closest friends. That was why Piper had practically invited herself to Annabeth’s house in order to help her get ready. Annabeth was a bit nervous because the last time Piper had helped her get ready she ended up wearing possibly the shortest dress known to man and it was not comfortable.

She kind of needed Piper though. Ever since she had agreed to go out with Percy the so-called captain of the hockey team had been super secretive about where he was taking her. He hadn’t told her anything but he *had* told Piper. Annabeth wasn’t surprised when she found out Percy caved and told Piper. She could persuade anyone to do anything. It was like some special talent she had.

Much to Annabeth’s dismay, Piper refused to tell her where Percy was taking her on their date. She promised she would help her pick out her outfit but she wouldn’t spill the secret.

“Ok so I already have an idea in my head for what you’re going to wear. I just have to hope you have what I’m looking for.” Piper explained mysteriously once they were both back in Annabeth’s room.

A few minutes passed of Piper making a complete mess of her closet and stopping every few seconds to scold Annabeth for having so many t-shirts and not enough blouses. Athena would probably yell at Annabeth later for the mess in her room but luckily she was working late that day. Finally, the brown-haired girl made a sound of surprise and came out of her now super messy closet with a pair of jeans, some long knitted socks and a slightly off-white knitted sweater.

“Perfect! Now we just need to find you some shoes and then accessorize!” Piper yelled excitedly before shoving the clothes into Annabeth’s hands and pushing her towards the bathroom to change.

Once she had the pieces of clothing on Annabeth stared at herself in the mirror curiously. The outfit was very simple which made her as anxious as ever to know where in the world Percy was taking her.

Percy. Even his name sent the feeling of butterflies fluttering in her stomach. It sounded insanely

cheesy but she was both excited and nervous that she was going on a date with the Trident's star hockey player and captain. She smiled at herself shyly while making her way back towards Piper who was still in her room.

"Great! Now just for some final touches..."

Piper gave her some brown combat boots to go with the look. Annabeth recognized the shoes from the very back of her closet. She hadn't worn them for a long time. She didn't even think she'd had them anymore but apparently she'd been wrong. She slipped on the shoes and then Piper surprised her by pulling out a tan colored pea coat. That definitely wasn't hers.

"I thought I'd loan you this for the night. It goes really well with your outfit and it was just sitting in my closet at home." Piper said kindly, pulling the jacket over her arms.

"Pipes you really didn't have to loan me one of your jackets, especially one that's this expensive-"

"Oh hush it's just a jacket. As long as you promise not to destroy it then you can have it tonight. It's not like I was wearing it anyway." Piper waved it off. Annabeth nodded.

"Thanks Piper. Seriously, for everything." She said honestly, referring to everything her friend had done to help her get ready.

"No problem Anna. Besides, when we're older I'll be able to tell my niece and nephew that I was the one who dressed their mother for their parents first date."

"Piper!"

"Ok, ok I'm sorry. I'm just really happy for you. You and Percy make such an adorable couple!" She said excitedly.

"We're not together Pipes. It's only our first date!" Annabeth replied exasperatedly, a small blush playing across her cheeks.

"You mean you're not together *yet*. Now come on, there's still a couple more things I want to add." Annabeth rolled her eyes, blindly following her friend's lead.

Five minutes later Piper had finally finished getting Annabeth ready. Her outfit consisted of brown combat boots with knitted socks sticking out from the top of the boots, dark skinny jeans, and an off-white sweater. Overtop of that she had on Piper's tan pea coat buttoned up with a white infinity scarf around her neck. Finally, on her head she had on a white knitted beanie with a grey pompom on top of it.

In other words, she was dressed for the cold weather outside which made Annabeth wonder if whatever Percy had planned was going to be outdoors. She tried asking Piper but she just smiled and shook her head mysteriously.

After another few minutes of Piper doing final touchups on Annabeth's look, the doorbell rung from downstairs. Piper immediately stopped what she was doing and jumped up excitedly. Annabeth smiled and rolled her eyes at her friend's ridiculous behavior.

"I'll get the door!" The kaleidoscope girl shouted excitedly before rushing down the stairs two at a time. Annabeth took a deep breath, the nerves slowly building in her chest. She overheard Piper and a certain male talking from below her.

"Hey Percy." Piper greeted nicely.

“Piper” He acknowledged back. Annabeth felt like there was a giant knot in her stomach. He was right downstairs waiting for her.

“Annabeth will be down in a minute. Don’t worry I didn’t tell her where you were going. Just remember to have her home by eleven if you want to keep all your limbs in tact. And don’t you dare try anything funny mister!” Piper threatened.

Percy didn’t say anything right away so Annabeth assumed she should make her way down to save him from Piper’s wrath. That girl could be pretty scary when she wanted to be. After one last look in the mirror, she exited her room and walked down the stairs and over to where she could see Piper standing in front of the door with her back facing her. She couldn’t see Percy but she knew he was on the other side.

Just as she thought, when she walked over she saw that Piper was glaring intimidatingly towards Percy and he looked slightly terrified of the smaller girl.

“Okay Pipes. I think you’ve scared him enough.” She said teasingly as she approached the two of them. Piper huffed and backed down.

She felt Percy’s stare on her as soon as she came into their line of vision. She almost instantly met his gaze and when she did she couldn’t look away. He smiled widely at her before he started talking and she felt her cheeks heat up as she smiled back.

“Hey. You look great Princess.” He started. Annabeth blushed and fidgeted with the buttons on her pea coat.

“Thanks. You don’t look too bad yourself hockey boy.” She complimented after observing his outfit.

He seemed to be dressed for the cold weather outside as well. He was wearing some jeans and a black North Face fleece jacket with a grey hoodie underneath it. His hair was just the perfect amount of messy and he had on his signature black high top converse.

“Shall we?” Percy asked, sticking out a hand towards her. She took his hand in hers and allowed him to lead her through the doorway.

“Have fun you two! But not too much fun!!” Piper yelled before Annabeth shut the door behind her. She was now blushing madly. She knew Percy had heard that.

“Sorry she’s...insane.” Annabeth apologized shyly.

Percy laughed. “Hey I get it. If it were Jason there would’ve been a lot more embarrassing comments than that one.”

She shook her head. “Those two really are perfect for each other.”

“You’re telling me.” He said, leading her over to his car and closing the door for her after she got in before running over to the driver’s side.

A few seconds of silence passed as Percy started up the car and put it in reverse to get out of the driveway.

“So will you tell me where we’re going now?” She asked hopefully. His expression changed to one of teasing as he smirked and chuckled lowly.

“Not a chance Princess. You’re just gonna have to wait and see.”

When Percy parked his car on the busy street and told Annabeth they had arrived she was confused. They were in the middle of New York City. Don’t get her wrong the city was absolutely gorgeous at night with everything lit up but what exactly were they going to be doing?

Percy didn’t let her think about it for too long before helping her out of the car and leading her through the busy streets of New York. She would’ve been fine if it hadn’t been for Percy tightening his grip on her hand as they walked. He walked beside her and she blushed whenever she stared at their hands. They walked about a block and then they stopped and Annabeth finally realized where Percy had planned on taking her for their date.

About twenty feet in front of them was the all too famous Rockefeller Center ice rink.

She gasped excitedly. It sounded lame but even though she’d lived in New York all her life not once had she ever skated on the giant Rockefeller ice rink. It was absolutely stunning. People were skating left and right. She saw little kids with their parents learning how to ice skate, couples skating together and even a few elderly people gliding across the smooth surface.

“Rockefeller Center. How did you know I never-”

“I overheard you telling Calypso you’ve always wanted to skate here one day.”

Annabeth searched her mind for the memory. She vaguely seemed to remember telling her close friend a long time ago in the parking lot of the rink after practice. It had been back when she and Percy hated each other and he’d still bothered to remember such a small detail. Her heart warmed at the thought.

“That was so long ago. I can’t believe you remember that conversation.” She said, her voice swooning slightly.

Percy shrugged as if it wasn’t a big deal but she could see a faint dusting of pink on his cheeks. Her grip tightened on his hand and he smiled.

“Come on.”

“But we don’t even have our skates.” She said.

“We’re renting skates. That’s the beauty of this date. Tonight we don’t have to worry about competitions or state championship games. We can just skate in those god awful blue plastic skates and pretend like we don’t have all this pressure on ourselves to do great for everyone around us. Tonight we skate for ourselves and no one else.”

Annabeth smiled at the sea-green eyed boy. She didn’t think it was possible for a guy to make her feel so warm and fuzzy inside but that’s exactly what he did to her.

“Well then what are we waiting for? I hear a pair of blue plastic figure skates calling my name!” Annabeth said happily. Percy chuckled.

“To the skate rental shack!” He shouted goofily. Annabeth laughed as he dragged her over to a crowd of people waiting to get either figure skates or hockey skates.

[Song Tribute-*Tonight* by Coasts]

“Percy stop you’re going to make me fall!” Annabeth shouted happily as she skated rapidly around the ice rink, dodging random people every few seconds as she flew by with Percy right on her tail.

Five minutes after stepping foot on the ice and somehow it had gotten to the point of Percy chasing Annabeth around the rink while the two of them tried their best not to bump into people or fall. They were acting like little kids and people kept staring at them but neither one of them cared. They were having fun and that’s all that mattered.

Annabeth didn’t have to look back to know that Percy was catching up to her. She tried her best to skate faster but it was hard with all the people around them. Not to mention she had figure skates on while he had hockey skates on. Still, she pushed forward, feeling the cold wind in her face and her hair flying in the wind. There was a song playing through the speakers for everyone to hear and she found herself feeling relaxed and carefree. It was nice to not have to worry about anything for a night.

As predicted, Percy’s skating form got closer to hers and within the next minute he’d caught up with her. She turned around to congratulate him but was met with something completely unexpected. She blamed it on the fact that they were skating in cheap skates that neither one of them was used to.

“Gotcha-wow!” Annabeth shrieked when Percy crashed right into her, wrapping his arms around her protectively before the both of them lost balance and toppled onto the ice in a split second.

Percy ended up landing on top of her while she crash-landed onto the cold ice beneath them. He placed his hands on either side of her so that all his body weight wasn’t on top of her.

“Are you ok?” He asked concernedly, his eyes roaming all over her face to see if she was hurt. She didn’t say anything and just stared up from under him.

“Nice one hockey boy.”

She started laughing, her mind replaying the situation over and over again. He let out a sigh of relief and soon enough he started laughing along with her. Before they knew it the two of them were just a couple of people laying down on the Rockefeller ice rink and laughing hysterically.

[Song Tribute-*Midnight* by Kodakline]

She felt his breath on her face when he laughed and she was sure he could feel hers too considering they were in a pretty intimate position. That idea didn’t register in her head until they had calmed down and he was still on top of her looking into her eyes. His green orbs sparkled and she found it impossible to break the intense gaze. They were still breathing heavily, her breath becoming visible in the cold night with puffs of white coming out every time she exhaled. Her nose and cheeks were red from the chilly weather and so were his.

“What?” She asked quietly, moving a strand of hair away from his eyes as he looked curiously down at her. She waited for him to speak because he looked like he wanted to say something.

“Nothing I just...” He trailed off, leaving her more confused than before. She furrowed her eyebrows but kept her eyes locked on his. He was looking at her with such concentration and emotion and she couldn’t figure out why.

“God you’re beautiful.” He whispered honestly to her once a minute of blissful silence had passed.

Annabeth’s breath hitched in her throat. The smile disappeared from her face as her expression changed to a serious one. She didn’t know if she’d heard him right but she hoped to god that she

had. She saw that his smile had faded too. She suddenly didn't mind the fact that her back was currently being pressed into the ice or that her beanie was getting all wet. All she could process was that she was on a date with Percy Jackson and he had just called her beautiful.

He started leaning down slowly. She closed her eyes when his lips were mere centimeters away from her own. His nose brushed against hers and then right when he was about to close the gap between them...

"Attention skaters. Please make your way off the ice for the Zamboni to smoothen the surface of the rink." A voice announced through the speaker above them.

Everyone started making their way to the entrance of the ice. There was movement all around them. Much to Annabeth's disappointment, Percy pushed himself off of her to stand back up. He offered her his hand and she took it, brushing the ice shavings off her jeans once she was standing up. Neither one of them said anything while they waited for the giant ice machine to clean the rink.

When they were allowed back on Annabeth mended the tension in the air by taking his hand hesitantly in hers. From the corner of her eye she saw him smile at her. They skated side by side for a while just observing the other people around them. She didn't really know why but ever since she was little Annabeth had loved people watching. So many different lives, so many different stories around them.

"So, how am I doing so far?" Percy asked from beside her as they continued to skate around the rink.

"Hmm well I *guess* this is better than my usual Friday nights of sitting at home watching Netflix." She teased when she realized he was talking about how the date was going for her.

Percy laughed. "I'll take what I can get."

They spent the next hour skating around the rink slowly. They talked about the most random things and Annabeth felt genuinely happy. It was peaceful and relaxing to skate for fun rather than training everyday like she'd been doing forever. She knew that Percy must've been thinking the same thing.

At one point Percy had adjusted his grip on her hand by moving to interlace his fingers with hers. Annabeth tried her best to hide her smile at the action by biting her lip. They continued talking as if nothing had happened but the only thing she could think about was the fact that his hand felt so natural in hers.

"So I guess this is it" Annabeth caught the hint of disappointment in Percy's voice once they were stopped in front of the door to her house.

Without a second's hesitation, she grasped his bicep muscle and leant up to place a soft kiss to his cheek. He was surprised at the action but smiled nonetheless, looking down at her curiously. She blushed and released her grip on his arm, taking a step back.

"What was that for?"

"I had a great time tonight. It was nice to have an escape from everything so...thanks Percy." She said shyly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

"Does this mean I can take you out on another date sometime?" He asked hopefully.

“I’d like that.” She said quietly.

She caught his eye as he took a step closer to her. Her heart rate started to pick up speed. He leant down towards her face and she got a close up view of his incredibly attractive facial features in the dim light from her front porch.

“Can I kiss you?” He whispered against her lips when there was barely any space between them.

She nodded silently and then his lips were on hers and all thoughts left her mind. He kissed her gently and she nearly melted on the spot. It was slightly longer than the first time they had kissed, this one lasting about eight seconds before he pulled away. He knew she wanted to take everything slow so he didn’t want to rush her.

When he pulled away Annabeth kept her hands on his shoulders. He smiled down at her and she grinned shyly back, hoping he couldn’t see the blush on her cheeks.

“Goodnight Annabeth”

He turned around and started the trek back to his car. She watched his retreating form while leaning against one of the pillars of her house.

“Goodnight Percy” She whispered into the night air once he was gone.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32

The sounds of a big audience and music filled the air. Annabeth took a deep shaky breath in attempt to calm her nerves. It didn't help much. Her heart was pounding so loud she was sure you could hear it from a mile away. It was yet another competition day. The second to last one of the entire season actually. Sectionals had some of the best skaters of her age. If that didn't make someone nervous she didn't know what did.

She was in one of the many dry rooms at the ice rink where sectionals was being held. Luckily the rink had only been about a 2 hour drive from where she lived. Some people had to travel way further than that to compete. The time was currently 1:15pm and she was supposed to be in the ice arena waiting to skate since she was up soon like Rachel was. Christina was probably figuring out ways to murder her right at that moment but she was too busy trying not to blank on her entire routine to care.

She'd watched some of the girls she was competing against skate earlier when they were rehearsing and needless to say, Annabeth felt like a beginner compared to them. Their jumps and landings were so structured and solid that it made her question everything she was doing. She didn't even have Calypso or Piper to calm her down because they were no longer skaters in the competitions for the season.

Meanwhile in a different part of the building, Percy was searching everywhere for the blonde-haired girl. Piper, Thalia and Calypso were right behind him. Jason, Leo, Will and Nico had offered to save all of their seats while they looked for Annabeth after Christina had walked by freaking out about the fact that she'd lost one of her skaters.

They decided to split up to cover more ground in the giant rink they were in. Percy found a random hall and headed down it. While walking he discovered that several doors were locked. Right when he was about to give up and start looking somewhere else, he saw one door to his left cracked open just the slightest bit. He walked in hesitantly, creaking the door open a bit more.

Annabeth jumped at the sound of the door opening more. She looked to her right and immediately caught the pair of familiar sea green eyes staring at her nervous and pacing form. She couldn't help when a feeling of relief washed over her upon seeing him.

When Percy entered the small room his gaze instantly went towards a head of familiar blonde hair. She looked beautiful with her hair up in a perfect bun, a few strands framing her face. Hiding her skating outfit was her quarter zip and track pants over top. Her makeup was neatly done. He'd found her but she didn't appear to be doing too well. Her facial expression showed that she was scared and nervous. Since she was standing up Percy could only assume that she had been pacing across the room as well. She stopped once he'd walked in.

"Hey-"

"Percy" Annabeth sighed in relief, cutting him off mid-sentence. She felt her body react before her brain and rushed over to him, throwing her arms around him in an embrace.

Percy returned it wholeheartedly, his arms encircling her protectively. Things between the two of them had been going pretty great. It had been a little less than two weeks since their first date and since then they'd gone out twice more. One time with friends and one time without. They weren't

exclusive, but Percy was hoping to change that soon.

The first thing he noticed when he was hugging her was that she was physically shaking with nerves. Percy had always known Annabeth to be such a confident and fearless person, seeing her so scared surprised him. He rubbed her back soothingly with his hands.

“We’ve been looking everywhere for you. What’s wrong Princess?” He asked lowly.

She took a shaky breath before speaking. “I don’t know if I can do this Perce.” She whispered into his shoulder.

His arms tightened around her before he pulled out of the embrace while still keeping her close. He caught her gaze with his own, staring at her like she was crazy.

“Are you kidding me? Of course you can do this! You’ve been skating for such a big part of your life and you love it!” He encouraged.

Annabeth sighed. “I know but everyone out there is *so* good.”

“And so are you.”

“You’re just saying that cause you’re my-... uh my um...”

Percy’s eyebrows shot up teasingly in surprise and Annabeth felt her face flush. She had no idea how to finish that sentence. There wasn’t a label on what they were. She loved that Percy was being respectful and taking things slow with her, but it was only getting more confusing as the days passed and they were getting closer and closer.

“I’m saying that because it’s the truth. Annabeth, I don’t think you realize how talented you really are. I’ve never met someone as passionate about skating as you. You captivate the audience every time you get on the ice and there’s no doubt in my mind that you’re meant to be here. Hell, the judges are crazy if they don’t pick you to go to U.S. nationals.”

Annabeth smiled. Her heart started beating faster but she was pretty sure it had nothing to do with her nerves this time. She pulled him back into a tight embrace. He chuckled and hugged her back.

“Thanks Hockey Boy” She mumbled into his chest.

“Well I hate to break up this adorable Percabeth moment but if Annabeth doesn’t get onto the ice in ten minutes she won’t be skating.” A voice spoke up from behind them.

Annabeth jerked away from Percy. Over by the door stood Piper, Thalia and Calypso with looks of relief on their faces. Percy and Annabeth blushed at Piper’s comment.

“How long have you guys been standing there?!” Annabeth asked.

“Long enough for me to want to gauge my eyes out.” Thalia commented.

Calypso rolled her eyes and shoved Thalia’s shoulder. “Doesn’t matter, right now we just need to get you in there!”

The five of them rushed out of the room and towards the ice arena. They had to separate once they got inside because Annabeth had to wait where all the other skaters were. Her friends wished her luck once more and she thanked them.

Percy waited for the three girls to leave before he gently leaned down to give her a light peck on

the cheek. Annabeth blushed for the fiftieth time in the last ten minutes and stared at him adorably in confusion.

“Good luck Princess. You’re going to be amazing.”

And with that, the raven-haired boy headed back up to the bleachers where the others were sitting. Annabeth bit her lip and smiled giddily, the giant knot of nerves in her stomach slowly unraveling.

Annabeth took her starting stance, anxiously awaiting the music to start her routine. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, blocking out the audience around her. She’d chosen a song that was meaningful to her. Every time she’d heard it she’d always imagined her father singing it to her in apology for what he’d done. As soon as the first note left the speaker she began.

I’ll Be Good-Jaymes Young

*I thought I saw the devil
This morning
Looking in the mirror, drop of rum on my tongue
With the warning
To help me see myself clearer*

She started out skating slowly, her white figure skates gliding across the ice smoothly. She did a few backward crossovers, her blue dress flapping with the wind created from the speed.

*I never meant to start a fire
I never meant to make you bleed*

She picked up speed, spreading her arms out wide in a graceful position.

I’ll be a better man today

She managed a near perfect double Lutz, her skate crunching the ice beneath her when she landed it.

*I’ll be good, I’ll be good
And I’ll love the world, like I should
Yeah, I’ll be good, I’ll be good
For all of the time
That I never could*

Her movements complimented the song beautifully. Throughout the chorus she executed several jumps including two toe loops and an axel. It was clear by the look on her face that she had a connection to the song, skating as if her life depended on it.

*My past has tasted bitter
For years now
So I wield an iron fist
Grace is just weakness
Or so I’ve been told
I’ve been cold, I’ve been merciless*

She stopped in place, emphasizing the pause in the music and keeping the audience on edge.

But the blood on my hands scares me to death

Maybe I'm waking up today

She used the whole rink to her advantage, skating gracefully from one end to the other. She performed another Lutz followed by a double axel as the chorus started for the second time.

*I'll be good, I'll be good
And I'll love the world, like I should
I'll be good, I'll be good
I'll be good, I'll be good*

Percy watched her intensely, completely enraptured by her as the song slowed down and her movements mimicked the beat.

*For all of the light that I shut out
For all of the innocent things that I doubt
For all of the bruises I've caused and the tears
For all of the things that I've done all these years*

She skated in a circle with one leg up in the air while the other skate drifted on the ice and the long note sounded.

*And all
Yeah, for all of the sparks that I stomped out
For all of the perfect things that I doubt*

*I'll be good, I'll be good
And I'll love the world, like I should
Yeah, I'll be good, I'll be good
For all of the times
I never could, oh, oh-oh
Oh, oh
Oh, oh-oh*

As the song wrapped up she executed a couple more jumps, landing each one on a different part of the ice. She ended with a simple Lutz and then skated back towards the middle as the last few notes of the song came from the speaker.

*For all of the times I never could
All of the times I never could*

As soon as it was over the audience went crazy. She noticed Percy and her friends cheering as loud as they could. She cast a smile in their direction and her eyes immediately caught Percy's who had nothing but pride in his eyes. Her heart swelled in her chest as she quickly skated off the ice to stand with the other performers who praised her as she walked by them. Rachel was the only one who didn't, a look of pure envy on her face. The redhead had skated a couple performances before her and Annabeth would be lying if she said it wasn't one of the best performances in the competition so far.

There were three more performers after Annabeth was done. Everything was a blur as Sectionals came to a close and the scores for each skater was tallied by the judges. There would be three figure skaters moving on to the final competition otherwise known as U.S. Nationals. Annabeth truly could not believe that she'd made it so far.

And that was why when she heard her name come from the speakers as one of the three skaters

moving on in the competition she nearly passed out.

She could spend several minutes trying to explain everything that happened after her name was called but it would probably end up being a bunch of jumbled words and unfinished sentences. In simple terms, it was pure and utter chaos consisting of Christina nearly hugging the life out of her, random strangers clapping her on the back, Rachel giving her a death stare out of jealousy, and her accepting a medal for being in the top three.

If there was one thing she was sure of in those moments following the announcement it was that she had the biggest smile on her face and it wasn't going away anytime soon.

Percy shuffled his way through the huge groups of people exiting the ice arena. He found his way to the skate rental lobby area and searched frantically for the familiar face of the girl he called Princess. He knew he looked like an idiot with a prideful smile on his face that wouldn't leave but he didn't care. The others were somewhere behind him lost in the crowds of people, but he could worry about finding them later. Right now, his focus was on one girl in particular.

He was about to shout Annabeth's name in hopes of getting a response but before he could he was tackled nearly to the ground by said girl. He managed to regain his balance, keeping them both upright while he embraced her right back.

"Whoa easy there Princess. I'm not a brick wall." He joked, grinning cheekily as she laughed into his chest.

"I made it!" The blonde-haired girl said happily, pulling away from the hug slightly.

"Well I'm not surprised. Of course you did." Percy replied nonchalantly.

Annabeth smiled as Percy pulled her into another hug, the second one not as intense.

"You were amazing Chase."

"Thanks Jackson." They stayed like that for a few seconds before the others managed to find them.

"Ugh will you two just get together already? I swear I feel like I've been waiting an entire year for you guys to become a couple." Will Solace muttered as Annabeth and Percy separated.

The two blushed, looking at the ground shyly. Percy cast a sideways glance towards her but she failed to notice it because Piper, Calypso, and Thalia were soon attacking her with hugs and shouts of congratulations. When everyone had calmed down Annabeth quickly headed towards the locker room to change while the others waited for her.

When she entered the locker room some of the other skaters congratulated her once again and she thanked them. It was only when she caught the eye of a certain red head that her smile slightly wavered. Rachel hadn't qualified for Nationals and obviously was not taking it well.

The girl was seated on the benches between the lockers with a disappointed look on her face. She looked sad and defeated. Annabeth hated to admit it, but she almost felt bad for her so called enemy. Maybe she actually had feelings after all. Key word: *almost*.

"What the hell are you looking at?" Rachel stated harshly with a cold look in her eyes.

"Nothing, I just... are you ok?" She replied lowly.

"I'm fine. I don't need some pep talk or speech for you Annabel so just leave." The red head insulted causing Annabeth's feelings of sympathy to be replaced by anger.

"You know I can't believe for a second I actually felt bad for you." She scoffed.

"Like I care." Rachel muttered, shouldering her duffle bag and exiting the locker room stiffly.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. Well no one could tell her she hadn't tried to be nice to the she-devil. She quickly changed into a pair of classic blue denim jeans and a dark blue long sleeve t-shirt paired with some black converse. She took her hair out of the bun in was it and let it hang loose. Over top she wore a grey jacket. She used some makeup remover to get rid of the makeup on her face. When she was done, she made her way out of the locker room.

She wasn't expecting to see or hear what she did. She left the locker room and heard some sort of shouting coming from around the corner. Being the curious person she was, she decided to investigate.

"-disgrace! Your landings weren't all solid, your arms looked like spaghetti noodles and you were off beat at the beginning!" Annabeth heard a man state strictly.

When the shouting got closer she made sure to stop before she went around the corner so no one saw her. She listened closely.

"Dad please-" Annabeth's eyes widened. She would know that voice anywhere. It was Rachel.

"I don't even know why I bother with having Christina as your coach. Clearly we need to find someone else." The man who she assumed was Rachel's father scolded.

"No dad please, I don't want a different coach. It's my fault. I-I'll work harder for next year I promise!" Rachel pleaded desperately.

"I'll think about it. But we're leaving *now*." He demanded after a moment of silence.

There was a pause before Annabeth started to hear footsteps making their way towards her. Fast as lightning, the blonde-haired girl turned and ran back to the lobby area where her friends were still waiting.

Her mind was going haywire and for the second time in the past fifteen minutes she found herself feeling compassionate and sympathetic towards Rachel Dare. She had no idea how much pressure her father put her under. It took her a second to realize that's something they had in common. In her case it was her mother constantly on her back about doing well in school not wasting her time on the ice and for Rachel it was her father criticizing every little thing about her skating. Never in a million years did she think she'd ever share something in common with the redhead.

She was so lost in her thoughts she hadn't even realized she was standing with her group of friends until Nico waved a hand in front of her face.

"You alright there Annabeth? I know I'm attractive but I can't help it." He joked. She looked up, smacking his hand away from in front of her face.

"Shut up Nico."

A few of the others chuckled. Annabeth felt someone squeeze her hand swiftly and turned around to see none other than Percy Jackson. His expression held a trace of worry.

“Hey, everything ok?”

She smiled, momentarily forgetting all thoughts of Rachel. “Yeah, everything’s perfect.”

He cast her a swoon-worthy smile and her legs nearly gave out beneath her. God, she hated feeling so helpless around him but she couldn’t help it. There was just something about him that made her soft.

“Well ok then. I say we all go out for dinner to celebrate Annabeth’s accomplishment who’s with me?” Shouts of agreement filled the air at his proposal.

“Thank the Gods I’m starving!” Leo replied exasperated.

“Of course you are Leo.” Calypso said sarcastically, linking her arm with his as the group started walking towards the parking lot.

Percy sneakily snatched the duffle bag containing her skating stuff from her grasp. He carried it on his shoulder and this time Annabeth let him without any complaints which made him smirk stupidly. They walked side by side out of the building, Percy’s hand hovering on her back as they exited.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33

When Annabeth walked through the doors of Goode High the following Monday she wasn't expecting to be greeted with smiling faces and applause. Word must have gotten around that she was now skating in the U.S. Nationals competition. She didn't think people would actually care about figure skating seeing as how the whole school mainly just focused on how their hockey team was performing. Her cheeks flushed as she thanked the people who congratulated her as she walked to her locker to put away her stuff. Piper and Calypso met her there.

"Hey Annabeth" Piper greeted once they reached her.

"Hey Pipes."

"So, quite the welcome huh? We saw everyone congratulating you when you walked in." Calypso explained.

"Yeah. It's weird actually. I guess I'm just not used to people being excited about figure skating for once" Annabeth replied lightly. The two girls nodded their heads in understanding.

The dreadful bell that signaled the start of the school day rang in the hall a moment later. She heard Piper and Calypso groan before they said their goodbyes and left for first period.

As usual, Annabeth could not seem to spot Thalia in biology by the time she sat down at her desk. She knew it would be at least another fifteen minutes before her choppy haired best friend made an appearance and Annabeth would have to send her a picture of her notes from the first half of class. The blonde sighed, getting out her spiral notebook and beginning to write the definitions of biological terms her teacher was writing on the board.

As suspected, a disheveled Thalia walked in about twenty minutes later. She apologized half-heartedly for interrupting the lesson and then took her seat next to Annabeth. She seemed completely out of breath, but it didn't faze Annabeth at all.

"Over...slept...again" She choked out in between gasps of air.

"How many times do we have to go through this Thals? You don't need to explain to me why you're always late. At this point it's only a surprise when you're ten minutes late instead of twenty." Annabeth teased, rolling her eyes.

Thalia responded by throwing a playful punch to her best friend's shoulder. They spent the remainder of class hastily copying down the notes from the board as their teacher sped through the concepts. Well, Annabeth did. Thalia seemed to give up five minutes in, claiming that her hand was killing her from writing so fast and resulted to sneakily taking pictures with her phone of the board every few minutes so she could write the notes at home. Annabeth knew those pictures were just going to end up lost in her camera roll in a few days though.

When it was finally time for lunch, Annabeth met up with her friends at one of the tables in the cafeteria. She took a seat next to Thalia who was already halfway done with the food on her plate. Piper and Calypso smiled upon seeing her as she put her tray down on the table. Will and Nico joined them a second later. The six of them made small talk as they ate.

A couple minutes later, Piper looked up from her plate to see three males approaching their table.

She smiled giddily when her eyes found Jason's and he smiled back. Calypso tried her best not to grin when she saw Leo as well.

Piper was about to wave the boys over when she saw Jason give a shake of his head. She stared confusedly towards him until the raven-haired boy in the middle caught her attention. Percy placed a finger to his lips as if to signal for them to stay quiet. Shrugging, Piper turned back to her food and tried to pay attention to whatever Annabeth was saying.

It was only when the small group of guys was a few feet away that both Piper and the majority of the table seemed to catch on to what was happening. Percy was planning to scare Annabeth while she wasn't paying attention. When she figured it out, Calypso nearly blew it by giggling causing Annabeth to stare at her like she was crazy.

"Sorry I just uh, remembered something funny." She explained on the spot.

Annabeth stared at her for another minute but then brushed it off and continued her rant.

"I just don't get it. I mean what's the point of writing notes all day in class can't they just assign that as homework and have us actually do *interesting* things in class that apply the concepts? I mean I know if I were a teacher I would-"

"Hi Princess!" Percy shouted rather loudly, placing his hands lightly on her waist from behind.

Annabeth shrieked, literally jumping out of her seat in surprise. She turned around to face him with a hand over her rapidly beating heart. Her eyes softened when she realized it was Percy, but she tried her best to appear stern and serious while the others laughed hysterically.

"Percy, you jerk!" She scolded, trying her best not to smile and ignore the small tingles from his hands touching her waist a moment before.

The sea-green eyed boy chuckled lightly, looking into her eyes admiringly with his gorgeous orbs. Annabeth tried not to let her eyes linger too long. He looked *good* and Annabeth was definitely not the only girl who noticed. She could practically feel every girl's stare on him from a mile away.

He had on a charcoal grey tight-fitted long sleeve t-shirt which he'd rolled up to his elbows. It outlined his muscular stature quite nicely. He was also wearing a pair of dark washed jeans and his usual black converse. He'd paired the outfit with a dog tag necklace and a black belt. His hair was messy and disheveled but that just added to the look.

Annabeth had no idea how someone could be so oblivious to it all. It just wasn't fair. He didn't even have to *try* and every girl in the school would throw themselves at him in a heartbeat.

"Oh just admit it, that was funny." He said, laughing along with the rest of the table as he took a seat down next to her. She saw Jason and Leo take a seat as well.

Annabeth rolled her eyes, failing at hiding her smile as she laughed lightly and sat back down. The table was pretty crowded at that point, so she blushed when she realized how close she was to Percy. Their legs and shoulders were touching to the point where she was basically pressed against his side in a comfortable way. He didn't seem to mind in the slightest.

She tried to ignore just about everyone's eyes on them as they ate their lunch in the cafeteria. Several times she had to smack Percy's hand away from her bag of potato chips that he was trying to steal. He would then pout adorably, and Annabeth would give in and hand him a chip. By the time the bag was empty, Annabeth was sure Percy had eaten just as many potato chips as her. Curse her inability to resist his cute seal-like pout.

As the lunch period came to an end, Annabeth unwrapped a single chocolate chip cookie and laid it in front of her. She immediately felt Percy's gaze on her delicious treat. His eyes widened to the size of saucers and Annabeth spoke before he could even ask his question.

"Oh no Hockey Boy. Potato chips are one thing but there's no way in hell I'm giving you my cookie so don't even think about it."

"But-" He argued.

"Nope, you had your own lunch!"

"I'm a growing boy Princess, I need my energy!" He rebutted.

"Oh and you think a chocolate chip cookie is going to give you energy?" She replied, crossing her arms on her chest teasingly.

"I...pleaseee" He begged, trying to catch her eye. Annabeth knew better than to look straight at him because he would be trying to make her crack with his pout. Not this time. She shook her head back and forth and he sighed before giving up on the pouting.

There was a moment of silence in which she just stared at him and he copied her stance, crossing his arms on his chest and straddling the cafeteria seat. She fought the urge to smile. He was such a child. She could feel his stare when she reached for the cookie and she turned back towards him.

"Percy" She scolded in attempt to try to get him to focus on something else.

"Annabeth" He replied in the same tone of voice.

The staring contest went on for a few seconds, the chocolate chip cookie on the table between them. She saw Percy's eyes shift from hers to the cookie as her gaze switched as well.

She was too late. Percy's hand reached for the cookie and he hastily shoved the whole thing in his mouth at the speed of lightning, leaving nothing but cookie crumbs on the table. It took Annabeth a minute to register what had just happened and she stared back at him shocked.

"Percy!"

"Whafg?" He replied as he chewed the cookie.

"What do mean 'what', you just ate my cookie!"

He shrugged. "You should've been faster."

She stared at him incredulously "Wha- you owe me a chocolate chip cookie Jackson!"

He snickered at her facial expression. It was then that the two realized everyone else at their table had stopped talking. Annabeth turned back to the table only to see everyone staring at them with a mix of emotions.

Leo, Thalia, and Jason had their eyebrows raised teasingly. Nico was looking at them knowingly. Piper, Will, and Calypso were smiling so big Annabeth could only assume the three of them were trying not to fangirl. She blushed and noticed Percy's cheeks also had a faint pink hue to them.

She spent the rest of lunch engaged in conversation with the others and occasionally shooting Percy glares to which he responded by winking at her.

The nerve.

The rest of the school week was a blur. Her classes went by pretty quickly with the exception of math where she awkwardly avoided Luke's gaze from across the room. Things between the two of them had been...weird to say the least. Annabeth still tutored him from time to time but instead of their usual friendly banter during school and tutoring sessions, the air around them was more serious and professional now. She hated that their relationship wasn't like it used to be because she'd actually enjoyed having him as a friend. It was almost like having a brother to complain about school with. She knew it was because Luke noticed her hanging around Percy more.

Before she could think about it any longer, the bell rang signaling the end of classes for the week and Annabeth gathered up her things to head to her locker.

Practice that Friday evening at the rink was hell. Now that she was going to U.S. Nationals not only did she have to stay twice as long as all the other skaters to practice, but Christina was also pushing her harder than ever. If there was even the tiniest stumble in a landing or her form was slightly loose during her jumps, her coach would make her do it over and over again until she met Christina's standards and then they would move on to the next task. She had refilled her water bottle three times within the last hour she was practicing.

After what seemed like an eternity, Christina dismissed her to the dry room to stretch and then told her she could leave. She hastily changed into some leggings, her warm Ugg boots and a red hoodie. She took her hair out of the bun it was in and ran a comb through her blonde curls before placing a warm black beanie on her head. She packed up her figure skating stuff and shouldered her duffle bag, exiting the locker room after the longest practice of her life.

...

"Rough practice?" A familiar voice asked, scaring her as she walked towards the exit of the rink.

"Percy? What are you still doing here?" She said astonished after turning around to find him sitting on one of the benches near the skate rental desk. His hockey bag was sitting next to him, so she knew he'd stayed behind instead of going home. Her stomach filled with butterflies. Had he waited for her again?

"Great night isn't it? Plenty of stars out." He stated, completely avoiding her question. She stared at him confusedly.

"I suppose. But what are you-" He cut her off before she could finish.

"Come on" He said, taking her hand in his and gripping it tightly. He quickly ran outside, dragging her along with him into the cold night air.

"Where are we going?" She asked in a half-serious, half-laughing tone.

"You'll see" He replied mysteriously. She sighed and allowed him to lead her outside and towards the back of the rink.

She recognized the ladder from the previous time she'd climbed up it. He wanted her to follow him to the roof of the rink again. She stared at him questioningly and he replied by gesturing for her to go up the ladder. The whole situation was so random. One minute she was walking to her car, exhausted and wanting nothing more than to be home in her bed, and the next Percy was dragging her with him to the roof for some unknown reason.

With one last look of confusion, Annabeth turned and started her way up the ladder and to the roof with Percy following closely behind. When she reached the last rung of the ladder, she pulled herself up over the pavement and stepped onto the roof of the building.

[Song Tribute-A Sky Full of Stars by Coldplay]

What she saw at the top made her heart warm. On the pavement a large blue blanket was spread out. On top of it was a box of pizza and a metal tin with what she assumed was some type of dessert. There were two pillows for them to sit on. She smiled widely at the display.

“What is all this?” She asked giddily, spinning around to face Percy who was now on the roof standing next to her.

“This” He gestured to the picnic, “is my way of showing you how proud I am of you making it through to Nationals. I would’ve set it up earlier but this whole week has been hectic.”

Annabeth bit her lip adorably and looked up at him.

“You didn’t have to do this. A simple ‘good job’ would’ve been fine.”

“You deserve it Princess. Besides...” He leaned down and opened the metal tin holding about a dozen homemade cookies.

“I owe you a chocolate chip cookie, don’t I?”

Annabeth laughed and nodded her head. She’d almost completely forgotten about him stealing her dessert at lunch earlier that week. She followed him and sat down on one of the pillows.

They practically devoured the pizza box before them in five minutes flat. Annabeth hadn’t realized how hungry she was from practice. She didn’t eat as many slices as Percy of course, but she was a close second. She laughed when he bit into one slice and the whole layer of cheese came off. He stared at her like she was crazy.

“How can you laugh when such tragedy has struck?!” He said, sounding genuinely upset. Annabeth only laughed harder and stuck out her tongue.

He pouted and she giggled silently, taking a cookie from the tin as Percy continued to ramble on about how cheese coming off of pizza was a serious issue. He grabbed his own cookie after finishing his pizza.

“Oh my gods, these are amazing!” Annabeth proclaimed, taking a bite out of the chocolaty goodness. The delicious dessert was soft in the middle and crunchy on the outside. The chocolate chips were still warm and melted in her mouth.

She stared at Percy who was already on his second cookie. “Thanks, but I can’t take the credit. My mom made them.” He explained.

“Well your mom should open a bakery or something because these are the best cookies I’ve ever had!” She said, reaching for another one.

“So I’m forgiven for stealing your cookie at lunch?” He asked hopefully.

She laughed. “Yes, you’re forgiven. You’ve fulfilled your debt to me and more.”

He smiled and so did she. He caught her eye and she froze. Something about the way he was

looking at her changed the air around them. He hesitated for a second before slowly taking her hand in his and moving closer to her. She looked down at their hands and then back up at him.

“So, listen...there was another reason I set all this up tonight.” He whispered almost incoherently.

“Y-yeah?” She mumbled nervously, not taking her eyes off of his.

He nodded his head. “I wanted to...give you something.”

“Ok” She whispered under her breath, completely lost in his mesmerizing green eyes. He smiled and squeezed her hand.

“Close your eyes and put out your hands.” He said.

She did as she was told, shutting her eyes. She heard him shuffle around for something before coming back down to sit next to her. She grinned when she heard him trip and curse under his breath. Typical Percy. He placed something in her hands that felt identical to a box.

“Ok open” He mumbled.

Annabeth looked down to see that he had in fact placed a medium sized white box in her hands. It wasn't very heavy nor was it really light. She stared at him curiously. He looked nervous, running a hand through his hair shyly. He gestured for her to open it and she brought her attention back to the box, shrugging before putting the box on her lap and pulling the lid off.

When she saw what was in the box, she felt her heart beat faster. She got butterflies in her stomach and a warmth spread throughout her whole body. She was smiling so big it was embarrassing.

Folded neatly inside the box was a freshly washed blue and black Trident's hockey jersey. It had the logo of the team and a small capital C on the upper left side of the material signifying hockey captain. She carefully lifted it out from the box and turned it around to see the back. The number 1 was displayed on the jersey along with the name *Jackson* written in capital letters. She bit her lip and looked towards Percy who was already looking at her.

As Annabeth had previously explained, it was a school tradition that whenever a girl was given or was wearing one of the hockey player's jerseys it could mean 3 different things. They were already a couple, the guy liked her, or...it was a way of asking a girl to be your girlfriend. Her cheeks flushed as she kept her gaze on his.

“Percy...are you asking me to-”

“Yes” He cut her off, taking her hand in his again and smiling nervously.

“Annabeth, I *really* like you. I don't think I've ever felt this way about anyone. I can't even describe the feeling it's just there whenever I'm around you. I've never given anyone my jersey to wear because it didn't feel right but with you...well with you everything's different. We've been taking it slow, but I don't think I can wait any longer. So, will you officially be my girlfriend Princess?”

When he was finished Annabeth thought she was going to melt right there on the spot. Who knew Goode High's old playboy could be so romantic? She was at a loss for words. It took a moment for it all to sink in. Percy Jackson, practically every girl's crush at school, was asking *her* to be his girlfriend. She was tempted to pinch herself to see if she was dreaming but didn't want to embarrass herself in case it wasn't a dream. She finally found her voice seconds later and interlaced her fingers with his.

“Of course I’ll be your girlfriend Hockey Boy”

His grin was enough to make her swoon as he tightened his grip on her hand and leaned in closer. She felt his breath on her face as the stars twinkled around them. Gods her thoughts were so cliché, but she didn’t care. He leaned his forehead on hers and closed the gap between them before anything else could be said.

Chapter 34

Chapter 34

Piper shared a smile with Calypso as the two laid eyes on their close blond-haired friend. Annabeth looked rather shyly around the halls as she walked the path towards her locker where her two friends were waiting. There wasn't a set of eyes that wasn't looking at the figure skater. Or more importantly...what said girl was wearing. Piper wanted to jump from excitement but refrained herself from doing so. Whispers amongst groups of people and jealous stares from several of their female classmates could be observed from afar as Annabeth made her way down the hall. Piper and Calypso instantly started bombarding her with questions when she finally made it to them.

"What-"

"When-"

"How-"

They took turns cutting each other off and Annabeth stared at the scene amusedly. She fiddled with a loose strand of hair on the side of her face that must've come out from the two braids she'd decided to put her blonde curls into. Along with the two braids she had on a pair of dark skinny jeans, white converse, and of course the thing practically everybody in the school was staring at, the Trident's hockey jersey with the name *Jackson* imprinted on the back. She was practically swimming in the jersey because of how big it was on her, but it was the most comfortable and warm piece of clothing she had ever worn. Finally, Calypso paused in her questions so that Piper could speak.

"Percy asked you to be his girlfriend?!" She asked excitedly. Annabeth responded by blushing and then giving a slight head nod to which Calypso chimed in loudly.

"When?!" The younger girl interrogated.

"Last Friday-"

"Last Friday??!! Why did you wait an entire week to tell us??" Piper said exasperatedly.

It was true. It had been exactly a week since the night Percy had brought Annabeth up to the rooftop and given her his jersey. Every time she thought about the memory a smile appeared on her face. It was now the day of the state final's hockey game. Annabeth thought it would be a good idea to wait until she wore the jersey to school in support of the team and let her friends figure it out themselves. She'd told Percy and for that reason that entire week at school leading up to Friday Percy had tried hard not to make it seem as if anything had changed between them. At times though he couldn't help himself and would do things like sneakily hold her hand while they ate lunch and she would gladly let him.

It wasn't that they thought their friends wouldn't approve. Hell, half of them had practically been begging the two of them to just get together already. It was more because Annabeth simply wanted to keep the relationship private between the two of them for the first couple days they were official.

As Annabeth was about to explain this all to Piper and Calypso, she was interrupted by a loud gasp from behind. Looking to see who it could be, she wasn't surprised when her eyes met those of Will Solace with Nico close behind. *Oh no, here it comes* thought Annabeth.

“Y-you and P-percy?! Is it true? Tell me I’m not dreaming!” The sun-kissed male said joyfully, jumping up and down like some happy kangaroo.

Annabeth tried her best not to laugh at his behavior and nodded her head to which he responded by letting out a high-pitched squeal. Nico gave her a warm smile before rolling his eyes at his boyfriend’s behavior. Will almost seemed happier about her being with Percy than she herself did.

“Umm...are you two ok?” She asked Piper and Calypso, waving a hand across their faces. They seemed to be thinking about something very deeply.

Annabeth then took notice of the fact that the three of them now had Trident hockey jerseys on. Piper of course had Jason’s with the number 5 on the back, Calypso had Leo’s with the number 30 that he’d given her a couple weeks ago, and now Annabeth had one with the number 1 splayed across the back. The only difference was the fact that the jersey Annabeth wore had the letter C on the front for captain. She smiled, what a long way they had come from being practically arch enemies with the Trident’s team. Piper and Calypso seemed to snap out of their trance at the same time.

“Annabeth...you do realize that you’re the first girl to ever wear Percy’s jersey, right?” Calypso brought up. Piper nodded rather aggressively in agreement.

“It’s true! He’s the only player who’s *never* given out his jersey for anyone to wear. This is a huge deal Annabeth!” The kaleidoscope eyed girl shouted, adding her emphasis by grabbing Annabeth’s shoulders and shaking them.

She steadily took Piper’s hands off her a second later as Will clapped his hands excitedly. She rolled her eyes at her ridiculous friends but couldn’t help the blush that came to her cheeks at the thought of her being the only girl to ever wear the jersey with the number 1 on the back. She knew that was a big reason as to why she was getting so many envious looks from her fellow Goode students a few feet away as she stood next to her locker.

“Will you all just calm down?” She said, trying her best to sound serious but failing to keep the smile on her face at bay.

“Calm down? *Calm down*?! This is not a matter in which one can ‘calm down’ Annabeth! Percabeth is finally happening!!” Will argued, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Once again, Annabeth found herself rolling her eyes at her friend’s behavior. There was no way of getting Will back to normal for a while. Before she could think any more on the subject, she heard the whispering around her get louder and assumed that could only mean one thing. Turning away from her group of friends, her thoughts were confirmed.

Percy Jackson was making his way down the hallway with Jason and Leo at his side. Annabeth didn’t think there would ever be a day when Percy didn’t look attractive. He was wearing a dark green tight-fitted shirt with jeans and his black converse. He wore a black jacket over top for protection against the cold weather and a black belt around his waist. His smile was infectious when his gaze landed on Annabeth in his jersey. He quickened his pace, looking at her and only her. The hall went dead silent, everyone waiting to see what was going to happen.

He didn’t stop once he’d gotten to the group like Annabeth had expected him to. Instead he grabbed hold of one of Annabeth’s hands, pulling her right up against him as she let out a sound of surprise. He placed his forehead against hers and Annabeth found herself having trouble standing up straight.

"I assume I can kiss you in public now?" He asked in a hushed voice. She smiled and nodded her head, confirming his assumption that she'd told her friends.

He grinned and leaned in further, closing the gap between the two of them and placing his hands on her waist. She placed her hands around his neck and kissed him back. Realizing that they were being watched by everyone in the entire hall, Annabeth broke away after a couple seconds much to Percy's disappointment.

"Good morning Princess"

"Good morning to you too Hockey Boy" She whispered back before pulling away completely.

Jason and Leo had their jaws open in shock. Percy must have kept his promise and not told either of them as well. Annabeth blushed and fell against Percy's chest shyly. He wrapped an arm around her and chuckled before explaining everything to his two friends.

"You look absolutely adorable in that jersey by the way." He whispered into her ear once he was done. Annabeth bit her lip and smiled up at him, blushing furiously.

"You two are so cute! I think I might faint. Nico catch me if I do." Will Solace commented. Nico's eyes widened comically at the prospect of having to possibly keep his boyfriend from falling. Not only was Will taller than him but Nico also wasn't known to be the strongest guy around.

Annabeth said something in response to Will's comment that made the others laugh but Percy didn't hear it. He was too busy staring down at the girl under his arm. Seeing her in his hockey jersey made him want to kiss her senseless. He refrained from doing so, although it was very difficult. The braids she'd decided to put her hair into went with the oversized jersey so well. She laughed at something Leo said and Percy smiled. If that laugh was the last thing he ever heard he'd die happy. *Gods what the hell? Get ahold of yourself!* He thought internally.

"...rcy...-ercy...Perce...PERCE!" Percy was brought back to reality with Jason's shout.

"Sorry what?" He said stupidly, turning his attention away from the blonde figure skater under his arm and towards his good friend and fellow teammate who smiled at him knowingly.

"Bell just rang." Jason explained.

"Oh, right yeah. So, I'll catch up with you later?" He asked, turning back to Annabeth who was placing the books she didn't need in her locker. She spun back around to face him and smiled.

She nodded and then surprised both him and herself by putting a hand on his shoulder and leaning up to give him a soft kiss on the cheek. "See you later" She said afterwards. He grinned like he just won a million bucks and she giggled.

"Come on Romeo, we can't be late to any classes on game day!" Jason scolded, grabbing Percy's arm and practically dragging him away from Annabeth.

Annabeth laughed at the sight of Jason pulling Percy away after saying goodbye to Piper. She noticed Jason put Percy into a headlock as they walked. Percy shoved him off while the two of them laughed. They turned a corner and were out of sight.

She hugged her biology textbook for first period against her chest and started on her way to class where she would tell Thalia about her new relationship with her cousin twenty minutes later and Thalia would just snort and mutter "I called it. Nico owes me five bucks, he said you two would get together after the state finals game and I said before." And then Annabeth would punch her

while secretly smiling to herself.

She'd been smiling quite a lot that morning.

"So it's true then?" Annabeth heard a voice ask as she took her seat in math. She turned to her left and was greeted by the familiar face of Luke Castellan who had decided to take the desk right next to her.

She had definitely not been expecting him to talk to her much less sit next to her instead of his usual spot a few desks away. Luke had been staring at her jersey when he asked the question so Annabeth could only assume he was referring to the rumor about her and Percy that was spreading around the school faster than wildfire. She didn't know if more people were talking about the state finals game scheduled for that night or her and Percy's relationship. Coming out of her thoughts, she realized she still hadn't answered Luke's question.

"Um...yeah" She answered awkwardly. She fidgeted with her hands and tried not to look directly at him.

"Always knew it would be him. Wouldn't be the first time Jackson's gotten the girl." He mumbled casually. She realized at once he was referring to Reyna.

Annabeth didn't think she had ever been in a more uncomfortable situation. It was crazy to think that she even had two guys interested in her to begin with and now she was having a conversation with the one she hadn't picked. Not only that but he had just casually brought up Reyna who had been in a very similar situation to her. She didn't know how to respond so she chose silence. Usually during their now rare tutoring sessions they could just focus on studying but seeing as how the class hadn't started yet, Annabeth was at a loss. He spoke again not even a minute later.

"Can I just ask...why him?" Luke didn't sound angry or annoyed, it surprised Annabeth. He sounded disappointed but also genuinely curious.

Again, Annabeth found herself not knowing what to say. She knew it wouldn't be appropriate to say that she picked Percy because every time she saw him her heart skipped a beat. Every time he smiled at her she felt her legs turn to jelly. Whenever she looked into his gorgeous green eyes she was mesmerized. That she'd picked him because she had never connected with anyone like she had with Percy. He was funny and outgoing but could also be vulnerable and compassionate when he needed to be. *Yeah, that's definitely not something you should explain to Luke* her conscious muttered, snapping her out of her thoughts.

The truth was she thought of Luke as more like a brother it just took her a while to come to that realization. She figured it would be best not to tell him that either though. It probably wouldn't be something he wanted to hear.

"Luke-...I just...I never wanted to hurt you honest. I can't help who I develop feelings for. I'm sorry." She gently explained.

The captain of the wrestling team stared at her. Annabeth noticed his eyes were filled with sorrow but also something else that she couldn't quite decipher. He looked hurt but his facial features also held an expression of understanding. It was like he knew exactly what her response was going to be.

"I hope Jackson knows he's one hell of a lucky guy." Annabeth stared back at him with a small smile that almost looked forced.

“Luke I-” She started but he cut her off mid-sentence.

“I don’t know if I’ll ever get over you but what I do know is that I’d still like to be in your life if you’ll have me. What do you say Blondie...friends?” He sent a small smile her way and stuck his hand out in between them.

Annabeth grinned, a huge weight coming off of her shoulders after Luke’s words. She reached for his hand and shook it.

“Friends” Luke smiled widely and then detached his hand from hers. A second later he turned back to her.

“But just so you know this doesn’t mean I’m all the sudden going to be best pals with Percy Jackson. If he ever hurts you I’ll kill him.” The blonde-haired boy stated. He even went as far as making a motion with his pointer finger cutting his throat jokingly to emphasize his point.

Annabeth laughed and he snickered. Glad to have the tension clear between them, she focused her attention back to the board just as their teacher made her way into the classroom, cutting off the excited whispers amongst the class of the big state finals hockey game that would take place in a few hours time.

The fact that it was the day of the big game and the whole school was depending on the Trident’s team to win didn’t seem to be bothering Percy as much as he thought it would. He figured it had something to do with a certain blonde who was now his girlfriend. The thought itself was enough to bring a smile to his face. The whole day he hadn’t been able to focus on anything in his classes because all he could think about was how in the world he got Annabeth Chase to go out with him. It was now the last period of the day otherwise known as English and he was sitting next to Jason as they worked on the class assignment.

“I still can’t believe you didn’t tell me about you and Chase dude.” Jason said, interrupting his thoughts and shaking his head back and forth in disapproval as he looked at Percy.

Percy chuckled, his gaze shifting to where Ms. Williams was sitting at her desk. After making sure their English teacher was preoccupied staring at something on her computer, the captain of the Trident’s team stopped writing and focused his attention on his blonde-haired teammate.

“I promised Annabeth I wouldn’t. Besides, if I told you there’s no way you would’ve kept it from Piper and then soon enough everyone would know.”

“I can keep a secret!” Jason said in a tone of mock hurt. Percy gave him a knowing look, raising his eyebrows sarcastically.

“Oh please, one look from Piper and you would’ve caved.” He argued.

Jason sputtered. “Look who’s talking! I saw you this morning Romeo. It doesn’t take a genius to see that Annabeth has you completely whipped.”

Percy ran a hand through his hair shyly, leaning over to punch Jason rather harshly on the arm.

“Shut up” He muttered. Jason grabbed his arm in pain, shoving him right back.

“Kind of funny don’t you think?” He asked. Percy stared at him confusedly.

“What?”

“Well it’s just if you told me a few months ago that you and Chase were going to end up together I would’ve thought you were insane. You two *hated* each other.” Jason explained.

“Hey, it wasn’t just us two! Our whole team didn’t get along with the figure skaters remember?” Percy replied.

“Oh come on. I’ll admit we had our differences but most of the reason why there used to be such a big feud was because you and Annabeth couldn’t spend more than five minutes together without screaming at each other.”

The raven-haired boy blushed a light pink color. “Well we’ve definitely come a long way from that.”

“Hell yeah we have. Leo and I are both dating figure skaters and our team captain is now going out with the top figure skater. Things have definitely changed.” Jason said rather loudly. Percy snickered, nodding his head in agreement.

“Mr. Grace, Mr. Jackson might I remind you there is an assignment due by the end of class. I suggest you get to work if you don’t want to end up in detention.” Ms. Williams scolded, staring straight across the room at the two boys sitting in the back.

Percy and Jason quickly turned back towards their desks and picked up their pencils. Coach Hedge would most definitely murder them if he found out they had afterschool detention on game day and had to miss practice before the game, especially when it was the biggest game of the season.

The rest of the class was a blur as Percy’s mind filled with images of a familiar girl with grey eyes and blonde hair wearing his hockey jersey.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35

Annabeth quickly stepped out of the car along with Piper and Calypso. They had finally made it to the ice skating rink where the big game was going to take place. It had only been an hour-long drive, but their entire friend group carpooled in two separate cars. Annabeth, Piper, and Calypso had taken Piper's car. Thalia, Nico, and Will took Thalia's car. Jason, Leo, and Percy had of course taken a bus with the rest of the hockey team to the rink.

Finding a place to park had not been easy. It wasn't an exaggeration that the entire school was going to be at the game. More and more cars kept piling up by the second. Luckily, they had gotten there pretty early so the parking spot they got was relatively close to the entrance of the ice arena.

"Annie slow down will you? I'm sure you'll get to see my idiot of a cousin before they start warm ups." Thalia commented smugly. Annabeth hadn't even realized that she'd been walking rather fast towards the building and away from her friends.

She blushed and stopped so that the others could catch up to her while hugging the enormous Trident's jersey to herself. It smelled of Percy, like a subtle ocean breeze. She smiled widely to herself. Annabeth found herself feeling super excited at the prospect of getting to see him right before the game. They had seen each other earlier during the school day but she already missed him. Gods, she seriously hated how much of an effect he had on her.

Once they got inside the building after paying for tickets, they were ambushed by crowds of people pushing their way through to get to the entrance of the ice rink. There were people wearing black and blue to support the Trident's team and other people wearing purple and white for the opposing team called the Thunder Bolts.

In between the crowds of people, Annabeth took note of how fancy the ice rink lobby area was compared to their rink back home. Instead of wooden benches there were comfortable looking couches. TV's covered the corners of the hall from every angle so you could watch what was happening while getting something from the concession stand. The overall vibe of the place was very organized and modern. As more and more people shuffled around each other, a surge of disappointment came over Annabeth. She would never be able to find Percy in this mess. The teams were probably in some other room anyway. Piper and Calypso stood next to her, looking around for their respective boyfriends.

She was about to give up and suggest they just find a seat in the bleachers before they were all taken, but a sudden vibration from her cellphone stopped her before she could. She unlocked her phone to see that Percy had sent her a text.

Meet us by the water fountain behind the concessions ;) -Percy

Annabeth grinned while staring down at her phone. She quickly told the others. She assumed since Percy had said 'us' that Leo and Jason were going to be there too. She informed Calypso and Piper. After working out a plan so that Nico, Will, and Thalia could save them seats when they returned, the three girls started on their way towards the area behind the concessions.

They spotted the boys a moment later standing by a small water fountain. They were clad in their hockey gear, holding hockey sticks and their helmets in their hands. Leo was of course decked out the most with all the padding and extra stuff he had to wear. They wore their black and blue

hockey jersey's that were majority black. Annabeth, Piper, and Calypso had on the primarily blue jerseys because those weren't the ones they were playing in that night.

Percy smiled upon seeing the blonde approach them. He still couldn't get over how cute she looked wearing his jersey. She smiled back at him and he leaned his hockey gear against the wall. When she was close enough, he took her hand in his, swiftly dragging her away from the two other couples so they could have more privacy. Her heart skipped a beat at the sweet gesture.

"Hey" He greeted, still casting her a giant grin.

"Hi" She replied happily, a smile emerging on her face as well.

"I don't know how much time we have. We may or may not have snuck out of the locker room when Coach Hedge was busy. It's probably going to cost me later, but I just had to see you before the game started." He explained hurriedly.

Annabeth bit her lip in attempt to keep her smile from getting any bigger. Did he even realize how sweet his comments were? He was risking getting into trouble with Coach Hedge (trust her when she says that is something you did *not* want) just because he wanted to meet up with her before the game. She had been hoping to see him before he started warm ups, but she would never ask him to sneak out. He was an idiot but the whole thing made her feel giddy inside.

"You're insane. You may as well have signed over your death to Hedge." She said sarcastically.

Percy chuckled, taking both of her hands in his own. "Well I'm sure all will be forgiven if we win tonight."

He interlaced their fingers with both hands and Annabeth bit back another smile. She tried not to focus on how well his hands fit in hers.

"Are you nervous?" She asked, staring straight into his sea green orbs.

"A little. I'm surprised I'm not more nervous though, I mean this is the state finals game after all."

"Hmm well I guess that's a good thing right?" He nodded in agreement.

"Yeah it's great. Although if my theory is correct, I suspect my lack of nerves has something to do with the fact that my girlfriend will be watching from the stands. You should know by now you're my good luck charm Princess."

Annabeth felt the heat rush to her cheeks just like it had the first time he called her that. She took one of her hands out of his, hitting him playfully on the shoulder.

"Stop trying to make me blush Jackson!" She scolded. Percy laughed wholeheartedly and she rolled her eyes.

"Is your mom here?" She asked, changing the subject. Percy's eyes lit up at the mention of Sally Jackson. He was such a mama's boy.

"Yeah I think she's already seated in the bleachers. Knowing her, she's probably chatting away with complete strangers. That woman is crazy." Percy joked.

"Well hopefully I'll see her in there." Annabeth replied.

"Oh please, she's probably got a whole search party out looking for you already. She *adores* you.

I'm still deaf in one ear from when I accidentally let it slip that we're together now."

The grey-eyed girl laughed. Apparently from what Percy had told her, Sally freaked when she found out Annabeth was Percy's girlfriend. And we're not talking just some little hug and a warm smile, we're talking a full-on fangirl moment where Mrs. Jackson had literally danced like a happy maniac and shrieked rather loudly. Will definitely had some competition in the biggest 'Percabeth shipper' department as she was sure he would call it. It warmed Annabeth's heart. She could count on one hand the number of times she'd met Sally so hearing about how happy Mrs. Jackson was for the two of them made her feel so loved.

"Perce, ten minutes till warm-ups we need to go." Leo interrupted from a little ways away, his arm hugging Calypso to his side. Jason was giving Piper a final hug.

Percy turned back to Annabeth. "Guess it's time for me to go."

Annabeth nodded. "Looks like it."

"Do I get a kiss for luck? I mean I figured it's kind of a tradition now." He stated teasingly.

He leaned towards her and looked to the side, gesturing to his cheek that she now had perfect access to. Annabeth rolled her eyes again before leaning forward to peck his cheek. At the last second, the raven-haired boy turned his head back around and caught her lips with his own in a chaste kiss. She smiled once he pulled away, her lips still tingling from his touch.

"Good luck Hockey Boy"

"Annie over here!" Annabeth heard a familiar voice call once she stepped foot into the chilly atmosphere that held the ice rink.

She spotted Thalia a second later sitting with Will and Nico on one of the bleachers. Upon taking a second glance, she saw Sally Jackson sitting next to Thalia while her other side was occupied by some older woman. The seats they had were pretty good. They were in the middle so they had a clear view of the full rink. Thalia waved them over.

Annabeth took a seat in between her choppy haired friend and her boyfriend's mother while Piper and Calypso filled in the other empty spaces along the metal bleachers. As soon as she sat down Sally greeted her excitedly.

"Annabeth! Oh sweetie it's so good to see you!" She stated happily.

"It's good to see you too Mrs. Jack- Sally" Annabeth corrected herself, turning towards the woman politely.

"Now tell me my son wasn't playing a cruel joke on me when he said you two were dating. I mean you're wearing his jersey and it sounded like he was telling the truth, but I never know with that boy." Sally commented while casting a hopeful towards the blonde who laughed in response.

"It's true, we're really together." She confirmed, smiling to herself.

Sally Jackson gasped excitedly before pulling Annabeth into a tight embrace. Her presence was so warm and comforting that Annabeth almost didn't mind the fact that she nearly couldn't breathe. They separated a moment later and Sally started bombarding her with questions regarding where and when it all happened and if her son was treating her right. The blonde smiled as she conversed with her while the Trident's team started making their way out onto the ice for warm-ups.

Percy stepped onto the smooth ice, gliding across it easily as he warmed up with the rest of the team. Whenever he had the chance, he would cast a glance up into the stands in an effort to try and find his friends. When they were almost done with their warm up drills, his gaze caught on a familiar face or rather faces in the audience. He couldn't hold back the grin emerging on his lips when he spotted Annabeth and his mother deep in conversation. His girlfriend was laughing at something his mom said as she talked animatedly with her hands. It was a refreshing sight to see. His mother never liked any of the girls he used to bring home until Annabeth came along. He felt a funny feeling in the pit of his stomach as he watched the two females interact. His thoughts were interrupted when Jason shoved him lightly and gestured for him to move because it was his turn to practice a shot on goal. He brought his attention back towards shuffling the hockey puck with his stick, now feeling more energized than ever.

...

"Jackson takes his stance, takes aim...SCORE FOR THE TRIDENTS!"

Annabeth stood up with the rest of the audience, screaming as if her life depended on it while Thalia and Sally Jackson were cheering loudly on either side of her. The buzzer went off and the crowd remained standing as they clapped, whistled, and cheered on the team clad in black and blue. Annabeth couldn't believe how exciting the game was. It was now second period and the score was 3-4 with the Tridents in the lead. It seemed like every few minutes one of the teams was scoring. It didn't take a genius to see that the opposing team was very skilled because they were keeping up just fine with the Tridents. All of the players on both sides looked absolutely exhausted but they were fighting for the championship as hard as they could. Just because the Tridents were up by one didn't mean they were destined to win.

The players exited the rink for the short intermission once the second period had ended. Annabeth saw Percy in the middle of a huddle with his teammates. Coach Hedge was standing next to him hurriedly explaining game plays she was sure they already knew but wanted to engrain the information into their brains. They drank from their water bottles as if they hadn't had any water in days. Percy took off his helmet, running a hand through his sweaty hair and breathing heavily as he listened intently to what his coach was saying. Annabeth heard a few excited whispers and sighs from a couple girls around her. She could only assume they were looking at Percy. Despite the fact that his hair was going in every direction and he was exhausted, the green-eyed male looked downright *sexy*. She blushed at her thoughts. She was sitting next to his mother for Gods sake!

The female voices continued to giggle and whisper around her as they watched Percy. Annabeth tensed. Now that she was officially his girlfriend, she couldn't help but feel like there was a giant knot in her stomach every time she noticed other girls ogling Percy. Sure they hadn't been together that long but that didn't mean he didn't get stares everywhere he went.

Percy turned his head, his gaze matching hers. Annabeth smiled and he grinned back, sending her a quick wink before turning back to the group huddle. She instantly felt a little bit better. Percy wanted to be with *her*. That was all she needed to keep the smile on her face as the third and final period began.

The third period of the hockey game was the most exciting and eventful one. Both teams managed to score, they seemed to be taking turns. Jason and another Tridents player named Anthony managed to score a goal each. Annabeth could hear Piper cheering loudly for her boyfriend. Jason was playing an amazing game. By the end of the period the score was 6-6, a tie that could only be broken with sudden death. Annabeth hadn't known what sudden death was in hockey until Percy explained it to her after one of their practices. If the teams were tied by the end of the third period they went into overtime known as 'sudden death' where they played back to back twenty minute

periods until one of the teams scored a final goal which would end the game once and for all.

Annabeth's heart pounded in her chest. They were so close, one more goal and the Tridents team would win the state finals game. She couldn't imagine the pressure the team was undergoing at that moment. The stands were overflowing with people from both sides and everyone was chatting nervously amongst each other. She stared at Percy who was busy using the short break to talk to his team in a group huddle.

...

"Ok guys this is it. Now I know you all want that state champion title and I do too but let's really take into account what's important here." Percy started, staring at all his teammates who looked exhausted beyond belief and had nervous looks on their faces.

"We've played our hearts out tonight. Whether we walk out of here with the trophy or not, I'm proud of each and every one of you because we've never played a better game."

"Leo you've blocked countless goals tonight, if it wasn't for you we definitely wouldn't be in sudden death right now. Anthony your offense has been on point from the start and you scored the goal that tied the game. Jason you've been unbelievable tonight, scoring half of our goals. Liam your defense has been flawless. I could go on and on but we'd be here all night. The point is win or lose, you guys should walk out of here feeling great about yourselves. I don't know what I did to deserve such a great team."

"Perce stop you're going to make my mascara run!" Leo stated sarcastically, fanning his face dramatically and pretending to cry. The rest of the team burst out laughing at the action and Percy cracked a smile at the Hispanic boy.

"But seriously dude, without you we never could have made it this far. You're the best captain a team could ask for." Jake, another player commented from the side. The others nodded in agreement.

"Thanks guys."

"Might I suggest we try Riptide once we have possession." Jason spoke up after a moment, proposing one of the plays they named.

Percy hesitated. Riptide was the name of a play they hadn't practiced too much during practice. It was effective but rather hard to execute. It required everyone to be at precise locations at the exact same time in order to work. He looked up to Coach Hedge who had a look mirroring his. What came out of the coach's mouth next surprised the raven-haired boy.

"Your call Jackson."

Percy stared at his teammates calculatingly. "I don't know guys. We've barely practiced that one."

"Come on Perce! We both know that if we can pull it off the game will be over."

"Yeah we got this Jackson!"

More and more voices chimed in as he thought it over. They were right. If they successfully executed the play they won. The tired looks amongst his teammates were replaced with ones of confidence and determination. He smiled, if anyone could pull it off it was this group.

"Alright let's do it." He decided at last. A chorus of triumph echoed over him as the Tridents

players high fived.

“But remember what I said. Even if we don’t win-” He was cut off by none other than Leo Valdez a moment later.

“We know Perce. But let’s admit it, it wouldn’t exactly hurt to go home with the state championship title!” He said loudly. The others voiced their agreement and nodded their heads, a newfound energy radiating from the group.

“And I’m sure miss Annabeth Chase would be quite impressed as well.” Coach Hedge stated coyly from his spot in the huddle. A smug smile on his face.

A chorus of *ooo*’s emerged from the group. Percy’s fellow teammates slapped him on the back of the head and his shoulder teasingly while he turned beat red.

“Coach!” He tried to argue but his teammates were still taunting him with whoops and hollers. Some of them ruffled his hair and he slapped their hands away.

“He speaks the truth!” Jason added. Percy glared at him.

“Shut up and let’s play some hockey!”

...

Annabeth watched as the teams took their respective positions on the ice. The entire audience was watching intensely as the game wore on. She noticed that the Tridents team was skating with newfound determination, their skates gliding across the smooth surface of the ice. Leo managed to block a shot on goal and then all hell broke loose.

The puck shuffled along the ice with Jason Grace keeping it under his hold. The crowd dressed in black and blue screamed when they realized who had possession of the small black hockey puck. Sally grabbed Annabeth’s hand tightly and the blonde returned the action, squeezing back just as tight while they held their locked hands by their shoulders. Jason skated across the rink, making sure to keep the puck under control. He smiled when he saw that Percy had managed to break free from his defender and meet him. The other teammates on the Tridents team were successfully keeping the Thunder Bolts team back. Jason passed the puck to Percy.

Everything from that moment on seemed to go in slow motion. Percy shuffled the puck with his stick. He heard the crunch of the carved up ice under his skates, the light tapping of his wooden hockey stick against the ice. His breathing was heavy, and he could see his own breath in front of him. He smelled the familiar scent of the ice rink that one simply couldn’t describe unless you were there. The shouts from the bleachers and the commentary from the speakers sounded muffled, as if it was just background noise. All his senses, all his attention was on his skating technique and the puck that was moving in front of his skates. It was just him and the sport he loved so much. He saw the opposing team’s goalie, moving cautiously from side to side trying to anticipate which way the puck was going to go. Percy took his stance, stopping near the goal and drawing his stick back. He heard a resounding clash as the wood made contact with the puck.

Every eye in the entire arena was on the plastic black hockey puck. Annabeth watched as the opposing team’s goalie moved to one side in attempt to block the shot. It all happened so fast it was hard to know if the shot was good or not. There was a moment of complete silence.

The red light lit up above the hockey net and the buzzer sounded throughout the entire ice rink.

[Song Tribute-Heartbeats by José González]

The crowd went insane. The cheering was so loud it was impossible to form a thought. Annabeth jumped up and down yelling at the top of her lungs along with the rest of the crowd before she turned to Sally Jackson and the two of them hugged happily. Her friend group embraced each other while on the ice Percy and the rest of the Tridents team shook hands with the opposing team before jumping on each other like a pack of animals. Black and blue confetti flew all over the place in the air around them.

The atmosphere was so full of energy that people started getting off of the bleachers and running onto the ice towards the team. Someone had opened one of the gates to get onto the ice. Coach Hedge was handed the giant trophy cup and was grinning like a madman along with the rest of the team. Annabeth turned her head and was met with the sight of familiar sea green eyes amongst the sea of black and blue and the confetti flying everywhere.

She fought her way through the crowds of people making their way onto the ice. Percy untangled himself from his teammates who were now admiring the gold trophy cup, his helmet and hockey stick long forgotten. He shoved his way through the people now on the ice, getting pats on the arm and words of congratulations from everyone he passed. He was surprised no one was slipping considering they were on the ice and the audience had sneakers on. He searched desperately for a pair of stormy grey irises.

“Percy!” He heard her voice call. He frantically looked around him with no luck. Her voice sounded fairly close though.

“Annabeth!” He shouted over the groups of people.

It went on like that for another five minutes, the two of them fighting to get to each other from both sides. There were hundreds of people but he didn’t care, he needed to find her.

He was about to call out her name again when he nearly knocked someone over. The girl gasped at the motion of being jolted back and Percy nearly got whiplash from how fast he turned back around.

There she was, beautiful as ever with her hair still in the blonde braids they had been in all day (now with pieces of black and blue confetti mixed in) and his ginormous blue jersey.

His green eyes caught her grey ones. Overcome with emotion and adrenaline, he surged forward. His arms wrapped around her tightly as he lifted her off the ground. She laughed joyfully, wrapping her legs around his waist so that she was raised slightly higher than him for once. He held her legs securely around him and she embraced him tightly. Her hair smelled like lemons, a fragrance he would never get tired of.

She loosened her hold on him so that she could look him in the eye. Percy used the moment to his advantage and leaned up, pressing his lips to hers and kissing her strongly. She sighed and let him kiss her, confetti falling all around them and people walking every which way. Her hands settled on his shoulders as she responded enthusiastically.

She pulled away breathlessly, her legs still wrapped tightly around him. He smiled up at her and she grinned back, the butterflies in her stomach matching the energy from the crowd.

Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

One of my favorite chapters :)

WARNING: Fluff overload!

Chapter 36

“Mother your son has arrived!” Percy shouted jokingly while trying his best to sound formal. He stepped through the front door to the apartment carrying his hockey bag in one hand while the other held the hand of his blonde-haired girlfriend.

Annabeth smiled at his ridiculous behavior, following him quietly through the door and taking her shoes off to leave them by the front entrance after he did. She placed her figure skating duffle down next to his much bigger hockey bag before resuming the action of interlacing her fingers with Percy’s and leaning against him lightly as they walked side by side into the apartment.

The two of them had just come from practice at the rink. Percy’s practices were very laid back now that the state finals game was over, but the team still practiced all year round. Lately the practices had been more of way for the team to bond even further than they already had. They mainly just acted like idiots skating around this ice and playing scrimmages. Percy wasn’t complaining though, it was a way for him to spend as much time as possible with his teammates before he had to leave them for college next year.

An uncomfortable feeling formed in the pit of his stomach. Percy and Coach Hedge had been meeting with college scouts for the past few days. He felt like he should be overjoyed that colleges were taking an interest in him and wanted him for their university teams but lately all he felt was sad whenever the topic was brought up. He would be leaving his teammates on the Tridents team, his close friends, his mom, Annabeth... Gods things had been going so well with her. He didn’t even want to think about having to leave her come next fall. He knew she was probably getting scholarships from schools left and right for academics *and* figure skating. Annabeth never really talked about it much, but he knew she was, his girlfriend was a talented genius. The two of them hadn’t discussed the matter much but he knew they should. Right at that moment though all he wanted to do was spend some quality time with his mother and her.

“Hey, you ok?” Annabeth whispered softly, noticing the troubled expression on his face. She stopped in her tracks and tugged on his hand to get his attention.

He turned to face her, staring directly into her eyes. He nodded and gave her a small smile. She didn’t look fully convinced but smiled back nonetheless as he led her further into the apartment.

Annabeth’s practices had been rough. With the National competition being only a week away, Christina was working her extra hard. The routine they had prepared was going to be another very personal performance for Annabeth. It was also going to be her hardest one to pull off but like Christina had told her, the judges liked to see skaters who took risks instead of playing it safe. Percy’s practices still ended an hour before she was finished but her boyfriend stayed behind to wait for her each and every day. She gave up on telling him he didn’t need to wait for her because

he never listened. One time he'd attempted to sneak into the rink she was practicing on to watch her, but Christina had gone full beast mode and chewed him out, claiming that Annabeth couldn't afford to have any distractions. His face was priceless, Christina could be terrifying when she wanted to be.

After that incident the couple decided to just stick with meeting up after they were both done. Sometimes they went on small outings when they didn't have much homework to finish after practice. Their favorite was simply going up to the roof of the rink and staring aimlessly at the stars in the nighttime sky. At least that was her favorite, Percy seemed to enjoy going to IHOP and ordering a huge stack of pancakes for them to share after enduring a long and exhausting practice.

That night however, Percy had practically begged Annabeth to go home with him because his mother had been nagging him non-stop since the state finals game five days ago telling him that he should bring Annabeth around. She agreed after taking one look at his pleading face and that led them to where they were now, at Percy's apartment in search of Sally Jackson.

They found her a second later hastily preparing what Percy assumed was dinner on the kitchen counter. She stared down at the food, humming quietly to herself as her back faced them. Percy placed a finger to his lips as he looked at Annabeth. The blonde nodded in understanding.

"Hey mom." He greeted casually as they entered the kitchen.

"Oh, Percy you're home!" Sally Jackson said happily while still keeping her back to them. She seemed to be cutting something on the cutting board.

"Did you not hear my loud announcement as I walked through the door? Gods mom, you know they say hearing is the first thing to go." He replied sarcastically. He could tell she was glaring at him without even seeing her face.

"Haha very funny. I guess I was just too busy trying to learn this new recipe for dinner." She said, now sliding the chopped-up greens into a saucepan.

"Listen can you grab the-" She picked that moment to turn around and face them. Her eyes lit up at the sight of his girlfriend and Annabeth smiled in return.

"Hi Sally." She greeted politely.

Mrs. Jackson wiped her hands hastily on her apron before approaching the two of them and pulling Annabeth into a warm embrace.

"Annabeth!" Sally Jackson stated excitedly while the blonde released Percy's hand and returned the bone-crushing hug.

"What am I, chopped liver?" Percy commented once the two women pulled apart. Sally barely paid him any attention, staring at the grey-eyed girl excitedly.

"Well this is a surprise!" His mother said.

"Is it really mom? You've only been begging me to bring her every second of every day since the game." Percy stated coyly. Sally glared at him and Annabeth laughed, they had a very interesting relationship.

"I hope that means you're staying for dinner?" The older woman asked hopefully. Annabeth nodded and Sally beamed at her.

“Perfect!” Suddenly, she got a worried expression on her face. “Oh no, but I’m trying out a new recipe! Percy you should’ve told me she was coming tonight I could’ve made something I knew was good instead of risking it with something new! Now we won’t know till-”

“I’m sure whatever you’re making will be as delicious as the last time I had your cooking Sally.” Annabeth said, effectively cutting off the older woman before she could worry any further.

Sally Jackson sighed and smiled gratefully towards her. She then turned towards her son for probably the first time since he’d gotten home.

“If you ever break her heart I swear to god Perseus-”

“I’m not planning on it jeez mom!” Percy held his hands up in surrender. His mother had been giving him a murderous look to which he was genuinely terrified of. He looked like a little kid who got caught stealing something from the grocery store. Annabeth stifled a laugh when she saw his frightened face but he caught her.

“Oh, you think that’s funny do you?” He asked, turning to his girlfriend and raising an eyebrow in question. Annabeth immediately noticed the glimmer of mischief in his eyes and started shaking her head back and forth in protest but he was already approaching her.

Before she could move, he hugged her from the side and started tickling her. She let out screeches of laughter and tried desperately to get out of his hold but he was too strong. She thrashed back and forth, laughing loudly and leaning forwards a bit so her hair fell like curtains around her face.

“N-no, no Percy! I-I can’t-t breathe! And you’re all s-sweaty!” She shouted while scrunching her nose cutely. He hadn’t showered after practice yet because he was planning to when he got home. Annabeth showered at the rink before they left since she wasn’t headed home. Percy chuckled, enjoying the moment a little too much.

Sally Jackson smiled at the two of them. She hadn’t seen her son so happy in a long time. Annabeth was truly bringing out the best in him. They were so different but that’s what made them so great together. Percy was turning into a better man and she would be forever thankful to Annabeth for causing that change. She could see how much the two cared for each other. If she didn’t know any better, she’d say they were in love. They just didn’t know it yet.

Finally, after he figured Annabeth had been punished enough, Percy stopped his tickling assault. The figure skater breathed deeply, catching her breath from all the laughing she’d been doing. He smirked triumphantly.

“Well now that we’ve settled that. Is there anything I can do to help with dinner mom?” Percy asked innocently as if he hadn’t just tortured his girlfriend for the past five minutes. Sally rolled her eyes.

“I’ll be fine, but I suggest you go take a shower before the food’s ready. I’ll keep Annabeth company.”

Percy huffed but then agreed halfheartedly. He knew his mother wanted Annabeth all to herself. It was probably so she could tell her all kinds of embarrassing stories from his childhood. Leaving them together was madness but he knew he needed to shower.

“Ok, ok I can take a hint.”

He hurriedly leaned over to give Annabeth a peck on the cheek. “Whatever she tries to tell you, I was an angel as a child ok?” He whispered into her ear before pulling away completely.

Annabeth laughed, not believing for a second that a young Percy was as innocent and pure as an angel. He stormed up the steps three at a time, trying to shower as fast as possible so the two women wouldn't be alone too long.

When Percy got back downstairs it was *way* worse than he thought it was going to be.

Annabeth grinned before pointing at another photograph in the seemingly endless photo album. "When was this?" She asked curiously.

"Oh, that was the first time we ever went to the fair together. Percy won a goldfish at one of the carnival game stands. I believe he made the fish's first name Golden and his last name fishy." Sally explained, smiling to herself as she stared at the picture of a four-year-old Percy holding up a plastic bag while pointing at it proudly and giving the camera the widest smile.

Annabeth laughed out loud. "So, the goldfish's name was Golden Fishy?"

Sally laughed in response. "Yes, it was. I'd never seen a boy so happy to have a fish in his life."

Annabeth continued flipping through the photo album consisting of old pictures from her boyfriend's childhood. Sally was seated next to her at the kitchen table as they waited for dinner to be finished cooking. The grey-eyed girl had to admit that Percy was absolutely adorable as a little kid. Even as a baby having those sea-green eyes probably made everyone melt from cuteness.

"Now this one I consider pretty important. I'll give you one guess why." The older woman spoke up while tapping a photo on one of the pages.

The image was of a young Percy wearing a green and blue hockey uniform. It was taken while he was standing on the ice, helmet and stick in hand. His cheeks and nose were stained red from the cold air but he was smiling happily towards the camera lens, a look of complete bliss upon his face. It took Annabeth only a second to realize the significance of the photo.

"This must've been after his very first hockey game." The blonde knew she'd gotten the answer right when Sally smiled and nodded in her direction.

"Right indeed. He started out on a youth league called the Tidal Waves when he was six. After seeing how happy he was playing in that first game I knew hockey was going to be a permanent part of his life." Sally stared at the photograph, looking lost in her thoughts. It was obvious how much she cared for her son. Annabeth could only dream of having a mother who was as supportive of her skating and wasn't so keen on making her out to be the 'perfect daughter'.

Sally flipped through the next few pages, casually stopping when she wanted to point out a specific picture or Annabeth was curious as to what the story behind something was. They paused again when Annabeth pointed to a picture containing four kids. From left to right there were two that had electrifying blue eyes, one with dark brown irises, and the last one on the right side had sea green orbs. It looked like the photo was taken at the beach because the ocean was in the background and they were all wearing swimsuits. They all looked around the same age, Annabeth would guess about nine years old.

"Ah yes the four cousins. Jason, Thalia, Nico, and Percy. We went down to Montauk beach for the day and these four spent the entire day either swimming in the ocean or building sandcastles. Quite a fun afternoon."

Annabeth's finger hovered over the picture. They all looked so happy. She wondered why Thalia hadn't told her much about how close they all were as kids. She could only assume it was because

of how much she used to complain about the hockey skaters when they were rivals.

“I owe you a big thank you Annabeth.” Sally spoke up suddenly, causing Annabeth to snap back to reality and turn towards her.

“For what?” She asked confusedly.

Sally cast a grateful look towards her. “Ever since he’s gotten to know you better, he’s become his old self. I’m sure you’ve heard it a million times, but you’ve truly had such a big impact on him. For a while I didn’t think I was going to get my son back. He was always going out a night to who knows where, getting in to trouble and doing god knows what. I could tell he was involved in the wrong crowd at school. We didn’t talk like we used to and it killed me. You make him happier than I’ve seen him in a long time. That boy’s been through a lot, we both have. I’m sure he’ll tell you the full story when he’s ready. Overall though, thanks to you I’ve finally got my Percy back.”

Mrs. Jackson was nearly in tears by the time she finished. Annabeth found herself wanting to cry and she didn’t even know why. Others had mentioned how much she changed him including Percy himself, but hearing Sally express her gratitude had the biggest impact on her. She wondered what Sally meant by the ‘full story’. Had there been more than losing his father to a shipwreck? She figured it was best not to bring it up at the moment.

“He makes me really happy too. You’ve raised a great son Sally, he just got a little lost along the way that’s all.” Annabeth replied softly.

This time it was Annabeth who leaned forward to pull the older woman into a comforting hug. Sally returned it whole-heartedly. They broke away after a few moments and Mrs. Jackson blinked back the tears in her eyes as they flipped through the next couple pages of the photo album. She smiled at some pictures of Percy losing his first tooth and of him sleeping soundlessly in the car during a road trip.

The two of them burst out laughing when they reached a picture of a five-year-old Percy dressed as a single piece of ravioli with red tomato sauce for Halloween. He was looking at the camera using his adorable pouting face and Annabeth could only assume that Sally had just finished telling him that she wasn’t going to give him the recipe for the pasta dish. She couldn’t believe he’d gone as far as dressing up as ravioli for Halloween to get the famous Jackson ravioli recipe even though that’s what Sally had told her all those nights ago at dinner. Seeing it with her own eyes made it ten times funnier.

Of course Percy emerged down the stairs following that moment. He heard loud laughter coming from the kitchen table. He immediately jumped to the conclusion that his mother was telling Annabeth a funny story from his past. He quickened his pace, practically sprinting to the kitchen area.

His eyes observed the scene before him and he froze. It took him only a few seconds to connect the dots. His mother. His girlfriend. An open photo album. Laughter. Oh, this was bad. It was very *very* bad. Way worse than just telling a story. Annabeth had seen photographic evidence of the various stages of his childhood.

The two women ceased in their laughter when they saw him enter. There was a moment of silence before he saw Annabeth break down into hysterics again after casting one look at him. He wondered which picture they were on. He approached them carefully, glancing down to see the picture on the page. He wanted to die of embarrassment when he saw it. The dreaded ravioli Halloween picture. Definitely not a highlight from his past. He used one hand to slam the photo album shut but it wasn’t much help. The damage had been done. He was seriously going to have a

talk with his mother later. Meanwhile, his girlfriend was still clutching a hand to her stomach and trying to calm down.

“Mom! Are you serious?! I leave for ten minutes and come back to this? I mean just look at her, you broke my girlfriend!” He was still very red in the face from embarrassment.

At that point Sally Jackson had stopped laughing and was instead innocently smiling up towards her son as if she had done nothing wrong. She got up from the table to return the photo album and check on the food cooking on the stove. A couple minutes later Annabeth had finally managed to stop laughing and stood up from her seat.

Percy scratched the back of his head nervously as he tried to figure out what to say. Annabeth approached him, the smile on her face bigger than ever.

“Listen Princess I-”

He tried to argue but she interrupted him by placing a finger to his lips. Before she could lose her courage, she boldly leaned up to capture his lips with hers.

Percy was caught off guard, not expecting to receive that reaction from her. She wrapped her arms around his neck as his eyes shut and his hands snaked around her waist to pull her closer. Her lips were soft and gentle against his own. He kissed her back just as delicately, neither one of them deepening the kiss because it already said so much. She smiled into it and started playing aimlessly with the slightly damp hair at the nape of his neck. He would never get tired of kissing her.

Annabeth pulled away after about ten seconds and he stared at her in a complete daze before she spoke. “You were and still are a complete dork Hockey Boy, but you were also annoyingly cute as a kid.”

“Are you saying I’m not still cute now? Cause I’ll have you know, I’m freaking adorable!” He argued, keeping his hands firmly on her waist. She giggled and continued absentmindedly tugging at his damp hair.

“You’re absolutely ridiculous.” She muttered before pulling him into a warm embrace. Percy had no idea why she was being so affectionate all of the sudden, but he was loving it.

He hugged her back tightly and buried his face into her blonde curls. The smell of her shampoo almost made him forget about what he had been so embarrassed about. Key word: almost.

It wasn’t until he saw his mom turn around from plating their dinner that he remembered. He cast her an evil glare from over Annabeth’s shoulder and she had the nerve to just look pleased with herself. She put the three plates of piping hot penne rose on the kitchen table while the two teens embraced. Percy resumed his action of burying his face within his girlfriend’s hair.

The hockey player’s mother hummed happily to herself.

Score one for Sally Jackson.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37

[Song Tribute-Clean Eyes by SYML]

“So, when’s the wedding?” Leo Valdez joked, rolling out from under the car to grab another tool from the metal box while casting his sea-green eyed friend a teasing smirk.

Percy responded by chucking an oil stained rag that he’d been using to wipe his hands towards the Latino male. Leo scooted to the side, the white towel just barely missing his face. Jason Grace chuckled from his position next to Percy.

It was a Thursday afternoon and the three males had found themselves once again working on a car in Leo’s garage. Normally they would be getting ready for hockey practice, but Coach Hedge decided to cancel afterschool practice that day. He said it was because he suddenly was too sick, but Percy didn’t believe that for one second. If you were to ask anyone on the Tridents team, they would tell you practice got cancelled because the National figure skating competition was only a few days away. Christina had lectured him about the team being obnoxiously loud when they were practicing in the rink next door and disrupting Annabeth’s concentration. She’d probably scared Coach Hedge into cancelling practice until the competition was over which would mean they wouldn’t have practice tomorrow afterschool either since the skating competition was that upcoming Saturday.

“He’s right man. Introducing Annabeth to Sally, that’s a big step.” Jason added, carefully working on a part of the car under the hood.

Percy sighed. “For the last time, she had already met my mom when we were paired together for a project. Gods you two wouldn’t remember something if it killed you.”

“But she wasn’t you’re *girlfriend* at the time dude. It’s different.” Leo replied, his voice echoing slightly while he spoke with the upper half of his body covered under the automobile.

The car they were currently working on salvaging was an old school 1969 Camaro. Leo bought it off some guy for a pretty decent price and since the Hispanic boy practically lived for anything having to do with mechanics, he immediately started to work on it. It needed tons of work before it would be acceptable to drive on the road but that’s why he’d bought it. Percy and Jason agreed to help whenever they could as long as they got to drive the gorgeous vintage car afterwards.

“Well what about you guys? You’ve been with Piper and Calypso longer than I’ve been dating Annabeth. I’m sure you’ve met their parents as well.” Percy spoke before beginning to tighten something under the hood. Jason was the first to respond.

“Piper met my parents a few weeks after we started dating. From what I can tell they really seem to like her. I met her dad shortly afterwards. The dude’s pretty protective over his daughter but I think I made a pretty good impression...I hope.” The blonde-haired male finished unsurely.

Leo shrugged. “Yeah I’ve met Callie’s folks once when I joined them for dinner. Not much to say really. Other than the fact that her father is terrifying I think it went pretty well. My mom seemed to really like her when I brought her over too. It was like I wasn’t even there. The two of them talked nonstop about I don’t even know what.” He chuckled, momentarily coming out from under the engine again.

Percy snickered. "Oh I can totally relate to that situation. My mom practically adores Annabeth. You should've seen them together the other night. I'm starting to think she likes her more than me!" He teased causing the other two to laugh.

"Well that's good isn't it?" Jason asked.

Percy nodded. It was great that the two of them got along so great. In fact, every time he thought about it a smile emerged on his face. The two most important females in his life closer than ever.

"Yeah it's great." He said, a grin emerging from his lips.

"What about Annabeth's mom? You met her yet?" Leo asked a second later. Percy shuddered, the grin on his face wavering.

"Yeah...just the other day actually." He said hesitantly. Jason looked up from what he was doing, casting him a knowing glance.

"Uh-oh what happened?"

The raven-haired boy sighed, grabbing a water bottle nearby and taking a sip before speaking.

"Let's just say we won't be getting anywhere near as close as Annabeth and my mom have." He stated briefly. Jason and Leo laughed but didn't push it any further, something Percy was grateful for.

It was just the other night after practice when it happened. Annabeth invited him in for a snack and they ended up kissing. It was an innocent kiss, neither one of them had deepened it but that didn't help matters when Athena Chase had walked through the door after returning from work to see her daughter being kissed by someone she'd never seen before. Immediately they broke apart and Annabeth had shyly introduced him as her boyfriend while he just stood there awkwardly after Athena didn't accept his offer of a handshake. She had the most intimidating stare Percy had ever seen in his life and he would be lying if he said she didn't terrify him. No wonder Annabeth was always talking about how strict and demanding her mother was about schoolwork. It all made perfect sense. Bottom line was, Percy was positive Athena hated him.

The three of them continued working on the car, the only noise coming from the radio blasting music. Leo was completely covered in motor oil, the other two males pretty close to being that way too. No one spoke for a few minutes until Jason decided to break the silence.

"Speaking of getting closer to people, have you and Chase...you know..." He trailed off, his hands still working on the motor but his attention now on Percy.

Leo chuckled, rolling his eyes before moving out from under the car again.

"What are we in fourth grade Jase? It's not a crime to say the word sex." Jason glowered at the curly haired boy. Percy looked up from what he was doing, completely taken off guard at the question.

"Why the sudden interest?" He asked in response.

Jason shrugged. "Just making conversation."

Leo stood up to be eye level with them, looking at the star hockey player curiously and momentarily stopping his work under the car. Percy sighed deeply while anxiously running a hand through his hair. When he finally spoke, it was in an almost whisper-like manner.

“No, we haven’t. As a matter of fact, we’ve barely done anything besides kissing. It’s not that I don’t want to believe me I do, it’s just....” He hesitated.

“Just what? Come on Perce you know you can talk to us dude.” Jason comforted, wiping his hands off with another oil rag before turning his full attention to the troubled male. Leo clapped his sea-green eyed friend on the back.

Percy stopped what he was doing as well, letting out another shaky breath before talking once again.

“I...I’m terrified of messing things up. Ever since I’ve gotten to know her I’ve become a new version of myself, a *better* version. You guys know better than anyone that before all this I was awful. I mean I treated every girl I was with like they were just some pawn in my chess game. Whenever I went to parties my goal was to end the night in bed with a girl. It makes me sick to think of what I did. With Annabeth... I don’t know I just feel like one wrong move and it all falls apart. I don’t want to lose her because I rushed her into anything. I *can’t* lose her. Not after everything we’ve been through.” He finished honestly.

Jason and Leo stared at him with looks of complete surprise. Neither one of them had been expecting such an answer from him. Percy smiled sadly at his friends.

“Have you told Annabeth all this?” Leo asked.

Percy shook his head back and forth. “No. Everything’s so fragile right now. It’s all new to me too. My feelings just, I’ve never...I’ve never felt this way about a girl before. I’ll be damned if I screw up the first good thing that’s happened to me in a long time.” He expressed, stumbling on his words a bit.

“Man if I didn’t know any better I’d almost say you were...never mind.” Jason trailed off. Percy caught his gaze, furrowing his eyebrows in confusion.

“What?” He said curiously. Jason sighed, leaning against the car and staring at him intensely. The silence lasted all of ten seconds before the blonde finally broke.

“Are you falling in love with her?”

Percy caught his breath, his lips forming an o shape as he looked towards him. The three found themselves in the quiet atmosphere once again as the radio blasted music. Jason’s gaze didn’t waver.

“I-I...no. No, I can’t be. I mean I...I wouldn’t even know what being in love feels like.” Percy stuttered, looking super unsure about himself. Leo and Jason shared a knowing look.

Was he in love with Annabeth? He couldn’t be. The concept made his head spin as he tried to pinpoint what exactly he felt around her. Besides, they hadn’t even been together that long. It just wasn’t possible. Sure, he liked Annabeth, he liked her a lot actually. But it wasn’t love. It couldn’t be. Jason didn’t even ask if he was in love with her though, he asked if he was *falling* in love with her. Even that was enough to give him a serious headache though.

“You don’t sound so sure about that.” Leo commented. Percy groaned, looking back and forth between his friends before breathing deeply again.

“You guys are seriously starting to get on my nerves. I feel like I’m in fucking counseling right now.” Percy said tiredly. Leo and Jason chuckled lowly. He felt one of them clap a hand on his shoulder this time.

“You say you don’t know what love feels like, so I’ll spell it out for you.” Jason muttered after another minute. He was looking down at his hands, a small grin on his face. Realization dawned on Percy as he looked towards him.

“You and Piper...you love her.” The words came out of the raven-haired boy’s mouth as more of a statement than a question. Jason’s smile widened and he finally made eye contact with Percy.

“I do.” He said simply.

Leo interrupted the sweet moment by whistling loudly. “Well it’s about time Grace!”

Jason rolled his eyes, the smile on his face still present.

“Well alright then Jase, enlighten us.” Percy stated, wrapping an arm around Leo’s shoulders as the Hispanic boy looked questioningly towards Jason. He laughed, shaking his head towards the two of them.

Jason sighed. “Truth is it’s different for everyone. With Piper it’s like...I find myself thinking about her all the time. Whenever I’m not with her I always think about what she could be doing. You get this weird feeling in your stomach whenever you see the person you’re in love with. There’s a moment where you can’t breathe when they walk into a room. You can be yourself around them comfortably. You just feel...*happy*. Yeah so...that’s what being in love feels like.” He finished shyly, looking up to see his two friends with their eyebrows raised in surprise.

“Wow” Leo said blatantly.

“Alright then.” Percy added.

Jason groaned, messing up his hair before speaking again. “Gods I’ve been watching way too many chick flicks with Piper.” Percy and Leo laughed.

“Excuses, excuses. You know Perce I’m disappointed in us.” Leo stated sarcastically.

“Why is that Valdez?” Percy asked in the same joking manner Leo spoke in, knowing whatever he was going to say next would be something to tease Jason.

“Well if this were a movie a sappy love song would’ve been playing in the background as Jason confessed his undying love for Piper and told us all about what love is. I mean we have a radio over there and I’ve got a fan somewhere in here for dramatic effect. We really missed a big opportunity there.” Leo shared, snapping his fingers and looking down in mock disappointment.

Percy laughed soundly. “You’re right. What do you say Grace can we do another take?”

Jason stared at his two friends who were now trying their best not to crack up. He knew based on the way they had been listening intently to him speak that they paid attention but leave it to Leo to respond with a joke. He just stood there for a moment staring at his two friends who thought they were comedians. Leo and Percy couldn’t take it any longer and ended up bursting into laughter.

Without a second’s hesitation, Jason leaned over to where his plastic water bottle was on one of the shelves in the garage. He unscrewed the cap and then squeezed the bottom of it so water shot out of it. Percy and Leo stopped laughing as soon as they felt the water hit their shirts. They looked at him incuriously and Jason simply responded with a smug smile.

“Dude!” Leo shouted.

“Oh that’s it Grace you’re going down!” Percy yelled, leaning forwards towards the blonde.

Jason ran from his grasp while Leo followed Percy’s lead. Momentarily forgetting about the car they were fixing, the two boys spent the next few minutes trying to tackle their blonde friend to the ground in revenge. There was yelling and laughter throughout the whole garage as the old radio played music loudly.

Leo stopped in his tracks to watch Percy and Jason on either side of one of their cars trying to get around each other. He smiled widely. The music, the setting, and the situation really did make him feel like he was watching something out of a movie.

An almost pointless scene that you couldn’t help but love watching.

“Well someone’s looking awfully happy today.” Piper commented after Annabeth joined her and Calypso at the table. They were in the middle of drinking strawberry and vanilla milkshakes.

That particular afternoon Annabeth had made plans during team practice with her two fellow figure skaters to grab dessert at the diner after she got out from individual practice with Christina. She was used to going out with her sea-green eyed boyfriend after she finished skating for the day, but his practices had been cancelled for the rest of the week. She was sure it was because Christina convinced Coach Hedge to cancel on account of the National competition being only a couple days away. A part of her was glad for the change in plans. She loved being around Percy but it had been so long since she’d had an night with Piper and Calypso.

Annabeth smiled. “I managed to make all of my jumps on the first try while practicing my routine!” She explained.

“That’s great A! You’re going to kill it on Saturday I know it!” Calypso stated happily. Annabeth smiled in thanks.

[Song Tribute-Sherry by Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons]

Annabeth smiles in thanks, listening to the music coming from the speakers in the diner. She loved how the place made you feel like you were transported back in time to the 50’s and 60’s with the music and the décor.

She felt so lucky to have such supportive friends. The two of them had been out of the competition for weeks now but they still listened and asked Annabeth all about how her practices had been leading up to competitions. Piper squeezed her hand excitedly, leaning over to take another sip of her milkshake.

Annabeth excused herself from the table before getting up to ask one of the waitresses for a vanilla milkshake. Seeing her two friends drinking them had suddenly made her crave the deliciously sweet dessert. Once she was back in the booth across from Piper and next to Calypso, the kaleidoscope eyed girl spoke.

“So, what’s the topic of discussion?” Annabeth asked jokingly while swirling her milkshake with her straw.

She remembered seeing the two of them chatting rather excitedly about something upon walking into the diner. They had been smiling so she assumed whatever it was they would talk about it. Piper and Calypso shared a look from across the table and Annabeth scrunched her eyebrows in confusion.

“You and Percy.” Calypso answered steadily.

Annabeth sighed, shaking her head and laughing lightly. “I should’ve known.”

“Oh come on *please* Anna?” Piper begged as Annabeth looked down at her dessert shyly.

“What is it with you two and Will? Are you guys really that interested in my love life?” Annabeth asked teasingly before looking up to see the two girls in the booth with her.

“Um, yes. Piper would you like to do the honors of explaining why or shall I?” Calypso said sarcastically. Annabeth rolled her eyes.

“I’ve got this one Callie.” Piper replied while Calypso nodded. Annabeth laughed at their behavior before Piper got a serious look on her face and clasped her hands together on the table.

“Listen Anna...you and Percy Jackson...your relationship is like something out of a movie. Not only does it involve the cliché but amazing ‘good girl gets the attention of bad boy and changes him’ dynamic, but it also deals with the fact that you two used to be rivals. You *hated* each other. You’re the best figure skater at the rink and he’s the star player and captain of the hockey team. You both have a passion for skating and by being forced to share the ice you developed feelings for each other. Now you can’t sit there and tell me that isn’t one of the cutest love stories out there because what I just said sounded like a fucking movie trailer!”

When Piper finished her rant there was a deafening silence that surrounded the three girls. Annabeth was tempted to laugh but the serious looks on her two friends faces made her second guess that.

“I...I have no words Pipes.” She finally said after a beat.

“Well I hope you understand now why we’re all obsessed with Percabeth-” Calypso started.

“Oh Gods the ship name, really?” Annabeth interrupted. Piper laughed at the distressed blonde who was clearly fighting the urge to blush.

“I think you should just be thankful Will isn’t here right now. I’m sure his rant about you two would’ve lasted a good hour.” Piper stated. Calypso nodded in approval.

Annabeth sighed deeply. “Alright. Ask away if you must.” She muttered before taking another sip of her vanilla shake. Piper and Calypso shared another look with each other and smiled in glee.

“We just want to know how things are going between you two.” Piper stated simply.

“We’ve only been officially together a couple weeks Pipes.”

“And in those couple weeks I don’t think I’ve seen you happier A.” Calypso jumped in, staring at her grey-eyed friend who was biting her lip with a grin on her face. The action didn’t go unnoticed by the two.

“It’s been...great. I don’t know what you guys want me to say. I’ve already told you about us meeting each other’s parents.”

Calypso gestured for her to continue while Piper looked at her expectedly. Annabeth chuckled at her two friends and then finally gave in, twisting the straw of her shake between her fingers.

“Ok, ok it’s been...amazing. We go out sometimes after I finish practice because h-he waits for me

to get out. We just do small things like going out to grab something to eat and taking walks together. I've gathered quite the collection of his hoodies because he'll loan them to me whenever I'm cold and my jacket's too thin. I usually give them back when he drops me off at my house... usually. But I've noticed that whenever I forget, the next time we go out and I'm cold he'll keep another hoodie in his car. He somehow always manages to calm me down when I get stressed out about school or Nationals. He just so...sweet." Annabeth gushed.

She knew she had a smile the size of New York City on her face but she didn't care. She didn't dare look up at Piper and Calypso because she knew they were almost as bad as her. It was silent for a few seconds and Annabeth continued to drink her milkshake.

Piper shook herself out of the daze she was in. "Ok, I'm ok now. Still internally screaming but I think I'm fine."

Annabeth laughed for the millionth time in the last half hour and shook her head and Piper's antics. Calypso laughed as well but then cooed at Annabeth's words, holding a hand to her heart dramatically.

"So how far has it gone?" Calypso asked a moment later.

Annabeth eyed her confusedly. "What do you mean?"

"What *Callie means* is have you two slept together yet?" Piper explained.

Annabeth nearly choked on her vanilla shake, coughing loudly into her elbow. Once she'd managed to calm down she looked up at the two girls with cheeks as red as a tomato. She had definitely not been expecting that question.

"I...we-...no we have not." She stumbled out in her flustered state.

Piper snickered, clearly amused by her friend's reaction. It was quite adorable how worked up she was.

"No need to be embarrassed Anna. It was just a question. However, if I'd known you were going to react so hysterically, I'd have brought up the topic sooner." Piper said, smiling pointedly towards her.

Annabeth tried her best to muster a glare in her direction but it was hard when her face was still noticeably red.

"Do you want to?" Calypso asked, referring back to the topic at hand.

Annabeth brushed a stray blonde curl behind her ear shyly. "I-I don't know. I think so...it's just well, you guys know I'm a virgin. What if he freaks out when he finds out I am? I'm also old school when it comes to relationships. I want my first time to be with someone I'm in love with."

"He's not going to freak out A. From what you've been telling us he seems like an amazing boyfriend who really cares about you. It doesn't matter that you're not experienced. As for the love part, are...are you in love with Percy?" Calypso finished excitedly. Piper stared back at her in complete concentration as Annabeth felt her cheeks heat up again.

"I-I...don't know. Sometimes I feel like I could be but how am I supposed to even know what love feels like? The only relationships I've been in have been either super short or blind dates set up by you guys--"

“Ok I’ll stop you right there. As someone who’s in love I can tell you right now what it’s like to-” Piper started.

The brown-haired girl was interrupted when a gasp sounded at the table. Calypso was smiling widely and looking towards Piper joyfully. Annabeth was also grinning towards her friend, nearly jumping out of her seat.

“You and Jason are in love?!” Calypso shouted.

“Since when?!” Annabeth continued.

It was Piper’s turn to turn red. She bit her lip nervously.

“Oh shush! We can talk about that later. Right now we’re talking about Annabeth.” She said in attempt to brush the situation off. Annabeth and Calypso didn’t look happy but let it go for the time being.

“Now Annabeth, love...it’s something that can’t exactly be explained. It’s more than just having a deep attraction to someone. With Jason I feel almost...weightless if that makes sense. Being in love with someone makes you feel safe and protected whenever you’re around them. You find yourself smiling constantly with whoever you’re in love with and your heart beats like a mile a minute when you see them. Believe me, I know this sounds sappy but there really isn’t one way to describe what being in love feels like so I’m trying my best. All I know is once you admit to loving someone it’s hard to go back to thinking about anything else.”

When the choppy haired girl was done Annabeth and Calypso stared at her in both happiness and shock. Piper had a dreamy look on her face.

“Well based on the way your relationship has been progressing, I give it a few weeks before you end up a lovesick puppy like our friend Piper here.” Calypso commented, addressing Annabeth directly.

Annabeth blushed whilst Piper smacked Calypso’s hand across the table.

The three of them spent the rest of the evening just talking about random things and enjoying each other’s company. Annabeth couldn’t seem to shake the feeling of their first conversation. She really cared about Percy but was she falling in love with him?

Only time would tell.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38

Annabeth took her starting position, breathing in deeply as she waited for the music to sound from the speakers that would allow her to start her routine. She felt eyes on her from all around the ice arena. The crowd was waiting in anticipation to see her skate. This was it. The last time she would perform a routine for the rest of the season. She was at Nationals. The idea itself made her feel like she was in a dream.

She now had to perform a routine that her and Christina had choreographed in front of so many people. The event was being televised for Gods sake. It wasn't just the fact that so many people were watching her and she was being judged that was making her nervous though. It was the fact that her routine was the most personal one yet. She'd performed something like it before but that day something felt different. She was hesitant on picking the song she did in the first place but she knew the judges wanted to see that the figure skaters could connect with their skating closely, so she stuck with it. Now she was starting to wonder if she would be able to get through the whole routine without getting lost in her thoughts, without succumbing to the painful memories that she had related the song to.

She tried to shake herself out of it. Maybe picturing happy memories would help. She tried to remember her friends' words of encouragement before she was forced to separate from them for the competition. Before the start of the event, she'd received comforting hugs from everyone in her friend group. They had wished her well and with a last kiss for good luck from Percy, she'd left to wait with the other skaters. She knew they were watching her from somewhere in the stands.

She looked down at the skating outfit she was wearing for the performance and a small smile emerged on her face. She brushed the smooth grey material with her fingertips before tracing her hands over the silver gems on the skating dress. The memory of how she got the dress flashed in her mind.

Sally Jackson gasped, her hands coming up to her face excitedly.

"Oh Annabeth! You look beautiful dear." Ms. Jackson stated happily. Annabeth sent her a shy smile in return.

Sally motioned for her to spin around in the outfit and Annabeth complied. When she was facing the older woman again, she noticed that Sally's eyes had a slight shine to them as she watched her joyfully.

"Are you sure about this Sally? You really don't have to-" She was cut off a second later.

*"I **want** to Annabeth. There's no one else I would want to wear one of my old figure skating dresses. Besides, they've just been sitting in my closet for years. It's about time they got worn again. I'll have to hem it a bit on the sides but other than that it's a perfect fit!" Sally clapped her hands in glee.*

Annabeth smiled again and walked over to look at herself in the full-length mirror positioned on the back of Sally's bedroom door. The outfit really was stunning. She put her hair up in a messy bun to get an idea of what she would look like for Nationals.

That night had truly gone by in the blink of an eye. One minute she had been devouring the

delicious penne rose pasta dish at the Jackson residence with Percy and his mom and the next she was suddenly looking through the various skating dresses Sally Jackson owned from her time as a figure skater. Annabeth had never seen such beautiful outfits. The detailing on them was incredible. Each vintage dress was unique in its own way. When Sally told her to pick one out to wear for Nationals Annabeth nearly died on the spot. After a few minutes of looking she'd found a gorgeous grey one.

The grey dress she had picked out was a long sleeve one that hugged her body in all the right places. The sheer sleeves came down past her wrists to wrap around her finger. The top of the dress had several silver sequins leading towards the bottom skirt part of the dress that was flowy. The only thing she was unsure about was the plunging neckline aspect of the dress, but Sally had assured her it covered everything and after trying it on she could see that Ms. Jackson had been right.

The older woman came up behind her in the mirror, squeezing her shoulder gently and grinning. Annabeth grabbed her hand and turned around to face her.

"Thank you Sally. I love it. Really...I can't thank you enough." She said.

"It's my pleasure Annabeth. You know...you remind me a lot of myself when I was your age. I know you'll do great at Nationals. I've already made arrangements be there Saturday."

"You're coming?"

"Of course! I wouldn't miss it for the world." Sally replied sweetly.

Not knowing what else to say, Annabeth simply leaned forward to give her a hug. Probably the tenth hug of the night but she didn't care. It was practically impossible not to love Sally Jackson. She hugged back just as tightly. They were interrupted a moment later.

"Alright mom, dishes are done now can I please have my girlfriend bac—wow." Percy trailed off upon entering his mother's bedroom.

Sally pulled away from Annabeth upon hearing her son's voice, smiling knowingly as the male laid eyes on the grey-eyed girl. His pupils widened as he took in her appearance. Sally laughed at his shocked expression before deciding to make herself scarce. She headed towards the doorway, stopping once she was next to Percy.

"Close your mouth son, it's not a very attractive look on you." She muttered close to his ear teasingly. Percy came out of his daze long enough to give his mother a menacing glare as she patted his shoulder and left the room.

The entire time Annabeth had been trying to bite back a smile and failing. When they were alone a full ten seconds of Percy staring at her went by before Annabeth spoke.

"Penny for your thoughts?" She asked quietly.

Percy shook himself out of it, blinking several times before voicing his opinion. "I-uh...you-um...you look...wow...I mean uh...wow."

Annabeth laughed at his inability to speak while blushing like crazy. He grinned shyly back, his hand coming up to ruffle his hair nervously. His cheeks were dusted pink and he looked adorable.

She figured her boyfriend had experienced enough teasing that night so instead of coming up with a witty comeback, Annabeth took a few steps forward until she was standing right in front of him.

She placed her right hand on his shoulder before leaning up to place a soft kiss on his cheek. She pulled back a moment later to see a wide smile on his face.

“Thank you” She whispered.

Annabeth was brought back to the present when she heard the first few notes of the song she’d picked for her routine start to play. She took another deep breath, focusing all her attention on the ice and her performance as she began to glide swiftly down the rink and spread her arms gracefully in different movements.

[Song Tribute-Don’t You Remember by Adele]

*When will I see you again?
You left with no goodbye, not a single word was said
No final kiss to seal anything
I had no idea of the state we were in*

Annabeth skated smoothly along the ice, crossing her white skates over each other as she slowly moved with the rhythm of the song. She tried not to listen to the meaning behind the lyrics and get lost in her thoughts, but it was proving to be hard.

*I know I have a fickle heart and a bitterness
And a wandering eye, and a heaviness in my head*

She couldn’t take it any longer. The last few lines forced her to picture her father and the smile left her face. She could relate to the lyrics on such a personal level. She knew she wasn’t always the perfect daughter growing up no matter how hard her mother tried to make her be, but it was her father, Fredrick Chase that always made her feel loved and safe despite her rough edges. She launched into a triple Lutz, nailing it head on and barely registering the claps from the audience.

*But don't you remember, don't you remember?
The reason you loved me before
Baby please remember me once more*

The chorus of the song hit her even harder. As she performed a double axel, a toe loop and another Lutz all she could think about was her father. Why did he leave? There had to be a reason why all of the sudden he’d just abandoned her. It was frustrating and heartbreaking all at once.

*When was the last time you thought of me?
Or have you completely erased me from your memories?
I often think about where I went wrong
The more I do, the less I know*

Did her dad even think about her anymore? What was he doing with his life now? Did he have another family? The questions popped up in her mind one after another and she couldn’t stop it. What had gone wrong? All she wanted to know was *why*?

*But I know I have a fickle heart and a bitterness
And a wandering eye, and a heaviness in my head
But don't you remember, don't you remember?
The reason you loved me before
Baby please remember me once more*

Annabeth felt her skate crunch the ice beneath her as she came down from another jump before

spinning in fast circles on the spot repeatedly. Halfway through she realized a single tear was falling down her cheek. She highly doubted anyone could see it, but it was there. Sniffing quietly, she blinked more tears back. She needed to finish her routine and stay focused. It was a miracle she hadn't fallen.

*Oh, I gave you the space so you could breathe
I kept my distance so you would be free
In hope that you find the missing piece
To bring you back to me*

She thought he might come back. Maybe he just needed a little time to figure things out but as weeks turned into months and months turned into years that last bit of hope she had in her disappeared. It had been almost 5 years. She had to accept that he wasn't coming back.

*Why don't you remember, don't you remember?
The reason you loved me before
Baby please remember me once more*

Did he remember all the good times they'd had together? They used to sneak into the kitchen some nights after Athena went to bed and eat heated up Oreos and other junk food. He used to come to every one of her skating events, *every single one*, and cheer her on until he lost his voice and then after that they would go out for some celebratory ice cream. Him leaving hurt her in more ways than she could've ever imagined. She thought he was happy but apparently, she'd been mistaken. Did he even love her anymore?

When will I see you again?

The last line of the song sounded through the speakers, voicing her exact thoughts. She landed one last jump before skating back towards the middle as the last few notes played. Another tear managed to slip down her face but no one could see it because her finishing stance involved her looking down at her skates.

There was a moment of silence that hung in the air for a good minute. Not one person spoke as the crowd stared at the figure skater before them. The whole audience could tell that the performance was clearly very emotional and personal to the blonde-haired girl. If one looked close enough they would see some people shedding a few tears similar to Annabeth, having had similar experiences they could relate the performance to. Annabeth skated off the ice slowly, wiping another stray tear off her cheek as she drifted towards the side where the other skaters were.

Throughout the whole performance Percy and the others watched Annabeth, captivated by her entire routine. It took only a few seconds to figure out that she was skating as if to send a message to her absent father wherever he was. Her last performance was also about her father but what she had just done was so raw and full of emotion. It was like everyone in the arena could feel how hurt she was deep inside. She wasn't just skating because it was some hobby she'd picked up. She was skating because it was a way for her to get out all her feelings of loneliness and pain. Figure skating was so much more than just a sport for her.

Annabeth Chase won first place in the National figure skating competition for the high school level that day.

She didn't remember much of what happened after she heard her name announced through the speakers. It was normal to her for the events following the competition to be a bit of a blur but usually it was as a result of her disbelief that she'd won. This time it was because of the fact that

she felt absent from everything going on around her. She could vaguely recount cheers and applause from the audience, receiving a gold medal, and skating onto the ice with the second and third place skaters.

Before Annabeth knew it, the competition came to a close and everyone slowly got up to leave the arena in large groups. She changed into sweatpants and a t-shirt afterwards in the locker room, receiving a bearhug from her coach Christina on the way. The other figure skaters congratulated her as well and she half-heartedly thanked them. Once she removed her makeup and let her curly blond hair rest on her shoulders, she left the locker room, a feeling of dread filling her when she walked past the skate rental area of the high-end ice rink where the competition had taken place. She held her duffle bag securely on her shoulder, her medal resting in one of the side pockets.

As she predicted, her group of friends found her moments after she stepped foot outside the locker room. Once they saw her the grins that were already on their faces brightened. Annabeth smiled back at them forcefully, trying her best to make it convincing.

Percy was the first one to reach her, practically sprinting up to her before engulfing her in a tight embrace. He laughed joyfully in her ear, lifting her off the ground slightly. She wrapped her arms around him a second later, her hold on him tighter than usual. Percy didn't seem to notice.

"I'm so proud of you. You were absolutely mesmerizing Princess." He whispered whilst still hugging her. Annabeth barely registered his words.

His presence was so warm, so comforting, that she almost lost it right then and there. Tears prickled her eyes, but she held them back, forcing a smile on her face for the others. She wouldn't cry. She *couldn't* cry.

Once she separated from her boyfriend, Thalia practically tackled her into another hug. The same went for just about everyone in her group of friends as well as Ms. Jackson who had found the group of teenagers a short while later. They were all so happy for her and Annabeth wanted *so* badly to feel the way they did.

But the truth was she simply didn't feel that way.

The only thing that was on her mind was her father. Performing her routine unlocked something inside of her that she didn't know still existed. She felt confused, frustrated, helpless, alone; everything she shouldn't be feeling after receiving first place at the National figure skating competition.

It wasn't fair. She should be feeling over the moon. Getting to Nationals had been a dream of hers forever and getting *first place*...she should've been elated. Instead all she wanted to do was curl up into a ball and block out the rest of the world.

She felt like she was fourteen all over again, waiting for her dad to come home but slowly realizing that he was never coming back. She'd lost the one person who supported her skating career more than anyone. As if to prove her point, her mother Athena was nowhere to be seen. Annabeth had told her mother when and where the competition was like she always did but of course Athena must've been busy working like she always was. It wasn't a big deal to her, none of it was and it never would be.

"Knock knock, anyone home Beth?" Nico said jokingly, looking straight at her as she stared off into space. The others laughed and Annabeth shook herself out of it, momentarily focusing on the pale boy with obsidian eyes.

“Huh?” She replied confusedly. Nico rolled his eyes.

“I asked if you felt like going out for pizza or sushi. We wanted to take you out for a celebratory dinner.” He explained. The others nodded in response and Annabeth stuttered.

“Y-you guys don’t have to really I-”

“Nonsense! You got first place Annabeth! You can’t expect us *not* to celebrate that!” Will cut her off, an excited look plastered on his face.

Annabeth felt the stares of everyone on her. “Uh, well I guess...sushi sounds good.” She stated half-heartedly.

Her friends seemed happy with her answer. They all nodded and smiled at her once more. The truth was, Annabeth just wanted to go home but she wasn’t about to tell them that because that would lead to questions and the last thing she needed was to relive the memories she thought she’d erased. Dealing with the pain and keeping up a façade in front of her friend group was proving to be hard enough.

“Well then! Off to the nearest sushi place it is!” Leo said dramatically, taking Calypso’s hand and dragging her with him towards the doors. The others followed suit, Sally Jackson having left to get back to work a minute before after congratulating Annabeth once more.

Annabeth strayed back a bit and Percy noticed. He stopped in his tracks, moving back to walk next to the blonde with her duffle bag now resting on his shoulder. Annabeth didn’t even remember giving it to him. The sea-green eyed boy noticed the way her smile wavered for a split second before reforming itself and his eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

He took hold of her hand, interlacing his fingers with hers as he pulled her to a stop while the others walked ahead of them. Annabeth turned to look at him with a puzzling expression. He noticed that she wouldn’t meet his gaze. He gave her hand a squeeze and her eyes met his for only a second.

“Hey, you ok?” He asked in a hushed tone so their friends wouldn’t hear.

Annabeth focused her gaze on a spot right behind him, intensely staring at it. She knew if she looked into those green eyes for a long enough time she would break. He sounded worried and she hated herself for lying to him, but she didn’t want to talk about it. Maybe if she avoided discussing the topic it would go away on its own. At least that’s what she wanted to believe.

“I’m great! I mean I just got first place!” She stated excitedly, lying straight through her teeth and still refusing to look at him directly. The concerned expression on Percy’s face didn’t waver.

“Well then why won’t you look me in the eyes?” He asked lowly a moment later.

Annabeth stiffened. She should’ve known Percy would be the hardest one to convince. That boy had a talent for reading people. She swallowed the lump forming in her throat and ever so slowly moved her gaze to his sea-green irises. His brow was furrowed, and his eyes stared questioningly towards her. It took everything in her to keep the grin on her lips and continue the eye contact.

“See? All good.” She said lightly.

“Annabeth-” He started, still clearly concerned.

Before he could say anymore, Annabeth leaned up to capture his lips with hers. It was just a small

peck and when she pulled away all she wanted to do was let Percy hug her and tell her everything was going to be ok, but she couldn't. She wouldn't let herself. Percy had dealt with so much, the last thing he needed was another burden to carry and that's exactly what she would be giving him. Instead she forced another smile and choked down her shaky voice before speaking.

"I'm *fine* Percy. Now come on, the others are going to leave without us!" She said, trying her best to sound light-hearted and cheerful before running ahead of her boyfriend and towards the doorway.

Percy stared at her retreating figure. Something wasn't right. He couldn't quite place what was wrong, but he knew something was slightly off about the way Annabeth was acting. It was similar to the way he would act when he was his old self, putting on a show for everyone in attempt to block out his real feelings. The look in her eyes when she finally met his gaze was guarded, she seemed almost *scared* and he needed to know why.

The others may not have seen it at first, but he did.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39

The weeks following the final figure skating competition were pretty relaxed. For once the stress of awaiting a hockey game or a competition didn't exist for those on the Tridents team or those on the figure skating team. Practices were a lot more laid back. Christina and Coach Hedge still pushed their skaters when they could but overall everyone was more on the carefree side of things. However, there was one thing that was bothering a certain star hockey player and that was his girlfriend.

Annabeth hadn't been herself since the night of the competition. She would get these looks on her face as if she was lost in thought when the group was sitting together at lunch. He'd caught her several times snapping out of whatever trance she was in and trying to appear as if nothing was wrong. Percy knew better though. He wasn't falling for it.

They were currently eating lunch in the cafeteria. Since Annabeth and Percy had combined their friend groups the amount of space available at the table was very limited. There wasn't a single person who wasn't touching shoulders with the person on either side of them. None of them really seemed to care though.

"Ok I hear you but just listen. Right so, imagine it's the year 3080 and there's flying cars above you. How are they going to make traffic lights to prevent accidents in the sky? Are they just going to be floating in mid-air? I mean I'm just so confused!" Leo asked while staring pointedly towards Piper who was trying not to burst out laughing at how concerned the Latino boy appeared to be by the situation.

Annabeth felt the boy on her right shaking with hidden laughter. He ran a hand through his messy jet-black hair before Annabeth saw the smile on his face give out as he started laughing. The dimples on his face appeared stronger than ever as he shifted ever so slightly in his seat. His other arm which had been wrapped around her shoulders pulled her tighter against him unconsciously.

"Dude what the hell is this conversation?"

"I'm just saying! Someone needs to think about these things!" The Latino boy argued.

Percy shook his head back and forth in utter amazement at his friend.

"You're ridiculous Valdez" Jason added as everyone around the table laughed. Annabeth cracked a tiny smile at the comment and Calypso rolled her eyes at the boy.

She looked around the table they were all sitting at. Everyone appeared so carefree and happy. Thalia and Jason were busy talking about who knows what. Piper and Calypso appeared to be comparing skating tips. Will was whispering something to Nico who blushed in response so whatever the blonde male had said must not have been family friendly. Percy and Leo were trying to see how many food puns they could come up with before lunch ended. And Annabeth...well she was sitting silently at the table. Usually she'd be deep in conversation with someone at this point during lunch but lately she'd been reluctant to make much of an effort.

She wasn't an idiot; she knew something was wrong. The issue was that she couldn't pinpoint exactly why she was feeling the way she was. Ever since her final figure skating performance she'd been feeling...different. She tried her best to avoid the questions her friends asked her because she

had no desire to say much at all to those around her. There were long periods of time where she would find herself lost in her thoughts.

She knew Percy was worried about her. The raven-haired hockey player would ask her multiple times a day if she was ok and she'd simply respond by giving him a fake smile and a kiss on the cheek. He didn't believe her, and she knew that, but she didn't feel like trying to explain what was going on with her when she didn't even fully know herself. It had to do with her father and that's all she'd figured out. She had come to a temporary solution. Until she figured out exactly why she was feeling the way that she was, she would keep to herself. She'd later realize that it was a terrible idea but that's what she was going with for the time being.

She was once again brought out of her thoughts when she felt Percy's arm around her shoulders shift again. The world around her came back into focus. Her boyfriend gave her a reassuring squeeze and she looked up, her eyes meeting his sea green ones.

"Hey, you alright?" He whispered lowly after looking around the table to make sure no one was paying attention to them.

There was a familiar spark of worry in his eyes. She was the reason that spark was there and she hated herself for it. Even though she wasn't telling him anything she still managed to somehow bring him into it.

A ghost of a smile crossed her face and she lent up to kiss his cheek subtly. His expression didn't change majorly but she noticed that his lips twitched into a grin for a split second before his features returned to their previous expression.

"Yeah fine. Just wondering what I got on the biology quiz I took this morning." She explained quickly. Percy didn't look convinced in the slightest but he dropped it.

"I'm sure you crushed it princess." He replied, using the nickname he'd been calling her forever and giving her a reassuring smile.

In that moment, there was only one thought overcoming her entire being, suffocating her to no end and making her feel a million different emotions at once. He was looking at her like she was his whole world, his sea green eyes staring deeply into her grey irises. They'd gotten to know each other so well over the past few months. Whenever something was wrong they could always tell. They were honest with each other and now she was keeping something from him. She refrained from saying anything else and a feeling of immense guilt washed over her as the end of lunch bell sounded and all the students started to get up.

"Ok so basically the assignment is to pick an ancient Greek myth and write about the importance of it. I'm doing the story of Athena and Poseidon and how they competed for the control of Athens. There was a competition. Poseidon gave the people a salt spring and Athena gave them an olive tree. Athena ended up winning. I'm just going to expand on that story in my essay, but there's *tons* of stories you can do and- Percy are you even listening to me?" Annabeth interrupted her explanation of their history assignment when she saw her boyfriend looking at her as if not a single word was registering in his head.

The sea-green eyed boy laughed, and Annabeth knew the answer to her question without him having to answer.

"You're cute when you ramble" He said, making Annabeth blush a light pink. She hoped he hadn't noticed. She didn't want to give him the satisfaction.

“The assignment is due in two days and you haven’t written anything yet! I already have half of mine done but you need to at least pick a myth to write about today!” She yelled both worried for him and annoyed that he hadn’t written a single word of the thousand-word essay.

Percy shrugged and appeared to be completely calm over the whole situation. “No need to worry Princess. I’ve been writing essays and book reports the night before for as long as I can remember. Procrastination is a skill I have perfected.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes and chucked a pillow at him that was supporting her back as she leaned against the headboard of her bed. It hit him square in the face. He took the pillow away and she saw he was still smiling that annoying smirk of his. The nerve.

She had been doing homework in her room that evening after practice when Percy showed up outside her window (Athena wasn’t home so he could have just come to the front door, but she didn’t tell him that) claiming he needed help with their history assignment. She agreed to help him not knowing that he hadn’t even started it which led them to where they were now. Annabeth leaning against the head of her bed and Percy splayed across the bottom of the mattress.

“You’re also sexy as hell when you’re angry.” The hockey player added to his previous statement, causing Annabeth to turn a bright red. He knew that would get her. He loved it when she blushed.

“Shut up” She replied, looking back down at her laptop and continuing to type which was proving to be very hard because she felt his stare on her red face.

She tried her best to ignore him. It was only when he pushed the screen of her laptop down slightly so she couldn’t see it that she looked up at the boy who was now only a few feet from her. She sighed in exasperation.

“I need to do my work Jackson.” She said, reopening her laptop and resuming her typing. She needed to try and finish as much as she could because she had a lot of other work for her classes. Besides, doing her homework meant her focus wasn’t on the suffocating amount of emotions she was feeling towards her father.

“Annabeth” He said a moment later, this time in a more serious tone. She looked back up at him to see a worried look on his face. She’d seen that expression a lot recently.

“What’s wrong?” He asked concerned, staring directly into her eyes and refusing to look anywhere else. She tried to think of a quick response.

“Nothing, I’m just stressed about my schoolwork and-”

“Annabeth” Percy interrupted while giving her a look that told her he didn’t believe her. He was insistent on figuring out what was bothering her because he knew this wasn’t her.

The blonde sighed deeply, closing her laptop completely and tossing it aside so she could give him her full attention. He stared at her worriedly. Gods why did he have to be so incredibly good to her. She felt guilty as she looked at him.

He could have had any girl he wanted but he chose to be with her, something she was still baffled by. He was constantly checking up on her and she was just pushing him away. He texted her first thing in the morning and right before he went to bed. He tried to make her laugh whenever she was having a bad day. He supported and believed in her more than anyone else did. She stared into his caring green irises. She couldn’t take it anymore. He was just so infuriatingly *good*. She didn’t think she would ever deserve him.

With that thought in mind she grabbed a fistful of his t-shirt, bringing him towards her and smashing her lips against his.

To say he was surprised would be an understatement. Percy nearly lost his balance from being pulled towards his blonde girlfriend. He kissed her back before realizing the conversation they had been in the middle of. He reluctantly pulled away from her, but she surprised him once again by following his lips with hers.

“Annabeth” Percy tried between her kisses to get back to the topic at hand. He pulled away completely after a few more seconds.

“I’m worried about you Princess. You’re not acting like yourself.” He finally said, taking her hand in his carefully and running his thumb across her skin.

She took a deep breath and found it super hard to look him in the eyes. She didn’t want to burden him with her pile of issues that had resurfaced. He didn’t need that.

“I-I know.” She stuttered after a long pause.

“Was it something I did? Something I said?” He asked lowly.

“No! Gods no Percy.” She quickly responded. How could he even think that he’d done something wrong? This was all on her and she hated herself for making him feel like he was the problem. He was the complete opposite of the problem.

Annabeth saw him visibly relax before staring at her encouragingly to continue. She sighed, closing her eyes before talking.

“I just-I don’t want to talk about it. I hope you can understand. I just want to be here with you. No drama, no figure skating or hockey. Just us. Can we do that?” She whispered, leaning in closer towards him.

Percy sighed, staring deeply into her eyes. He knew something was wrong, but he didn’t want to push her. He knew that forcing someone to tell you something could cause you to lose their trust. He wanted Annabeth to trust him fully. He hoped that when she was ready, she would tell him. With that in mind he nodded, leaning towards her and closing the gap between them.

Her response was almost immediate. She pulled him closer, moving her lips feverishly against his own. His hands wrapped around her waist as her hands tangled into his messy hair. Feeling bold, she casually grazed his lip with her tongue. He was shocked but didn’t pull away. Within the next ten seconds their tongues were competing for dominance. Percy won but Annabeth wasn’t complaining.

A flashback replayed in her mind about the time Percy had come to her house to work on their history project about Hestia. They had a competition for who could tie a knot out of a cherry stem the fastest otherwise known as the test to see if someone was a good kisser. Annabeth was now experiencing proof that the test did not lie. She hadn’t kissed that many people to begin with but that didn’t mean she couldn’t tell Percy was a good kisser. His lips moved in perfect sync with hers, kissing her slowly yet roughly.

Annabeth leaned back against the bed whilst dragging Percy on top of her. Her head was cushioned by the soft pillows. He placed his arms on either side of her so that he wasn’t putting his weight on her. Her fingers stayed in his hair, twisting his raven colored locks. He pressed his lips harder against hers. She let out a small sigh at the action and she felt Percy grin against her mouth. Her

lungs were burning from the lack of oxygen she was getting but she didn't care in the slightest.

Annabeth was disappointed when a few minutes later Percy pulled away. Her disappointment was short-lived when she felt his lips move towards her collarbone, steadily inching up her neck. The feeling of his lips on her skin made her shiver and she decided right then and there that she never wanted him to stop. She stiffened when he reached a spot between the base of her neck and her shoulder. Percy must have felt the reaction because his lips didn't waver from the particular spot. Against her will a small moan escaped her lips when he bit the patch of skin. Percy definitely knew what he was doing. She tried not to dwell on the fact that he was probably so good because he had a lot of experience.

Having caught her breath, Annabeth brought Percy's lips back to hers. He complied happily. Her hands untangled themselves from his hair and moved to the hemline of his shirt. Her fingertips lightly grazed the skin directly underneath his cotton shirt, slowly inching up until she felt the smooth outline of his ab muscles. She felt her boyfriend tense. This time she was the one who smiled, pleased that she could in fact get a reaction out of the school's ex playboy.

She pressed down harder on the skin under his shirt, tracing patterns along his torso as he kissed her.

Percy pulled away after a moment, breathing heavily while opening his eyes to look down at her. Annabeth looked back up at him, breathing just as heavily if not more.

"We should stop" He whispered under his breath just loud enough for her to hear. His eyes were a shade she'd never seen before, a darker green.

Percy wanted more than anything to keep going. Hell, the old him definitely wouldn't have stopped. But he knew better. There was something bothering Annabeth and until she felt comfortable enough to tell him, they shouldn't take it any further.

Annabeth sighed. She didn't want to stop. For the past however long, she'd finally managed to get her mind off of everything. Now it was all coming back to her. She wanted to forget again. She wanted *him*.

Still, a tiny voice in her mind was telling her Percy was right. She couldn't pretend that she was fine and try to block out all her problems.

She nodded her head ever so slightly. "Yeah" she agreed.

It took all his willpower but after one last kiss Percy managed to get off her and laid next to her in the bed. Annabeth unconsciously laid her head on his shoulder as he wrapped an arm around her.

They stayed that way for a while, not saying a single word. Just enjoying the silence.

Annabeth attempted to process what happened that afternoon. She'd never kissed anyone like that before. She knew it was embarrassing but it was the truth. It made her think about what might happen in the future concerning her relationship with Percy. Nerves erupted in her stomach. She liked him. She *really* liked him. It scared her.

"Percy?" She asked, breaking the quiet atmosphere.

"Yeah?"

"I-I just...um" She stumbled.

Percy shifted, turning to face her better whilst still keeping an arm around her. He eyed her questioningly and she blushed.

“What is it?”

“Well...you should know that- you know if t-things go f-further with the two of us and uh you know kissing and...stuff...”

“Mmmhmm” Percy said, listening to the adorable girl under his arm try to speak without turning redder than she already was. He tried desperately not to laugh at the way she was struggling to get out her thoughts.

“Stop laughing!” She scolded, slapping his chest.

“I’m not I swear!” He argued, failing to hide his smile.

Annabeth huffed. “Well it’s just that you know...you’re pretty e-experienced with everything and I-”

“Annabeth listen to me.” She met his eyes before he continued.

“I don’t care that you haven’t been with many guys. I never understood why people had such an issue with it. I mean if you really like someone it shouldn’t be such a big thing I-”

“Even if that person’s a virgin?” She blurted out before he could finish.

Percy stopped talking, looking down at her with an expression she couldn’t read. He scooted down closer to her, bringing a hand up to brush a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Annabeth kept her eyes on his the whole time.

“Even if that person is a virgin” He confirmed, keeping his hand on her cheek. Annabeth breathed a sigh of relief, leaning into his touch.

“Why were you so scared to tell me Princess?” He whispered in their close proximity.

She shrugged, choosing to focus on the material of his shirt. “I don’t know. I guess I just thought... well I thought you would want someone who you know...knew what they were doing.

Percy almost didn’t hear her but when he did, he tilted her chin up to look at him once more.

“When are you going to realize that I don’t want anyone else but you Princess.”

It was more of a statement than a question. His tone was so sincere that Annabeth had no choice but to believe him. A small smile made its way onto her face and she felt her insides basically turn to mush.

“I don’t either” She replied before breaking eye contact and snuggling into his chest further.

The last thing she remembered was Percy pressing a light kiss to her hair before she drifted off to sleep. She knew when she woke up everything bothering her the past few days would come spiraling back and she would have no choice but to face it head on.

Chapter 40

Chapter 40

As the days passed Annabeth only seemed to feel worse and it was affecting her skating. Sure, the figure skating team didn't have any upcoming competitions to worry about anymore but that didn't mean it was ok for them to completely slack off or in Annabeth's case, fall every other time she tried a jump. Her teammates had noticed, and she knew Christina had too. She couldn't help it; her heart just wasn't in it.

She hit the cold hard ice for the fourth time in the last fifteen minutes, landing on her butt and sighing in annoyance. She felt eyes on her.

"Alright practice is over, hit the locker rooms." Christina shouted towards the group.

Annabeth got up, skating steadily towards the exit of the ice where the rest of the team was going. She could see Ashley and Rebecca giggling about who knows what a few feet in front of her. Rachel must not have been very far behind.

"Wonder what those two are giggling about." Calypso said, appearing at Annabeth's left side.

"Probably how much money they just spent on a pair of shoes. Oh but don't worry it was *totally* worth it!" Piper added in a high-pitched tone, coming over to Annabeth's right side.

Despite her annoyed and sad state, Annabeth managed a small smile. Leave it to two of her closest friends to put a smile on her face.

They got changed in the locker room. Annabeth replaced her white skates for a pair of comfortable boots and took her hair out of the high ponytail it had been in. She pulled a giant hoodie over the thin long-sleeve shirt that she had hanging on a hook in her locker. The smell of sea salt air enveloped her. She grinned shyly down at the piece of clothing. It was one of Percy's hoodies that he'd let her 'borrow' about a week ago. He was crazy if he thought he was getting it back. It was way too comfy. She would never say it out loud, but it didn't exactly *hurt* that it also smelled like him. The blue hoodie was huge on her, the bottom of it went to her mid-thigh and the sleeves went well past her hands making it look like she didn't have any.

She bunched up the sleeves in order to organize her duffle. She eyed her now off-white skates next to the duffle. She knew she needed to change the laces on them. She already had a pair of white laces in her bag, but she just hadn't gotten around to actually changing them. She sighed, looking at the frayed edges and brown tint of the laces. Now was as good a time as ever she thought. It wouldn't take too long anyway. Deciding to stay an extra few minutes, she watched as all the other skaters left the locker room. Piper and Calypso each hugged her goodbye and then she was by herself...or so she thought for a good ten seconds before she saw a flash of red in her peripheral vision.

Rachel was notorious for taking forever to get out of the locker room. It was like she lived in there. How much could one person really need to do in a locker room?

The red head's locker was on the opposite side of the row from hers (something that was definitely done on purpose when they had the chance to pick lockers at the beginning of the season). Annabeth could see that they had similar ideas because Rachel was also improving the appearance of her skates. She was sat on the bench in front of her locker polishing the blemishes on her white

skates. Annabeth looked back at her own skates. They could really use polishing as well but she didn't have any on her. She looked back at Rachel. Might as well give it a shot.

"Dare" She called, grabbing the attention of the other skater in the room.

Rachel looked up; her eyes narrowed when she spotted Annabeth. "What?"

Annabeth was already regretting asking. "My skates could really use a polish before I re-lace them, but I don't have the stuff. Any *possible* chance you can find it in you to share some polish?"

Rachel didn't say anything for ten seconds. Just when Annabeth started to think the red head had ignored her, she spoke up.

"Only if you've got an extra pair of white laces I can have" She challenged, eyeing the strings in Annabeth's hand.

The blonde rose her eyebrows in surprise. Truth was she did have an extra set. The pack she'd bought had two pairs. She had a mental battle with herself. She really didn't want to give Rachel her extra set because she knew she'd end up changing the laces again soon, but she also really wanted to polish her skates. They needed it...badly. Rachel stared at her expectedly.

"Fine, deal." She said after taking another look at her skates. She reached into her duffle to grab the extra set.

Rachel smiled triumphantly and moved the small jar of polish to her other side so it was closer to Annabeth but still far enough that she was going to have to sit on the same bench as her. She hesitantly approached the skater and handed her the laces before taking a seat on the bench facing the opposite direction so they were back to back.

The two skaters sat in silence for a while, both polishing their white figure skates. After a few minutes Annabeth felt a slight vibration from the bench she was sitting on followed by a low ringing noise. She checked her phone but saw that no one was calling her so it must have been Rachel's cellphone. Rachel picked up her phone a second later, confirming Annabeth's thoughts. She took one look at the caller ID and turned the device off. Right before the screen went black Annabeth caught a glimpse of the word 'Dad' on the iPhone. Rachel stared at the phone with a look of annoyance, one Annabeth was all too familiar with.

"Everything ok?" Annabeth asked. She had no idea why she said anything in the first place. It would have been perfectly fine if they spent the rest of the time in silence.

"What do you care?" Rachel replied harshly before using one last bit of polish.

"I don't even know why I try" Annabeth huffed, resuming the cleaning of her skates.

Another minute passed. She felt Rachel shift to her left and pause when she went to pick up the extra laces. She seemed to be conflicted over if she should say something.

"Why do you?" The red head said it so quietly Annabeth almost didn't hear it but when she did, she looked up to meet green eyes.

"What?" She asked confusedly.

"Why do you try to start conversations with me when we're not friends? It's not the first time you've done it." The way she asked the question was less like an insult and more like a genuine curiosity. She didn't seem mad at her but rather confused as to why Annabeth was talking to her in

the first place.

Annabeth sighed, remembering the specific time after one of the competitions that she'd tried to talk to the girl. "Honestly...I don't know."

"I-I guess I just feel like I can...relate with you somehow." She continued.

Rachel laughed sarcastically. "How can you *possibly*-"

"Just hear me out ok?" Annabeth interrupted whilst closing her eyes briefly. Rachel sighed, gesturing for her to continue even though she didn't look interested in what she had to say.

"I saw you after Sectionals...talking to your dad." She started.

Rachel's face paled, the sarcastic smile on her face now replaced with a frown. "Well you should've minded your own business Chase."

"I didn't mean to I was just leaving the locker room and-"

Rachel put down her skates and turned to face her. "Yeah? Well next time instead of eavesdropping on other people just keep walking and stay the fuck out of-"

"Perfect daughter" Annabeth blurted out before she could finish. It took Rachel off guard, she furrowed her brows and stopped mid-sentence.

"W-what?" She said shakily.

"Be responsible Annabeth. Do your homework Annabeth. Don't forget to apply for scholarships Annabeth. Why did you get a B on your essay? Oh and my personal favorite- ice skating is just a distraction from your schoolwork."

Rachel gave her a look she didn't quite understand. "Your mom?"

Annabeth nodded, looking down at her skates and starting to lace them up. She couldn't meet her eyes.

"I know how it feels to have someone constantly on your back about succeeding. When you feel like you need to constantly prove yourself to them. Be the quote on quote 'perfect daughter' because anything less means you're worthless."

Rachel didn't say anything for a while. She couldn't figure out what to say really. The truth was she'd heard stuff similar to what Annabeth was talking about from her dad her whole life. She had no idea the blonde had such a similar situation to her. She finished lacing one of her skates, but she paused before starting the second one.

"Ever since I was a little girl my dad's been pushing me to be a better skater. Everyone in my family is good at something like *really* good. My cousin's currently on his way to being part of the Major League Soccer team. My Aunt was an Olympic gold medalist in swimming. My dad was on his way to being in the NBA before he got injured. So, when I went skating for the first time when I was six and told my dad how much I liked it...I basically decided the rest of my life. I started taking lessons and the rest is history. Getting second place in anything just wasn't an option. 'Perfect daughter' in a 'perfect family'." She finished.

Annabeth sighed. "I had no idea."

“How could you have? We haven’t exactly been the best of friends Chase.”

“Guess we’re both pretty messed up aren’t we?” Annabeth asked sarcastically. Rachel laughed quietly whilst nodding her head.

“Yeah”

Flashbacks of her arguments with Rachel over the years went through her head. They had been enemies for so long. Constantly fighting and throwing insults. But no matter how far back she thought she couldn’t remember where it all originated from. Why were they enemies? When did it all start? The insults, the competitiveness, the stubbornness.

“Why do you hate me so much Dare? What did I ever do?” Annabeth asked desperately, putting down one of her finished skates.

There was a moment where neither one of them said anything. Annabeth’s gaze didn’t waver from the girl sitting beside her.

“You really don’t know do you?” She heard Rachel whisper.

Annabeth shook her head. “No”

“I’m jealous of you.” Rachel admitted, shutting her eyes and refusing to make eye contact with the blonde.

“What? How...how can someone like *you* be jealous of someone like *me*?” Annabeth asked confusedly.

It didn’t make sense. Rachel was the popular girl in school, the one other girls wished they could be. The life of the party with a pretty face. Meanwhile she was just some bookworm obsessed with figure skating.

“Are you kidding me? Listen as much as it pains me to admit, Annabeth you’re an amazing skater. It’s like it just comes naturally to you. I wish I had that. Everyone hell, even coach thinks you could make it big one day. We don’t exactly have a captain on the team, but everyone knows if we did it would be you. You’re better than any of us on the team-”

“That’s not true I-”

“Yes, it is. You’re also modest as hell. Just take the compliment Chase.” Rachel butted in, shaking her head.

Annabeth looked down, smiling. “Thanks. You’re also really good Rachel. Better than you seem to think.”

Rachel nodded her thanks. She shifted in her spot on the bench and tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear before she continued.

“And then there’s school. You’re so smart Annabeth. If you don’t get a skating scholarship, I’m sure you’ll get an academic one to college. I don’t have that option.”

“You don’t know that.”

“And lastly, as cheesy as it might sound...you’ve got Jackson. I’ve had a crush on that boy for as long as I can remember. He’s never looked at me the way he does to you and he never will. Not

only that but somehow, you've changed him. He's different now. Not the same old playboy who used to go to parties almost every night of the week and hook up with a new girl. I knew that Percy. The Percy he was before you came into his life. Every girl wants to be the one that changes the bad boy and that was you. Not to mention you also had the captain of the wrestling team pining for your attention at the same time. You're pretty intimidating if you ask me."

"I don't...I don't know what to say." Annabeth breathed. She was beginning to feel overwhelmed with the amount of stuff Rachel was telling her. Was she really jealous of her? Never in a million years had she thought that was the reason for her coldness.

"I didn't really expect you to. But now you can see why I've hated you so much the past few years. You have the life I wish I had. I mean you know, before you told me about all the strict mother stuff." She joked at the end.

Annabeth smiled sadly. "The only reason I'm so good at skating is because it's...it's what got me through a rough time in my life. I spent entire days at the rink when I could just skating to try and forget a lot of stuff I was going through. I get good grades in school because my mother pushes me past my breaking point on a daily basis. As for Percy...that was something I never saw coming believe me."

She laughed. "I mean come on you saw how we used to be. Constantly at each other's throats whenever we saw each other at the rink. It all just kind of...happened."

Rachel smiled, emitting a breathy laugh. "Oh I remember."

Annabeth shifted her hair over her shoulder and Rachel caught a glimpse of something that made her grin. "Clearly a lot has changed since then. Looks like things have been going well between you two." She winked at the blonde.

"What do you mean?" The blonde asked confusedly.

"Oh nothing. Just referring to the hickeys on your neck." Rachel said in a subtle teasing tone.

Annabeth's cheeks flushed red and she moved Percy's hoodie in attempt to hide her neck. "W-what? I don't know what you're-"

"Oh please. I know a cheap foundation coverage when I see one. Not to mention it's rubbing off. Jackson really did a number on you, that's quite a dark shade of purple." Rachel teased, finishing the laces on her second skate.

Her comments only made Annabeth blush harder. Truth be told over the past few days her and Percy had been getting...distracted a lot. Things never went too far, maybe sometimes a shirt or two would come off and maybe their lips would end up swollen, and hickeys...lots of hickeys and not always just on her, but it never went past that. Although that didn't mean it wasn't getting harder and harder for both of them to stop before it did.

Percy was usually the one to pull away. She loved that he respected her and never once tried to do something she didn't want or something she wasn't ready for. But she knew that wasn't the only reason why he pulled away. He didn't want to go further until he knew how she was feeling. *Exactly* how she was feeling.

Annabeth refused to make eye contact with the girl across from her. She finished up her skates and placed them aside. Rachel stared at her suggestively.

"Whatever Dare" She said, confirming what Rachel already knew.

“Just saying, I know a ton of ways to get rid of those hickeys faster. Wouldn’t want mama Chase to see her daughter marked with purple bruises on her neck now would we?” Rachel continued, enjoying herself far too much.

Annabeth gasped in mock hurt, leaning towards the curly haired girl and slapping her arm. “Shut up! I’m highly regretting telling you about my mother right now!”

Rachel laughed, putting her hands up in surrender while Annabeth just turned redder. Once the moment had died down Rachel spoke once more, this time in a more serious tone.

“No but seriously, all jokes aside Chase I’m glad you two have managed to resolve things. Whenever I see him with you, I can tell how much he cares about you. I knew the minute I saw him go over to congratulate you on a good race the day we did a relay during practice that I had no chance. You balance each other out. I mean I’m still jealous as hell because that boy is *gorgeous* but...I’ll get over it.” She fidgeted with the hemline of her jacket and Annabeth stared at her sadly.

“You’re going to find someone Rachel, I promise.”

The red head smiled. “Thanks.”

Everything Rachel said replayed in Annabeth’s head. Percy showed her all the time how much he cared about her. He was sweet and kind and patient. And what had she repaid him with? Keeping secrets, shutting him out, and trying to figure everything out on her own. She was a horrible girlfriend. But she was done. Whether she had her shit together or not it didn’t matter. She needed her boyfriend to be there for her and the only way that was going to happen was if Annabeth told him everything. Satisfied with her decision, she stood up from the bench in the locker room.

“Come on, let’s go. It’s well past the end of practice.” Annabeth said, putting her skates in her bag and zipping it up. Rachel copied her and they walked side by side out the door to the ice rink.

Who knew Rachel Dare would be the final push to get Annabeth to stop shutting everyone out? She had no idea what to call the red head as the evening came to an end. They would never be best friends. That type of plot only existed in those cheesy teenage movies Annabeth couldn’t help but love.

However, the two of them understood each other on a level other people couldn’t, and that was something very valuable in Annabeth’s eyes.

Chapter 41

Chapter 41

Annabeth felt the smooth curve of the ice beneath her skates. The brisk wind blowing her hair back that had escaped the bun she put it up into. The blue quarter zip long-sleeve she was wearing hugged her body. A pair of black leggings accompanied the look along with her white skates. She spread her arms out as she skated around the large circumference of the ice rink, skating sideways along the edges and occasionally throwing herself into a jump. The ice crunched under the blade of her skate each time she came down. She stumbled more than once, distracted by the fact that any second now she was going to be sharing her tragic past. Frustrated with herself for missing yet another jump, she turned up the volume of the song playing through her headphones.

She didn't notice him come in. He smiled as he walked further into the arena, admiring the blonde figure skater practicing the sport she loved so much. She stared down at the ice determined, gaining speed before performing a triple Lutz. She sighed in defeat even though he hadn't seen anything wrong with the move. Then again, he was a hockey player not a figure skater.

She finally looked up after what seemed like hours but in reality, was only a few minutes. She saw him almost immediately, her grey irises zeroing in on the boy in dark jeans and a black hoodie holding a stuffed duffle bag at his side where she could see a small hole with hockey skates sticking out from not being zipped up all the way.

"Percy" She voiced, her words echoing inside the empty arena as she took the headphones out of her ears.

The raven-haired male grinned, staring at her before shoving his duffle bag next to hers near the bleachers and walking over to the railing outside the rink. Annabeth skated over to him, stopping when she got to the railing on the side with ice. Before she could say anything else, he leaned forward and kissed her lightly. His touch was warm from having been in the locker room while she stayed and practiced in the main rink.

"Hey Princess" He greeted after he pulled away.

It was a Friday night and both teams had gotten out of practice a little while ago. Annabeth had requested to stay a little longer than usual because she needed time to think and Christina let her. They didn't have practice tomorrow till late afternoon instead of the early morning and Christina had trusted her to lock up when she was done. She had texted Percy to meet her whenever he was done. She was tired of keeping stuff from him. He tried not to show it for her sake, but she could tell he was worried and that in itself made her feel guilty. Now was as good a time as ever to tell him how she'd been feeling since her final performance at Nationals.

"Hey" She whispered back in return, gripping one of his hands in her own and intertwining their fingers before resting them on the railing. She concentrated on the movement of their fingers, refusing to look him directly in the eye.

Percy furrowed his eyebrows in concern. He placed a finger from his free hand under her chin, shifting her gaze to meet his. His eyes widened when he noticed the shine in her eyes from a buildup of tears.

"What's wrong?" He asked immediately, his hand coming up to cup her cheek comfortably as he searched her face.

She was quiet for a minute, staring into his sea green eyes and gripping his hand tighter. She felt a lump forming in her throat as her eyes welled up. She hated crying. It showed weakness and vulnerability. Only a handful of people had ever seen her in such a state.

“I just...I-I’m so sorry Percy.” She finally replied, trying as hard as she could to keep her voice from breaking or her tears from falling.

Percy stared at her in shock, not understanding why she was apologizing. His thumb rubbed across her cheek. “What-”

“You’ve been trying for *days* to get me to talk to you about why I’ve been...the way I’ve been. You’ve been so sweet and understanding yet all I’ve done is s-shut you out and told you to drop it. I thought I could just get through it on my own, but I was wrong. I don’t want to keep anything from you, that’s not how relationships work. I just...I d-don’t-” She hiccupped at the end, biting her lip in attempt to keep the tears at bay. Percy cut her off, dropping her hand and surprising her when he hopped over the short railing that had been between them. Sneakers on and everything. Somehow, he hadn’t slipped on the ice.

He pulled her into a tight embrace, and she wrapped her arms around him. Her breathing became shakier and she buried her face into his chest.

“Shhh. It’s ok.” He soothed her, rubbing small circles on her back.

“I want to tell you. I want to tell you e-everything” She said in a muffled voice from being completely enveloped in his arms. She felt him nod in response. They stayed that way for a while.

Percy stared at her patiently as the two of them sat side by side facing each other on one of the bleachers in the ice arena. He held her hand in comfort and she squeezed it lightly. Their knees touched from their close proximity. She took a deep shaky breath.

“I don’t know where to start.” She said nervously. Percy responded by rubbing his thumb across her knuckles. Annabeth sighed, moving her eyes up to meet his.

“You already know the story with my dad. The man who got me into skating. My biggest supporter who ended up abandoning me.” She started sadly, trying her best to summarize the story she’d told him so many nights ago on their walk home.

Percy nodded, intertwining their fingers as he listened. His full attention on the blonde in front of him. He saw her look down once again in deep thought. When she hadn’t said anything for a few minutes he broke the silence.

“Your performances are for him though aren’t they?” It was a dumb question. He knew the answer to it without needing confirmation, but Annabeth still nodded her head.

“No matter how hard I try I can’t forget him. *Every day* there’s a moment where my mind wanders and I imagine what my life would have been like if he was still here. Maybe my mother wouldn’t be so hard on me all the time about school and he could have made her see how I value skating. Maybe he could have taught me to drive instead. He could have listened to my rants about how much I hated Rachel and well...the star player of the hockey team.” She paused, the smallest of smiles flashing across her face. Percy smiled back, remembering the stupid rivalry.

The grin on her face faded as soon as it appeared. “But...he’s not here. I just...I want to forget *so* badly. Why do I still think about him when all it does it make me upset? Why can’t I just let him go? W-why do I still choose to do performances for him when all it does is hurt me? W-why can’t

it just s-stop? I-I want it to *stop* Percy....I-I..." She couldn't stop the tears this time. Little by little teardrops fell down her cold cheeks as she breathed unevenly.

Percy lurched forward and wrapped his arms around her for the second time that night. She leaned her head against his chest and she felt him rest his chin on top of her head in their sitting position. He ran his fingers through her blonde curls as her left cheek stayed pressed against his shoulder and she looked out at the ice.

"He's your father Annabeth that's why. You try to forget him because of all the terrible things he's done but in the end he's still your dad." Percy spoke after a minute, his chin still resting on her head.

Annabeth closed her eyes, her eyelashes wet with tears. She sniffled and pressed her face further into his shirt as his arms tightened around her small frame. "I-It just *hurts* Percy. It hurts so much. I just want to know why. *Why did he leave?* H-he was here and then he was just g-gone. I can't...I d-don't understand-" She sobbed, unable to continue the sentence.

Percy soothed her, digging his hand further into her hair that had long since fallen out of its bun. His other hand was wrapped around her tightly as he whispered words of comfort to her.

"I know it hurts. Trust me I do. I would give anything to know why my dad cheated on my mom. Why he still went on that stupid fishing trip instead of staying to work things out. I think about it all the time too. But...sometimes we don't always get answers. It sucks but that's the reality of it. We may never know why they did the things that they did."

Annabeth hiccuped as the tears continued to fall from her eyes. His voice was so steady, so comforting. Knowing that he had such a similar situation to her made her feel less upset and angry at herself. There was no one else who could make her feel the way she felt in that moment.

"It's ok to still think about him though Princess. Without him you wouldn't be the person you are today. The amazing figure skater I get to call my girlfriend. That experience has helped shape you and I know that I would never change a single thing about you."

Annabeth felt her heart warm at his sweet words. She lifted her head from his chest to look him in the eye. His green orbs stared into her grey ones slightly red from crying. She pecked his cheek, her lips lingering on his skin before she pulled back.

"Thank you Hockey Boy." She muttered, her voice slightly cracking as she tried to get across how grateful she was to him.

Percy nodded, resting a hand on her thigh and running his thumb across the fabric of her leggings. She felt goosebumps on her skin from his touch. He closed his eyes for a brief moment, sighing as he uttered his next words. "While we're sharing...there's something else you should know about me...about my past."

Annabeth stared at him curiously, she placed one of her hands on his chest and he held it there.

"I don't want there to be any secrets between us. Not anymore." Annabeth nodded, agreeing with the statement before he continued.

Percy took a deep breath, eyes fixated on her. "Even though it seemed like I was the type of person who got wasted at parties and skipped school because of a hangover...that wasn't true. I just made people think that I did because they associated it with my image and popularity status. Truth is I don't drink or smoke for that matter and there's a reason for it." He started.

Annabeth waited for him to continue. Flashbacks to him at Silena's party replayed in her mind. She never saw him holding a solo cup, much less taking a sip from anyone else's drink. She remembered asking him about it on the roof of the rink and he told her that it was a whole different story. She could tell whatever it was it troubled him.

"Summer before sophomore year. Before all the Luke and Reyna drama but after my dad died. My mom, she met this guy a few months before the end of freshman year...Gabe. He was really nice at first. Coming over for dinner at least once a week and asking my mom about her day. She really liked him I could tell. But then...I don't know I guess his true colors came out."

Annabeth felt her stomach drop as she tried to figure out what her boyfriend was leading up to. The look in his eyes, the tone of his voice. She tried to piece it together and when she did, she hoped to all the Gods that she was wrong.

"He started spending more time at the apartment. Spending the night often. Eventually my mom asked him if he wanted to move in and he did. For the first couple weeks of summer everything was fine but then he got more...comfortable around the house. He went out to the liquor store constantly. It got to the point where he was drunk more than he was sober and if he wasn't drinking, he'd be smoking with his buddies in the living room."

He paused and Annabeth breathed shakily. *Please, no.* She begged, realizing more and more what the story was leading up to.

"One day he got really angry. Started yelling at my mom and threatening her. I was on my way back home from practice and when I walked through the door to the apartment, I saw him...hitting her. He was stumbling around drunk out of his mind gripping her arm in one hand while I saw him smack her across the face with his other. She was crying, telling him to stop but he kept yelling at her for I don't even know what. I stepped in as soon as I saw him. I pulled him away from her but that only made him angrier."

Annabeth brought a hand up to cover her mouth, the tears welling in her eyes as Percy continued whilst staring down at his hoodie.

"Gabe may have been a drunk idiot, but he was strong. Managed to get a few blows in. Luckily it was summer, so I didn't have to make up a lie about how I'd gotten into a fight with someone in our grade and received a purple eye. It wasn't too long after that that it became a regular thing. The beatings, the yelling, throwing empty bottles of beer on the wall. I protected my mom each and every time I could. She tried kicking him out, but he threatened to hurt her through harming me."

Annabeth felt a stream of new tears fall down her cheeks. She shook her head, her vision becoming blurry. "Percy-" She croaked but he interrupted her.

"Eventually we found out he'd done time in prison before. When he wasn't home, I called the police and since I had evidence all over my face of the things he'd done and my mom confirmed it, the officers arrested him as soon as he got back. He was out of our lives. Sentenced to jail for life from all the other things he'd been charged with too. We never talk about it. My mom and I. Almost like we're...afraid that he'll somehow come back. I can tell she still thinks about it sometimes. It's a part of the past we can't erase."

Percy closed his eyes for a moment, a singular tear falling from his eye. The sight made Annabeth's heart break even more than it already was. He wiped it away before looking into her eyes for the first time since he'd started the story.

"I made the decision that summer that no matter how bad things got I would never drink or smoke."

I saw what it did to him...to Gabe, what it made him capable of. I *never* want to be that person, that *monster* that hurt my mother. Drugs are a constant reminder of him, and I don't want to be anything like him or have anything to do with him." He finished.

Annabeth sniffled, wiping a couple stray tears from her cheeks. Gods she had never been more emotionally exhausted in one night. Instead of saying anything right away she settled for hugging him again, burying her head into his neck as he gripped her tightly. Small quiet sobs escaped her body as Percy turned his face into her, copying her position. She could feel his breath against her neck, shaky and deep.

"I'm *so* sorry." She whispered into his skin, placing a light kiss into the crook of his neck.

Percy didn't say anything in response, instead pulling her even closer and shutting his eyes tightly. Her lips grazed his neck every so often and he breathed in her lemon scented shampoo.

He knew it in that moment. Hell, he had known it for a while now, but he was absolutely certain when they held each other on the bleachers that night in their ice rink. She was damaged and he was damaged. Neither one of them was perfect and they never would be. They had scars of a haunted past that would stay with them forever. But sitting there with her in his arms, having shared every part of his life with her. The good, the bad, the ugly. He knew. There was no one else and there never would be.

He pulled away after several minutes but only far enough so that he could lean his forehead against hers. She wasn't crying anymore but her eyes were still red-rimmed. Percy thought she looked beautiful. He saw her close her eyes and he stared at the long lashes against her skin. Her breathing was still uneven as it fanned across his face.

"Hey Princess?" He said lowly, waiting for the blonde to open her mesmerizing grey eyes.

"Yeah?" She said back, using the same volume in her voice as him. She blinked her eyes open, meeting the sea green ones that took her breath away every time.

Percy brought a hand up to cup her cheek, keeping his forehead against hers as he looked at her. He whispered his next words so quietly she almost missed them.

"I love you"

Annabeth sucked in a breath, her heart rate picking up as she tried to process what he had said. "You-"

"I love you Annabeth Chase." He repeated louder this time, cutting her off.

If there was one thing he didn't want her to be uncertain about it was this. She had to know without a doubt that he was in love with her. He would say it a million times more if she still didn't understand.

Annabeth stared deeply into his honest eyes. An indescribable feeling coursing through her veins as he looked at her. She replayed the words in her head. Hearing him say it did the opposite of cloud her mind. For once she knew exactly what she wanted and what she was feeling. The boy in front of her, the guy she had hated for so long who had somehow wormed his way into her life. The guy who understood her more than she thought anyone ever would, who had similar life experiences to her. Who listened to her and comforted her whenever she needed him. Who made her smile and laugh constantly. No one had ever made her feel like he did.

A memory surfaced in the back of her mind.

“Maybe you’re not as awful as I thought you were.”

“I know. I’m awesome right? Just don’t fall in love with me Chase.”

“Don’t think we’re gonna have an issue there Jackson.”

If only she could go back and tell herself how wrong she had been.

“I...I love you too Percy Jackson.” She whispered back after a few seconds had gone by. Nothing had ever felt so right to say in her life.

She saw his face break out into a grin and she tried desperately to keep the smile on her face at bay. He leaned in closer, their noses touching and the space between them miniscule. His hot breath blew across her face and she sighed.

Finally, he closed the distance, bringing his lips to hers gently. It was a soft kiss, neither one of them in a rush to deepen it. Percy held her face as if it was the most fragile thing in the world. Annabeth smiled into the kiss, the sad emotions leaving her shoulders as he brought her in for another kiss. Their noses brushed every so often. She had never felt so safe.

When they finally pulled away Percy stared at her before possibly the most cheesy but romantic idea came to him. Annabeth furrowed her brows when his eyes lit up. He stood up, grabbing her hand and pulling her up with him.

“I’ll be right back. Stay here.” He said excitedly to her.

“What are you-”

“Do you trust me?” He asked before she could finish her question.

She smiled. Not even having to think about the answer before she said it. “Always”

He beamed at her response, not able to stop himself from pecking her on the lips one last time. “Don’t move” He whispered against her lips.

Chapter 42

Chapter Notes

WARNING: This chapter contains some more mature content/scenes

Also RIP to Christine McVie. When I wrote this I originally used the Eva Cassidy cover of the Fleetwood Mac song but I love both versions. So sad to have lost such a legend in the music industry :(

Chapter 42

Needless to say, Annabeth was beyond confused when three minutes later the lights to the ice rink turned off, encasing her in complete darkness. It only lasted a second though because she blinked and then hues of blue colored the main ice rink, making it look like an ocean. She smiled at the sight. The colored lights were only used for figure skating competitions and she'd never gotten to enjoy them from the bleachers before. A song started playing through the speakers. Some fast-paced tune that reminded her of the summer.

She heard the main door to the ice arena open and was met with the sight of her boyfriend. He smiled when he noticed the music and the blue light. He ran up the bleachers like an excited kid on Christmas morning.

"Ok how in the *world* did you get access to the lighting and sound system?" She asked once he appeared next to her, already knowing that it was something he shouldn't have been able to do.

Percy shrugged innocently. "Let's just say it involved sneaking into the rink one night with the team, snooping around Coach's office, and a very tech savvy Leo Valdez."

Annabeth shook her head in mock disappointment.

"So, what do you say? Up for a little more skating or are you too tired Princess?" He asked competitively, his eyes gleaming with interest as he grabbed his hockey skates from his duffle.

Annabeth scoffed, her own competitive side coming out. "Please. Do you know who you're talking to?"

He smiled, tightening the laces on his hockey skates. Luckily, Annabeth hadn't taken her white figure skates off yet, so she was already set to go.

"Last one down's a rotten egg!" She shouted before steadily making her way down to the bottom of the bleachers.

"Not fair! You already had your skates on!" He yelled after her, finishing up his second skate and following her down.

She stuck her tongue out at him when she stepped foot on the ice, not caring that the action was something a five-year-old would do. The blades of her skates met the now blue tinted ice as she glided easily over to the other side of the rink. She stared at the clock above the ice, realizing how late it was. Her mother was going to murder her, but she found herself not caring in the slightest.

“That was very unsportsmanlike Chase. I’d say you need to go in the penalty box immediately.” Percy said. She turned around as she saw him getting onto the ice. His skating technique coming as easily to him as it did to her.

“Oh yeah? Well then you’re going to have to come over here and get me first Jackson.” She teased, skating backwards as he moved towards her.

His eyes glimmered with playfulness as the speakers continued to play a random song from his playlist. “How many times do we have to go over this babe? I’m faster and you know it.” He replied cockily.

She scoffed, trying not to dwell too much on the fact that he’d called her babe. “Prove it then.”

As soon as the words left her lips all hell broke loose. She screamed when she saw him kick off in a burst of speed. She skated away from him, finding it slightly hard to see in the darkness mixed with blue. They skated in giant circles around the large circumference of the ice. The wind blew her hair back and she felt her heart beat faster when she noticed him getting closer.

The scenario seemed all too familiar. She smiled as she recounted the memory at Rockefeller Center. Except now it was just the two of them at their own rink. The one they had been skating on since they were kids. She got so lost in her thoughts she almost completely forgot she had a hockey player chasing after her. When she remembered, it was already too late.

“Too slow Princess!” Percy shouted in victory, wrapping his arms around her waist as she laughed.

He spun around to face her, skating backwards along the ice as she faced him. Truth was she knew he was obviously faster. He was a hockey player for gods sake. Even his skates were meant for speed. But she didn’t want to fuel his already massive ego.

He gripped her waist and she felt herself being pushed backwards. Before she knew what was happening, she felt her back hit the tempered glass walls conveniently next to the penalty box. She breathed heavily. She couldn’t tell you if it was because she was finally getting to catch her breath from skating or if it was because he was leaning so close to her it was almost suffocating. Every smart comment she was going to give him left her mind.

His hands stayed firmly on her waist and she reached up to wrap her arms around his neck. His skin was tinted blue as was hers due to the lighting. Their skates stayed in place along the edge of the rink.

When their lips met this time, it was different. A good kind of different. She felt him inch closer to her, connecting their lips more firmly as her back pressed up against the wall harder. She buried her fingers into his hair when he deepened the kiss. His tongue asking for permission that she granted. She was suddenly so thankful for the wall behind her because without it she was pretty sure she would have lost her balance. Her legs felt like jelly and she needed the support it gave her to stay upright. Her head jerked back every few seconds due to the force behind the kiss. She was having trouble keeping up. She sighed into it. It was honestly frustrating how good he was at kissing. He probably knew it too.

They pulled away for two reasons. One because air became a necessity and two because a different kind of song started playing from the speakers around them. Annabeth raised her eyebrows in question, looking at the boy in front of her for an explanation as the beginning notes to the song started.

“Funny. I didn’t take you for much of an *Eva Cassidy* fan.” She teased, recognizing the song

immediately. Her voice came out in labored breaths and a look of realization crossed his features.

He shut his eyes tightly, cursing under his breath. “Will” She heard him say.

“What?” She asked, laughing a little.

“Will asked to borrow my phone yesterday. He said it would only take a second, so I let him. I should’ve known he would mess with my playlist.” He mumbled, his own heavy breathing fanning her face.

Annabeth laughed. “Ok but...how could he *possibly* know we would be in a situation like this where the song would play?”

Percy shrugged. “I stopped trying to figure that dude out a long time ago.”

He tried to go in for another kiss, but Annabeth put a hand on his chest, stopping him but not before she let their lips touch for a millisecond. She giggled. She did that a lot around him and it was totally out of character for her. She grabbed one of his hands, dragging him away from the side as she pushed off of the wall. He lazily followed her, letting her guide them along the smooth ice. She led them to the middle of the rink before stopping with her toe pick, nearly making him crash into her as the lyrics of the song sounded all around them.

[Song Tribute-Songbird by Eva Cassidy OR Fleetwood Mac]

“Time for you to learn some spins mister.” She voiced, turning to face him with a mischievous look on her face.

“Oh not in this lifetime. In case you haven’t noticed I’m a *hockey player*. We simply don’t do that.” He argued.

Annabeth waved off his comment, demonstrating a simple one-foot spin, tucking her arms into her body as she built up momentum. She finished with her arms out wide, staring at him expectantly. He looked back at her as if she’d just completed the world’s hardest math problem.

“Yeah...no. Not going to happen Princess.” He replied, crossing his arms on his chest. She laughed before skating close to him again.

*For you there'll be no crying
For you the sun will be shining
'Cause I feel that when I'm with you
It's all right I know it's right*

She unraveled his hands from his chest, gripping them tightly as she skated in a small circle around him. His skates followed reluctantly, and it wasn’t long before he began to feel dizzy. He hadn’t even been spinning that fast and Annabeth had been the one doing all the work. She came to a sudden stop and he felt the world come in and out of focus, spreading his arms out to catch him if he fell. Annabeth tried her best to hold back her laughter.

“How the hell do you not get dizzy from that?” He asked after everything had settled back into its original place.

She met his eyes, smirking like she had known all along he was going to hate it. “Years of practice.” She supplied.

“You want to try something else? I think at this point you could easily handle a layback spin.” She

joked, knowing full well it had taken her years to perfect that move.

He glared at her before grasping one of her hands and yanking her towards him. She yelped, crashing straight into his chest and nearly losing her balance. For the second time that night she was finding it quite hard to breath at their close proximity.

"I've got a better idea." He said, intertwining their fingers.

*And the songbirds keep singing like they
Know the score
And I love you I love you I love you
Like never before*

She stared at him expectedly and he smiled.

"Dance with me." He said like it was the most casual thing.

"What?" She asked confusedly.

"Come on" He said, dragging her back to the middle of the rink since they had slightly strayed from the spot.

"In case you haven't noticed Hockey Boy we're on an ice rink. How do you suppose we slow dance?" She stated sarcastically once they had come to a stop.

"Easy. I stand here while you get to be pulled around in a circle like this." He started, gripping her hand tightly and pulling her around him.

Annabeth laughed. "Ok now what?"

"Now you get to pull me around. Slowly this time." He warned. She rolled her eyes, pulling him around her in a small circle.

"And now" He said after facing her once more. "We spin at the same time"

His one hand stayed interlocked with hers as they skated around in a smooth motion. She laughed at his ridiculousness as they continued to skate. Percy took her other hand in his, deciding it was better to skate in front of her backwards. She grinned at the new adjustment and they skated around the outer areas of the rink.

"You know what this reminds me of?" Percy asked, his fingers still laced with hers.

"What?"

"That *Happy Gilmore* movie. You know, the scene where Happy and Virginia go on that ice-skating date while the song *Endless Love* is playing and the guy who drives the Zamboni is mouthing the lyrics."

Annabeth choked back her laughter. "What are you talking about?"

Percy's eyes widened in shock and he nearly lost his balance. "Don't tell me you've never seen the movie. Come on you have to know *Happy Gilmore*. About the one hockey player who joins a golf tournament to earn some money?" He questioned, explaining the plot briefly.

Annabeth shook her head back and forth. "Nope. Never seen it."

He held a hand to his heart like it physically pained him to hear her response. “Well it’s a good thing I have it! Emergency movie night. This weekend, my place. I’m not accepting no for an answer.”

“Ok” She said after a minute.

“No I don’t care how many excuses you make we’re watching it and-did you just say yes?” Percy asked, realizing midsentence what the blonde had said.

Annabeth nodded. “It’s not like we have practice on Sunday’s so what about tomorrow night?” She replied, already thinking about the text she would be sending her mother about staying over at Piper’s as a cover up.

*To you I would give the world
To you I'd never be cold
'Cause I feel that when I'm with you
It's all right I know it's right*

Percy smiled like she’d just told him he won the lottery. He pulled her towards him strongly, this time she had been prepared for it. Her hands braced themselves against his hoodie and she looked up at him.

“Hey” he whispered when there was only a centimeter of space between them.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “Hi”

“You’re beautiful” He whispered dreamily, wrapping his arms around her waist.

“Oh my god” Annabeth said back in disbelief as she bit back a smile.

“What?” He asked innocently.

“Nothing. Just that you are possibly the cheesiest person I’ve ever met.”

Percy scoffed in mock hurt. “Um I prefer the term *romantic*. I’m sorry if I want to let my girlfriend know how much I-”

She leaned forward, cutting him off by placing a sweet kiss to his lips. “I didn’t say I didn’t like it.” She finished.

A Cheshire smirk spread across his features as he closed the gap between them once more. Holding her tightly as the end of the song came through the speakers.

*And the songbirds keep singing like they
Know the score
And I love you I love you I love you
Like never before like never before*

*Like never before
Like never before*

“You can’t tell me that movie wasn’t hilarious.” Percy remarked once the closing credits flashed across the TV screen in the living room.

Annabeth shook her head back and forth. “I’m not surprised *you* like it. Let’s put it that way.”

He seemed satisfied with her answer.

It was the following night and Annabeth was over at Percy's apartment complex to watch the movie she had promised him. It was nice to get away from homework for a while considering it was all she did that day. The end of the year was getting closer and closer and it absolutely terrified her.

Seeing as how the weather was warming up, she had arrived in a pair of old cotton shorts and one of Percy's oversized t-shirts. One of her favorite things about movie nights was that they entailed comfy clothing and no effort.

"Hey where's your mom?" She asked after a minute. Embarrassed for not noticing her absence sooner.

"Some cooking seminar for the weekend. Don't ask me why. The woman practically knows how to cook everything already." He joked.

She hummed, leaning her head against his shoulder. "I wish my mom could be more like yours."

Percy smiled sadly, rubbing her arm. "She'll see how great you are one day Princess I promise. When she does, she'll be proud. Till then you have me. I'll always be proud of you." He said sweetly. Annabeth nuzzled her nose further into the crook of his neck in response.

They sat there for a while before he remembered something. It hadn't exactly been in his plans to show her until they had been together a little while longer but at that moment it seemed like the perfect time.

"Come on. I want to show you something." He voiced, standing up and holding his hand out to her. She took it, a confused look on her face. He led them upstairs to his all too familiar bedroom.

He let go of her hand, running excitedly over to his closet to retrieve something. Annabeth stood nearby, leaning against his wooden desk.

"Should I be concerned you're about to pull out a murder weapon and tell me where you hid the body?" She teased, staring at the posters on the walls.

He responded by pulling out a small corkboard and turning back around to face her. She walked over to get a closer look at what he was holding.

In his hands was a little brown cork board covered in pins and small newspaper clippings. A few photos occupied the space and there was still room for a couple more. Her eyes watered as she looked at it. They were all of her. Photos and news headlines from her competitions that season.

"Why...why did you make this?"

Percy scratched the back of his neck nervously. "I started it back when I knew I liked you. Stupid I know and probably creepy too but--"

"No. No I-I love it." She cut him off tearfully as she took the board in her hands and looked over it. He smiled before continuing his explanation.

"I don't know why I did it really. I just-... *I'm* proud of you Annabeth and if this doesn't prove that then I don't know what does." He stated.

A single tear fell down her cheek and he wiped it away with his thumb. She leaned into his touch,

placing the board against the wall next to them.

“You’re amazing.” She whispered, holding his hand against her cheek.

“Last time I checked it was you who won all these awards Chase not me. You’re the amazing one.” He replied, his lips ghosting across hers before he closed the gap between them. His touch gentle and loving. She sighed, closing her eyes in bliss.

When he pulled away Annabeth leaned towards him to connect their lips once more. This time there was more passion behind it. She wanted him to know how much she appreciated the gesture, how much he meant to her.

She felt the change in the room as she stepped closer to him. Percy tilted his head, deepening the kiss. She didn’t hesitate to let him, their tongues battling for dominance that he won. She moved closer to him if that was even possible, her hands tangling into his messy raven locks and twisting strands around her fingertips. He placed his hands lower, so they were touching her thighs and Annabeth got the message, jumping lightly as he caught her. Her legs wrapped around his waist and he placed her down on top of the wooden desk in the room. She sat upright, her legs touching the glossy wood below her as her back pressed up against the blue wall. Her hands rested against his neck, bringing him to her as he kissed her.

She felt his hands move to the baseline of her shirt, lifting it up just enough so he could feel the skin beneath it. She gasped in between kisses due to the lack of air especially when she felt his hands move up her shirt, massaging the skin on her waist and back leaving a trail of goosebumps.

She detached her swollen lips from his when air became an absolute necessity. Percy’s lips moved down to her exposed neck as she tilted her head to give him better access. She sighed at the feeling of his touch slowly leaving a trail of open-mouthed kisses from her neck to her collarbone. His fingers moved farther up her shirt, putting small amounts of pressure to her upper back. She moaned when his lips reached a sensitive patch of skin near her jaw, closing her eyes and pushing her head back to give him control while he continued to trace patterns on her skin. One of her hands detangled itself from his hair, holding the side of his face that was kissing her neck. Every thought left her mind as he continued his actions.

“Percy...” She whispered breathlessly.

He pulled away from her neck, keeping their faces as close as possible whilst looking at her. His breathing was heavy as was hers. She felt the ghost of his lips near hers as she kept her eyes closed. He tucked a strand of blonde hair behind her ear before leaning in to kiss her on the mouth briefly. She rubbed their noses together and wrapped her arms tighter around his shoulders, gripping the material on his shirt and pulling him in so she could place subtle kisses on his neck. Percy smiled against her skin, kissing her shoulder where the oversized t-shirt had fell to the side. After a few seconds she yanked at the bottom of his cotton shirt. He complied, pulling the material up over his head. He eyed her questioningly and she nodded, letting him pull the already half ridden shirt over her head leaving her in a grey bra.

His lips immediately went back to her neck once the shirt was off, his head swinging around to the other side of her neck this time. Her legs wrapped around his torso and he picked her up once more, moving them over to his bed without breaking the connection.

She felt the soft material of the pillows under her head as he crawled on top of her. She brought his lips back to hers, kissing him desperately and moving her hands down his bare chest. His muscles contracted beneath her touch. He groaned into her mouth and Annabeth thought she had never heard anything more attractive in her life.

He moved to kiss along the front of her chest, his arms bent on either side of her face so that he wasn't putting all his weight on her. Annabeth's breath hitched and she arched her back slightly, closing her eyes once again as she sighed. He kissed her bare skin down to her stomach and she bit her lip before bringing his head back up to hers. She couldn't hear anything but the sounds of their labored breathing. Couldn't feel anything but her boyfriend's touch. She didn't care about anything else but them in that moment.

Slowly, she moved to take one of his hands in hers as he kissed her lips. He adjusted his weight onto one arm, and she brought his hand lower. She placed it subtly on the waist band of her cloth shorts. He seemed to get the message almost right away, his swollen lips detaching themselves from hers as he looked her in the eye seriously. They had never gone past the stage they were at now.

She opened her eyes to meet a pair of sea green ones, a darker shade than they usually were.

"Annabeth..." He said, taking a moment to catch his breath. "Are...are you sure? We don't have to do this. We can wait if you're not ready." He finished, his voice hoarse and deep.

She stared up at the boy above her, pushing a stray piece of hair from his face as she combed it back. She smiled, wondering how she found someone so sweet and understanding. Someone who always put her feelings before his. He would never do anything to hurt her, not on purpose. She loved him without a doubt.

Her hair rubbed against the pillows as she nodded her head. "I'm sure." She said just loud enough for him to hear as she pulled his forehead down to press against hers.

There was a brief moment where it felt as if time and space had stopped around them. Their breaths intermingled in the small gap between their lips. She cradled his cheek, holding him there and meeting his eyes with an expression of both nervousness and confidence. Percy stared right back at her, searching her features for any hesitance.

"Just...go slow?" She whispered nervously whilst trying not to blush and not breaking the intense gaze he was giving her.

Percy nodded, brushing his nose against hers affectionately. She hummed contently at the sweet gesture.

"I love you" He murmured.

"I love you" She repeated before his lips slowly kissed hers once more.

Chapter 43

Chapter Notes

The final chapter! Enjoy guys!

Chapter 43

Annabeth sighed, slowly blinking her eyes open and squinting from the bright light coming through the crack in the curtains. She yawned and rested her cheek comfortably against the pillow. When her eyes finally adjusted to the light, she managed to open them completely. The first thing she saw was a pair of green irises staring back at her.

Flashbacks to the night before resurfaced in her head as she saw his expression study her. She nearly melted from the look he was giving her, his fingers carefully tucking a piece of blonde hair behind her ear.

“Good morning” He said lowly, refusing to look anywhere else but at her.

“Hmm...morning” She mumbled under her breath, still half asleep.

He laughed and scooted closer to her, placing a small peck to her forehead. “You’re really freaking adorable in the mornings you know that?”

Annabeth smiled, grabbing his arm to prevent him from moving away. She rested her head against his bare chest, and he wrapped an arm around her swiftly.

“Last night was perfect” She whispered, not caring that she sounded like some love-struck girl in a romance movie as she snuggled deeper into his torso and wrapped the comforter tighter around them. She could practically feel the smirk on his lips even though she couldn’t see his face as she traced her fingers over his skin.

“I agree Princess.” He muttered after another moment went by.

“Why do you call me that?” She asked curiously once they had been in the position a while. She lifted her head off his chest so she could turn to look at him.

“You’re going to laugh at me.” He replied, meeting her gaze.

Annabeth raised her eyebrows in question, urging him to elaborate. He sighed, shifting so that he could face her better.

“I was eleven.” He started

“I saw you skating on the rink with Christina coaching you once when my mom dropped me off for youth practice. You were learning some new jump I guess I don’t know. Anyways, you were getting ready to leave so we could have the rink but before you did you took your hair out of its bun. It was one of the first times I saw it down instead of in some updo. I thought you looked like a princess from one of those old Disney movies and...I don’t know I guess it just stuck.” He explained, twirling a singular blonde curl between his fingers.

Annabeth couldn't help but laugh once he had finished telling the story. Percy glared mockingly. "I knew it." He said, referring to the fact that she found it funny.

"I-I'm sorry but just...really, my hair? That's so cute. All this time I thought it was because when we hated each other you thought I was some spoiled *ice princess* if I remember correctly."

Percy shook his head. "Nope. That's what I was trying to get you to think but clearly the real reason is something I should keep to myself from now on." He said sarcastically as she continued to laugh.

They let the silence hang in the air for a bit. Enjoying the serenity and peacefulness of the morning. She stared at a specific spot on the ceiling as she laid against his chest, getting lost in her thoughts.

"Percy...what's going to happen when we go off to college?" She finally asked, voicing something that was constantly in the back of her mind. She heard his breathing hitch for a second.

"I don't know." He muttered honestly, rubbing her arm and forcing her to look him in the eye again.

"But if there's one thing I *do* know it's that I don't want to be with anyone else. I know we're young. Most people would probably roll their eyes at what I'm saying but...you're it for me Princess."

"Percy-" Annabeth started. She knew he loved her, that much was true. But how was she supposed to know that wouldn't change once they went off to college? A whole new environment. New people. A new life.

"Just let me finish. Please?" He begged. Annabeth sighed, nodding for him to continue.

He grabbed one of her hands and interlaced their fingers. "Wherever we end up. Whether that be one mile apart or a thousand. *Nothing* is going to change that way I feel. You need to know that. I'm not saying it won't be hard if we end up across the country from each other, but we can make it work. I know we can." He finished.

Annabeth was rendered speechless. She reached her hand up, tracing her fingertips along the side of his face as he looked at her. She had no idea what she'd done to deserve him. The past two days had been emotional but perfect all at once.

"We *are* pretty good together aren't we?"

He smiled. "The best."

She leaned forward to kiss him on the cheek, keeping their faces close. He tried to capture her lips with his, but she stopped him before he could.

"I haven't brushed my teeth yet Jackson."

"I don't care Chase." He replied, closing the distance between them for a short peck on the lips before she could say anything else. She smiled after he pulled away.

"Come on. Time to get up."

Percy groaned, pushing his face into her hair when she tried to get up.

Needless to say, Annabeth spent the next ten minutes trying to get a very stubborn Percy out of bed. She never knew teenage boys could be so whiny in the mornings.

Annabeth huffed, nearly bumping into another student as she shuffled around in her bookbag for an English paper she was sure she had placed in her backpack. She apologized when she hit another person's shoulder before sighing in relief when she laid eyes on the small three-page paper stapled together in one of her folders. Her shoulders relaxed. Considering the assignment was due that day and English was one of her morning classes, forgetting the paper would have been very bad. She zipped up her backpack and readjusted it on her shoulders, making a bee line for her locker where she saw a group of familiar people standing like always.

That particular Monday morning she had chosen to dress comfortably. She wore a pair of black leggings, her white converse, and one of her boyfriend's many hoodies that she'd...borrowed. So maybe she'd been dressing similarly the whole weekend. Maybe she couldn't resist the oversized warm hoodies that smelled like the ocean and brought a smile to her face. The past few days she had pretty much been a lovesick idiot who couldn't get the image of sea green eyes out of her head. Sue her.

Like usual, Percy, Leo, and Jason hadn't made an appearance yet, but Annabeth was met with the faces of Piper, Calypso, Nico, and Will once she reached the group. Of course, Thalia wouldn't be showing up anytime soon. The girl was most likely still in bed.

"And where the hell were you this weekend missy?" Calypso asked sarcastically once she joined them.

"Yeah I didn't exactly get an explanation as to why I had to cover for you Saturday night." Piper added, rising an eyebrow in question towards her.

Annabeth smiled shyly, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear as she looked at the ground.

"Oh. My. Gods." She heard Will mutter dramatically.

"What?" Nico asked confusedly, furrowing his eyebrows and looking over to his boyfriend from his spot under his arm.

Annabeth felt Will Solace's eyes practically burning a hole into her head. Hesitantly, she looked up to meet his eyes. The expression on his face made her realize what a mistake that had been.

"You had sex!" Will voiced not too loudly but definitely not quietly either.

If Annabeth's cheeks hadn't been red before they definitely were now. *How* did he always seem to know everything? It was freaky.

A few heads turned in the group's general direction and Annabeth wanted to die right on the spot. She was speechless. "I...What-" She stuttered

Her cheeks only got redder as she choked on her words. That was all Piper needed to realize the blonde boy was right. She gave Annabeth a knowing look and the blonde groaned internally. She knew Piper was implying that she wanted the details later.

Calypso gasped. "So you finally admitted that you loved him didn't you?" She asked, referring to the conversation they'd had in the diner several days before. Annabeth had said her first time was going to be with someone she was in love with.

Not trusting her words, Annabeth nodded shyly. All she wanted to do in that moment was hide herself completely in the oversized hoodie she was wearing but she knew her friends weren't going to have any of that.

"My best friend and my cousin huh?" Nico spoke up, slightly grimacing. "Don't get me wrong it's still weirds me out but...I'm happy for you."

Before anything else could be said a familiar voice approached the group. "Before you say anything yes, I know I'm actually on time for once. Don't ask me how, don't ask me why it just happened." A slightly cranky Thalia stated once she stood in front of them with an iced coffee in her hand.

Annabeth held her hands up in surrender. "I wasn't going to say anything."

Thalia stared at her disbelievingly. "Mmmhmm sure you weren't. So...what stimulating conversation did I miss this morning?" She asked sarcastically whilst turning towards the others and taking a giant sip of coffee.

Will was the first to answer. Annabeth had no time to cut in and change the topic. "Not much. Unless you count the fact that Annabeth and Percy slept together of course." He replied innocently.

Thalia's eyes widened and she immediately spit out her drink in surprise. The mist sprayed straight towards Nico who looked like he was having a hard time believing she'd just done that. He wiped some of the liquid off his face and stared at her. Piper and Calypso stood nearby trying their best to muffle their laughter.

"What?!" Thalia muttered in between fits of coughing.

It was official. Annabeth was going to murder Will Solace.

"Alright I give up. What's up with you?" Jason asked, pausing briefly from polishing the silver tire rims.

"What?" Percy replied confusedly, momentarily coming out of his daze.

Leo rolled his eyes. "Don't think Jase and I can't tell you've been acting weird all morning."

"What do you mean?"

Leo and Jason shared a look before the latter spoke up once again. "For one thing you haven't stopped smiling the entire time we've been working. You've also been so spaced out you missed an entire conversation Leo and I had about the team."

Percy rubbed the back of his neck embarrassed. Maybe he'd been spacing out more than he thought.

"You want to tell us what's going on with you and Annabeth?" Leo asked using a teasing tone.

Percy couldn't help it when he felt his smile grow a little at the mention of her name. He looked down so the others didn't notice. Gods what had that girl done to him?

Leo and Jason immediately noted the change in facial expression from their friend. They shared a knowing look.

"Did you and Chase..." Jason asked, raising his eyebrows in question. He didn't even have to

finish asking for the other two to understand what he meant. They focused all their attention on the sea green eyed hockey player.

All he had to do was scratch the back of his neck nervously before the two males got their answer. Before he could speak, Percy was being tackled halfheartedly with his hair ruffled and now standing up every which way. He shoved them off once they started making kissing noises in his ear.

“Very mature” He replied with a small grin on his lips.

“This coming from the guy who has a pair of Finding Nemo boxers.” Leo teased.

Jason laughed at the retort while Percy glared in response.

“No but seriously Perce. I’m happy for you. Chase and you make a good match, she’ll keep you in check.” Jason complimented whilst patting his friend on the back once more. Percy nodded in thanks.

“Something’s different this time that’s for sure. The old you used to gloat about the nights he spent with girls.” Leo started. Percy grimaced at the mention of his previous actions.

“Now look at you. All shy and smiley. The kid’s in love Jase.” Leo Valdez finished, holding a hand to his heart dramatically.

Percy smacked him lightly with one of the oil rags he was holding. It was silent for a good ten seconds before the captain of the Trident’s team realized his friends were looking at him to confirm their assumption.

“Yes, I love her ok? Now can we please get back to-” Percy was cut off as his two friends once again ruffled his hair and shoved his shoulder. At this point he was going to be arriving to school with a rat’s nest for hair.

After a few more seconds of teasing, shoving, and uncontrollable smiling, the three best friends resumed their work on the car in front of them. When they had completed their jobs, Leo leaned in through the driver’s open window and twisted the key into the ignition. The loud hum from the engine filled their ears and they cheered in victory.

“Well it looks like our work here is done *muchachos*.” Leo muttered, wiping his oil covered hands with a small rag and walking over to them with a smile.

“Dude it looks awesome.” Jason said whilst staring excitedly at the vehicle before them.

“No argument there. I say we take it to school. You cool with me leaving my car here Valdez?” Percy asked, looking up at him for a brief second before looking back at the beautiful sight a few feet away.

Before them stood a now completely restored 1969 Camaro. It took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears but between the three of them they had finally managed to turn the old rusty car into a masterpiece. When Leo had told them the car was only a short amount of time away from being finished Jason and Percy had agreed to wake up early and help finish the work they’d been doing for weeks in Leo’s garage. It had paid off big time.

They arrived to school that morning in style.

[Song Tribute-Diamonds from Dust by The Aftershow]

“Seriously?” Percy asked, staring directly at his coach and trying to make sure he heard him correctly.

Coach Hedge nodded in confirmation. “The team has had a great season. Best one yet. What kind of coach would I be if I didn’t give you boys a break once in a while?”

Christina nodded in agreement. “Yeah same goes for me and my skaters. The pressure’s intense during competition season. Sometimes it’s important to remember why you started in the first place. Because you love being on the ice.”

The group of figure skaters started talking amongst themselves excitedly. Using wild hand gestures and smiling contently. Annabeth smiled, looking to her left along the bleachers to where the Trident’s team was sitting together in a group. Percy was getting patted on the back and ruffling Jason’s hair as his friend tried to push him off. He met her eyes, returning her smile.

The two groups were seated in one area of the bleachers. The hockey players on one side and the figure skaters in the section right next to them. The scene reminded Annabeth so much about the time they had been in nearly the same position as their coaches explained their weekly joined practices.

This time however, they had been told to meet at the main rink so that Christina and Hedge could tell them the reason they didn’t have regular scheduled practice that Saturday. Apparently, they were both feeling extra generous and had decided on giving them all a free skate practice. They could do basically anything they wanted and both rinks were open for them.

Both groups practically sprinted down to the entrance of the rink, some people simply hoping over the wall with their skates on.

“I have absolutely no idea why they’re in such a good mood but I’m not going to question it.” Piper said, skating over to where Annabeth was with Calypso in tow.

Leo and Jason followed them over. “Yeah the last time we had free skate was...well...never.” Leo added.

“Come on. Time for you to learn some jumps Valdez.” Calypso said maliciously, grabbing the goalie’s hand before dragging him off to a different part of the rink.

Leo stared back at them fearfully, mouthing the words ‘help me’ as they skated away. Jason laughed, removing his arm from around Piper.

“And it’s time for you to let me teach you some hockey tricks.” He said, taking her arm as she laughed.

“Wish me luck I’ll need it.” Piper told Annabeth before the two of them left. The blonde smiled, muttering a subtle ‘good luck’ before they were gone.

She was alone for barely a second before familiar arms came up behind her, nearly knocking her over. She stared down at the ice, smiling at the worn-out hockey skates next to her white figure skates.

“Missed you Princess” He mumbled into her ear sweetly. Annabeth rolled her eyes, biting her lip to keep her smile from surfacing.

“You just saw me a few hours ago Hockey Boy.” She replied, holding his hands against her waist as her back pressed against the front of his chest.

She heard him laugh, butterflies erupting in her stomach at the sound. “Your point?” He asked.

She sighed, keeping her eyes focused on the skaters all over the rink. She knew Percy was staring at the same thing.

Rachel was practicing a few spins. She stopped to wave shyly at Annabeth, and the blonde smiled back. Rachel went back to what she was doing. Rebecca and Ashley were probably somewhere near her. Annabeth didn’t fail to notice a few glances the redhead got from a select group of Trident’s players trying to check her out subtly.

“I’m sorry, did I miss something between you two?” Percy asked in complete shock after he saw the exchange.

Annabeth laughed. “We got tired of fighting.” She stated simply. Percy stared down at his girlfriend while she kept her eyes on the rink. He would have to get the full story later.

Annabeth saw Calypso cracking up when Leo fell face down onto the ice. The poor goalie of the Trident’s team looking like an injured gazelle each time he attempted a simple jump. Leo gripped her hand tightly when she tried helping him up. She was thrown off guard when he pulled her down with him.

Somewhere else Piper was getting ready to shoot a puck into a hockey net that had been set up. Jason smiled when she missed completely, knowing he had an excuse to put his arms around her as he guided her shot the next time she tried. Piper blushed, most likely making some comment about the situation being cliché but secretly enjoying it.

All around them the two teams were skating around messing with each other. It was a scene none of them had ever thought would become a reality. Christina and Hedge had actually been on to something when they started the group practices early in the year. Annabeth remembered how she had felt the minute she realized she’d have to see the cocky Trident’s captain every day at the rink. Now things were different. Completely different.

“Been one hell of a season.” She heard Percy say after a few minutes had passed.

“That it has.” Annabeth agreed. She felt him turn her waist and she complied, spinning around to face him.

It was at that moment looking into the sea green eyes of the boy she fell for that she knew. Whatever life threw at them. Competitions, games, graduation, college. Whatever it was, they would get through it. She loved him and he loved her. They had a close-knit circle of friends both on and off of the ice. It had been quite a long road to get to the point they were at.

But that’s what skating was. You start out completely hopeless, falling every two seconds. Coming home with bruises all over your body. But you keep at it. It takes determination. It takes work. Practicing every day until you manage to learn a few tricks. Whether that be learning a perfect slapshot in hockey or finally landing a double axel in figure skates. You stick with it. Overcoming anything and anyone that tries to stop you.

She leaned up to kiss him, not caring that everyone around them was watching. He smiled once they pulled away, resting his forehead against hers.

“I love you” She whispered.

“I love you too Princess.” He replied automatically.

If you’re really passionate about something you don’t let it go.

That’s how she knew they were going to be ok.

~ *Fin* ~

Extra Scene!

Chapter Notes

So this chapter is just an extra snippet I wrote set in between the final chapter and the epilogue which is next!

WARNING: contains mature content/implications

~3 years later

Percy sighed, bringing a hand up and running his fingers through his slightly damp messy black hair. With his other hand he pushed the metal key into the lock on the door. With a small 'click!' the door unlocked, and he made his way into his apartment.

It had been a long and exhausting practice. Coach Davidson was practically killing them with all the back-to-back drills they had to do. He should've been used to it from his past experiences of getting coached by Hedge, but he was surprised he'd lasted as long as he had. College hockey was no joke. As tiring as it was though, he loved every second of it. The wind in his face, gliding across the ice, the satisfaction of seeing the puck hit the back netting of the goal, all of it.

The final game of the season was in two days and you could practically feel the intensity and excitement in the air all around campus. If they won this game their team would become the champions of the NCAA division for the season. Not to mention there were going to be NHL recruiters at the game searching for new players. Percy had never wanted something so bad. The stakes were high.

He was beyond nervous and the one thing that could possibly calm him down was over a thousand miles away. He frowned, shrugging his duffle bag off and placing his keys on the rack before walking further into the apartment. He missed his girlfriend more than anything. Not getting to see her in person everyday was torture but somehow they'd managed to make it halfway through college by video chatting constantly and seeing each other during breaks.

Annabeth was currently a student taking classes at NYU while simultaneously training for the next winter Olympics. It would be her first time competing and Percy was beyond proud that she'd qualified. His girlfriend was amazing and the world deserved to see that.

He just wished they got to see each other more.

He lazily made his way into his small kitchen. Normally this would be around the time he ransacked the fridge after practice with his roommate but not today. Frank had a date with Hazel, and they met up right after hockey practice so he was all on his own.

Percy still couldn't get over the fact that of all the universities in the country, Frank Zhang, the guy he'd played against during his last hockey season as a high school player was now his teammate and closest college buddy at the University of Minnesota. After just one year of playing on the same team together they'd decided to become roommates and had lived together all of sophomore year and now junior year. His girlfriend Hazel had also become one of his closest friends. He treated her like a little sister and even though she always scoffed at his teasing, he could tell she

loved it.

That being said, Percy opened the door to the fridge before taking out a bottle of Gatorade. He twisted the cap off and took a sip of the cold liquid, sighing in relief as he closed his eyes.

“Do I need to give you two a moment?” A female voice echoed into the room.

Percy froze, instantly recognizing the voice. His back was facing her and even though he couldn't see her he could tell she was smiling and trying to hold back a laugh. A huge grin unconsciously made its way to his lips. In one quick movement he spun himself around to face her. His eyes were filled with disbelief the second he focused on her. Her perfect blond hair and stormy grey eyes.

It took about another 0.2 seconds for his attention to go to what she was wearing. She had on one of his college hockey jerseys. As always, she was practically swimming in it because of how large it was and it went down to her mid thighs. The sleeves went way past her arms. But the best part of the whole outfit was that besides the jersey...she wasn't wearing anything else.

Percy could practically feel his heart beating out of his chest at an unhealthy pace. He was pretty sure his jaw was hanging open in a very unattractive way, but he didn't have the mental capability to fix that.

“Hey Hockey Boy” She said innocently, as if she wasn't doing anything remotely out of the ordinary.

Percy was one hundred convinced he was living in a dream. She looked like an absolute goddess standing in front of him and he didn't know how long he stood there staring at her speechless. They hadn't seen each other since summer, and it was now halfway through the school year.

“You-....I-....Jersey....here....what-“ He stumbled, trying to get one coherent thought out.

She raised her eyebrows amusedly. “You'd think a third-year college student would have a better vocabulary” She teased, playing with the hem of the jersey.

Right after the words left her mouth Percy couldn't take it any longer. He slammed the bottle of Gatorade he forgot he was holding down on the kitchen table, walking in big strides across the room to where she was standing.

When he finally reached her she gasped in surprise as he crashed his lips to hers. His arms instinctively wrapped themselves around her waist as he walked forwards until she was pinned tightly up against the nearest wall. She sighed when her back hit the wall, closing her eyes and delving her fingers in his hair.

“Annabeth...” He mumbled in between kisses. He felt her smile against his lips as she pulled at the hairs near the base of his neck.

“What are you doing here?” He asked breathily before kissing her once more.

“When did you...how did you even...get into my apartment?” He questioned, connecting their lips every few words.

Annabeth finally managed to pull away, smiling giddily. “You going to give me a chance to answer Jackson?”

Percy cast her a mischievous glance, nodding his head before leaning down to kiss her neck, her cheeks, her nose, her eyelids, her forehead. Annabeth giggled in delight.

“I got here about an hour ago...used the spare key you keep under the mat.... way too obvious by the way”

“Hmmf” Percy huffed as he continued his assault of butterfly kisses on her face. The sound of her melodious laughter filled the apartment.

“Changed into your jersey and just.... waited for you to come home” She sighed, biting her lip as he continued placing light pecks to her skin.

“As for what I’m doing here...I missed you, stupid” She said sincerely, pulling his head up to meet her eyes once more. He was breathing heavily and so was she.

He smiled and leaned his forehead against hers. “Missed you too Princess” He managed to get out.

Annabeth closed her eyes and hummed, nudging her nose against his. “You didn’t think I’d miss your biggest game, did you? I’d never miss the chance to see my boyfriend get recruited for the NHL.”

Percy chuckled, placing a chaste kiss to her lips before leaning his forehead against hers once more. Her being there meant everything to him. He knew she must be busy with classes and training, but she’d found time to visit and he was beyond happy.

“I love you” He voiced.

“I love you too” She replied almost automatically.

Being so close to her was driving him mad. The lemon scented shampoo he loved so much, her blond ringlets falling lazily against her shoulders, the small bits of laughter she escaped her every few minutes. It was intoxicating.

“So, what do you want to do?” She asked innocently, her face scrunched up in an adorable way as she pulled away from him and detached herself from the wall behind her. He could hear the amusement in her voice.

Percy barely let her get out of arms reach before he pulled her back up against him. She laughed, looking into his eyes with a hint of mischief.

“Oh, I think you know. Unless of course you show up to everybody’s apartments wearing nothing but their oversized jersey.” He joked, staring at her intensely as he interlaced their fingers.

“Only for a certain hockey player” She replied, placing her hands on his shoulders.

The grin widened on his face. He leaned forwards until their lips were mere centimeters apart. She closed her eyes and they stayed that way for a moment.

“How did you know Frank wasn’t going to come back with me?” He asked, suddenly curious.

“Who do you think gave Hazel the date idea?” She said coyly. Percy shook his head in disbelief. She was incredible.

“You’re looking way too sexy right now Princess” He whispered under his breath when there was just a tiny gap between them. He brought a hand up to cup the side of her face.

Annabeth instantly felt her cheeks heat up and her teasing attitude was suddenly replaced by a shy demeanor as she opened her eyes.

His sea green eyes stared deeply into hers. Gods he was attractive. There was no way girls weren't throwing themselves at him just as they had in high school.

"Y-yeah?" She stuttered out, suddenly feeling her legs turn to Jell-O as he ran his thumb across her skin.

"Hmm" He confirmed, nodding his head in response.

It took all her strength to get the next few words out without stumbling.

"Well what are you gonna do about it Hockey Boy?"

Needless to say, they didn't do much talking after that.

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

The final installment of The Rink!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Epilogue

Annabeth stared down at the young girl before her as she sighed in frustration, grudgingly getting back up and rubbing the flakes of snow from the ice that had accumulated on her leggings.

“It’s hopeless Mommy. I’m never going to land it.” The girl said angrily, her face colored red from the crisp winter air that surrounded them.

Annabeth placed a hand on her daughters’ shoulder, brushing aside her blond hair. “You will Aspen, I promise. It just takes practice. How many times do you think I fell before I landed my first double axel?” She told her encouragingly.

“Hard to imagine *you* falling that often. All those shiny gold and silver medals you have. I...I just wanna be as good as you.” She replied, looking down at her feet on the ice wishfully.

Annabeth felt her heart warm.

Eight-year-old Aspen Jackson was one of the best things in her life. Almost as soon as she started walking, she’d been figure skating and the young girl loved it just as much as her mother.

Annabeth never wanted to be the type of parent who forced her children into sports when they didn’t want to be an athlete. In Aspen’s case, the first time they had ever gone ice skating for fun the little girl had taken to it immediately and since then Annabeth had been teaching her. Not long after they’d started practicing together, Aspen joined a youth team over at the all too famous ice rink she had once skated for.

Christina was still coaching the young figure skaters there and after a heartfelt reunion, Annabeth was offered to coach alongside her. Needless to say, she accepted and helped with training all the skaters from ages 5 to 18.

Aspen got quite a lot of attention during the practices seeing as her mother was a retired Olympic gold medalist figure skater. The younger girl didn’t seem to mind it one bit.

In terms of physical appearance, Aspen had long blond hair like Annabeth and striking sea green eyes just like her father. Besides figure skating, she loved watching hockey on TV (it was a weekly tradition in the Jackson household), reading, and drawing.

Annabeth crouched down, squatting in front of her daughter on the ice. “You want to know what I think?”

Aspen met her mother’s gaze, nodding soundly.

“I think you’ll be an even *better* skater. I didn’t even start skating till I was 9 and you’ve already been skating for years! You’ve got more potential than you know.” Annabeth said, squeezing her

hand gently.

Aspen smiled shyly. “Really?”

“Really” Annabeth confirmed.

“Now come on, let’s go make sure the boys haven’t completely scratched up the other half of the ice.”

Aspen laughed and skated next to mother with newfound confidence. They started on their way over to the other half of the frozen lake and were met with the sight of two males skating quite frantically and trying to dodge one another. Each one had a hockey stick, and one puck was shuffling back and forth between them. The older of the two was currently in control of the puck as the younger boy tried to get it from him. The sounds of the ice crunching beneath their bulky hockey skates filled their ears.

Annabeth smiled as she took in the scene. Her husband grinned smugly as he kept the puck under his control, trying to bypass his son who was putting up quite a fight. Both sets of eyes were focused so closely on the puck as they tried to move towards the goal set up. Neither one of the males had noticed them. Deciding to help her brother out, Aspen spoke up.

“Dad!” Aspen yelled. Her father immediately lifted his head up, looking around curiously for the source of the voice that had called him.

In a split second the younger boy stole the hockey puck away, skating down towards the goal. Realizing what was happening, Percy immediately went back into hockey mode. He tried his best to catch up with his son but it was too late, the black puck hit the back of the goal and the younger boy cheered in victory.

“Too slow dad!” He yelled as he skated back towards them from the goal.

When he reached them, he fist bumped Aspen, who laughed at the expression of mock hurt on her father’s face. “Thanks little sis”

Aspen rolled her eyes, just like her mother seemed to do on a daily basis. “How many times do we have to go over this Colden? We’re *twins*. Born on the same day. We’re the same age.”

Colden laughed. “Yeah except that I’m three minutes older. Which makes you my little sister.”

Aspen shoved her brother’s shoulder lightly in response. Annabeth watched the entire exchange, shaking her head at their antics with a smile on her face.

Colden Jackson was the complete opposite of Aspen Jackson. He had messy black hair and grey eyes. Instead of figure skating his favorite thing in the world was hockey. Percy was beyond ecstatic when Colden started playing on his old youth league called the Tidal Waves at the rink. The two of them could spend hours talking about hockey. Percy had practically educated him on all there is to know about the sport even though he was only eight.

Similar to how Aspen got attention for being the daughter of an Olympian, Colden got stares at the rink for having a father in the NHL. Outside of the rink when they were all together it was even more intense. Cameras followed their family everywhere, but they’d learned to live with it. As long as they had each other.

Percy made his way over to his wife, shaking his head in mock disappointment. “You told her to do that didn’t you?” He asked once he reached her, coming to an abrupt stop in his hockey skates.

Annabeth laughed. “Oh, how I wish I could take the credit but no, that was all your daughter’s idea”

Percy looked towards where the younger girl was standing, an eyebrow raised in question. Aspen smiled and nodded her head in confirmation as Colden laughed.

Percy cast them all a glance of mock hurt, placing a hand to his heart dramatically. “You know I’m getting really tired of being the target in this family. There’s only so much a guy can take.” He continued, pretending to make his voice sound emotional.

Annabeth rolled her eyes at his ridiculous antics. He had been spending way too much time with Leo Valdez lately.

“I think I’ll just go find the one person who won’t plot against me.” Percy said, skating a little further down the frozen lake before meeting up with a line of three people skating. Two adult men with a little girl holding each of their hands in the middle.

The little girl’s face lit up when she realized who had come to join them.

“Daddy!” She squealed in delight before releasing the hands of the two people next to her and skating steadily over to her father in her white figure skates and a youth sized hockey jersey that reached her knees.

Percy felt his heart warm with delight as he bent down to be at eye level with his youngest daughter before pulling her into a hug. She giggled as he squeezed her tight.

“I am in desperate need of a little Noelle magic right now.” He said once they pulled away.

The small child smiled and reached up to place a small peck to her father’s cheek. “All better?” She asked afterwards.

Percy smiled gratefully, leaning down and placing a small kiss on her forehead. “All better”

Noelle Jackson was the youngest of the Jackson family being only four years old. She had curly hair like her mother, but it was a dark brown color. Her eyes were almost the same shade of green as her father’s but slightly lighter. She was adored by just about everyone she met but her favorite person in the whole world was her father. Annabeth knew from the minute her husband had carried her in his arms that the two of them would be inseparable. Noelle enjoyed both figure skating and hockey, but she hadn’t shown a preference toward either one. She was still really young, but Percy and Annabeth would not mind it one bit if she’d kept skating as just a hobby and pursued something else.

“Hey, Jackson” Percy heard a voice call to get his attention. He looked behind Noelle to see two men struggling very hard to keep their balance on the ice, hanging on to each other for dear life as they stumbled around in their figure skates.

“In case you haven’t noticed we’re currently trying not to die over here.” Will Solace stated dramatically, slipping before catching himself once again.

“Yeah, we need the kid.” The other male, Nico di Angelo added.

Percy laughed at the two men before him. “Are you serious?”

Noelle jumped in before either of them could answer. “It’s true. They fell like a *billion* times before we decided to all skate together.” She whispered the last part only loud enough for her

father to hear.

“A billion times huh?” Percy asked with a small smile of amusement on his face.

Noelle nodded vigorously in response. “It was bad”

Percy laughed once more, shaking his head and standing upright once again to grab his daughter’s hand and bring her towards the two struggling males.

“Well alright then. Don’t let me disrupt this lesson.” He said coyly, letting go of Noelle’s hand so she could grab each of Will and Nico’s. Nico glared at him before grabbing her little hand, a look of relief flashed across both of their faces once she was reunited with them in a line.

“Bye Daddy!” The four-year-old said happily.

Percy smiled, waving gently in her direction. “Bye squirt”

Before he could even get ten feet away he was being approached by another familiar face. Seven-year-old Maddie Grace was Jason and Piper’s daughter. She had dirty blond hair and blue eyes. She was one of the most intelligent seven-year old’s Percy had ever met. All that girl did was bury her nose in a book, well, if she wasn’t playing hockey that is. She was practically playing the game before she could walk.

Maddie and Colden played on the same youth hockey league together. And even though the two of them constantly bickered and butt heads, they were the closest of friends. Maddie was a year younger but that didn’t stop her from showing Colden up every chance she got and high fiving Aspen when she did.

“Uncle Percy please tell Colden that mouthguards are not required for the NHL” Maddie voiced, coming to an abrupt stop in front of him.

“Yes they are! All the players wear them!” Colden argued, coming up next to her.

“Well yeah, I mean it’s smart to but they’re not *required*!” She spat in a tone that was obvious.

“Dad, tell her they’re required” Colden said, turning to face his father as well.

Percy sighed, shaking his head at the two of them and their love-hate relationship. “Well technically...they’re not mandated, meaning the NHL doesn’t force you to wear one but yes, most of us still wear them as an extra layer of protection”

“Ha! I told you!” Maddie stated. Colden’s only response was to stick his tongue out at her.

Percy left the two of them to their bickering, skating over towards his wife who was now engaged in conversation with Leo and Calypso Valdez. Once she saw him her eyes lit up, he smiled back in return and joined the small circle, coming up behind Annabeth to wrap his arms around her as he listened to the end of her sentence.

“Can’t wait to meet him.” He heard her say as she gripped his hands in front of her and leant back into his embrace.

“Meet who?” Percy asked confusedly.

“This super attractive dude from work that has the hots for Annabeth after seeing her in a group photo.” Leo explained.

“What?! Who is he? What’s his name?” Percy almost immediately shouted in response as Calypso smacked her husband over the head.

“Jealous much? Jeez Perce it’s just too easy with you.” Leo laughed teasingly and Percy glared at him.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “We’re talking about the baby obviously.” She said, gesturing to Calypso’s pregnant stomach that was six and a half months along.

Percy let out a small sigh of relief, smiling as he looked down at the baby bump.

“I just want him out already. I have to pee every five seconds and it’s a struggle just to tie my shoes now” Calypso complained with a frustrated tone, staring down at her stomach.

Annabeth laughed. “It’ll be worth it, trust me.”

“Yeah, and when he does come, I’ll be finding the worlds smallest goalie helmet for him.” Leo added excitedly.

Calypso rolled her eyes, making eye contact with Annabeth and Percy once again. “Leo has this theory that our son is going to be the best hockey goalie in the U.S.” She supplied.

“Oh, it’s not a theory it’s a *fact*. He’s goalie material...I can sense it.” Leo responded, placing a hand over Calypso’s stomach and whispering the last part dramatically.

“Yeah, yeah come on. Let’s go take a seat on the bench. My back’s starting to hurt from carrying your spawn.” Calypso said, gripping his arm as they made their way off the ice.

Annabeth laughed at the way Leo hastily cleared every tiny obstacle that could possibly be in their way in order for her to get across to the bench. She knew Calypso secretly loved having him practically worship the ground she walked on as she carried their child. Annabeth’s mind flashed back to when Percy acted like her getting a paper cut was the end of the world when she was pregnant with Noelle.

“What are you laughing at?” She heard his voice say closer to her ear this time. She leant further back into his hold and he tightened his arms around her to pull her closer. After all this time she still got butterflies when she was around him.

“Just happy” She replied, closing her eyes momentarily and enjoying the crisp wind on her skin.

“Yeah?” Percy asked, kissing her cheek lightly from behind.

“Mmm” She hummed in response.

They stayed like that for a couple seconds before she felt him get impatient, nudging her neck playfully with his nose and tickling her collarbone. She giggled and sighed, turning around in his hold, and leant in to kiss him briefly. He smiled into the kiss, wrapping his arms around her waist as she placed hers on his shoulders.

The kiss was short-lived as they felt a small figure come crashing into their legs. Once they pulled apart Percy looked down to see their youngest daughter gripping his leg and laughing soundly.

“Tag! You’re it!” She exclaimed excitedly.

Percy smiled, getting a mischievous look in his eye that Annabeth knew all too well. “Me? You

sure you want to make me it squirt?"

Noelle nodded, beginning the skate away from him as Percy gave his wife one more chaste kiss before chasing after her. Noelle screamed as he got closer to her in a matter of seconds. He tapped her shoulder after a minute, making her it.

Noelle huffed, skating towards her father with a look of determination on her face. She tried her very best, but she couldn't seem to catch him. Aspen and Colden noticed what was going on and decided to help out their little sister. They moved to opposite ends of the frozen lake in an attempt to corner their father. Before Percy even realized they've ganged up on him he was being pushed to the ground by three bodies.

Annabeth laughed soundly as she watched her husband get tackled to the ground by Aspen, Noelle, and Colden. They piled on top of him and he pretended to be dying, causing the children to laugh. She could see the giant smile on his face from a mile away. He was a great father.

"Dinner's ready!" Percy heard his mother and Annabeth shout in unison from the kitchen up into the household where everyone was either in their rooms or talking in the living room after having come back from skating the past few hours on the frozen lake near the Jackson house.

Not long after they had come back Sally Jackson had shown up at the house with multiple bags of ingredients and shared a knowing look with Annabeth. When Percy tried to offer his help to make dinner the two women quite literally shoved him out of the kitchen, and he hadn't heard from them since. He wasn't stupid, he knew what the secrecy implied when it came to one of his favorite food dishes.

Annabeth heard the stampede of footsteps barrel down the main staircase of their home, a line of children coming down from the upstairs level of the house followed by a barking dog.

Delilah was their one-year-old grey Newfoundland dog. After years of begging from the children (and Percy as well), Annabeth had finally agreed to getting a family dog. Don't get her wrong she loved animals, the reason she had been hesitant was because she felt like she was going to be the one doing all the work. Needless to say, she was pleasantly surprised when Noelle took to being a dog owner quite fast. They all adored Delilah, but Noelle loved that dog more than any toy or game she had and spent all her time with her when they were home. It was adorable especially because the dog was bigger than her.

Noelle made it down the stairs first, hastily running over to the pantry to give Delilah her dinner as well.

Percy made it into her view next, coming from the living room with Leo, Calypso, Nico, Will, Jason, Piper, Frank, Hazel, and Thalia in tow. They had a full house tonight. Usually there was at least one time every month that they all got together at one of their houses and today it was the Jackson's turn to host.

Jason and Piper offered to set the table quickly as everyone started coming into the dining area. The two of them had just arrived a few minutes prior. They knew the house as well as their own because one of them was usually picking up Maddie from their house almost every day.

"Should we set a place for your mom Annabeth?" Piper asked from a couple feet away.

Annabeth shook her head. "No she can't make it tonight, she's going to stop by later this week." Piper nodded and finished up the last spot at the table.

Things with Athena Chase and Annabeth had definitely changed over the years. Their relationship would never be sunshine and rainbows they both knew that, but after several conversations, tears, and Athena apologizing for doubting Annabeth's career goals, they had reached a good place. It wasn't perfect but what family was? At the end of the day Annabeth decided that she wanted her mother to be a part of her children's lives and Athena absolutely adored them.

She saw Thalia grab a couple of the side dishes with Hazel and Frank to set down before taking a seat at the table. Now Thalia was another story. If there was a definition for the phrase 'cool aunt' in the dictionary it would be Thalia. The kids practically saw her as a goddess. When she wasn't traveling for work she was riding her motorcycle or going to rock n roll concerts. It wasn't a coincidence that Aspen had recently started painting her nails in random color patterns like Thalia did. It was only a matter of time before she expected one of her children to beg for a black leather jacket like their Aunt Thalia had.

Hazel and Frank had become good friends with their group over the years as well. Percy's two closest friends from college had a baby girl named Ariel who the babysitter was watching that night. Annabeth was sure that in no time at all that baby would be joining them for their monthly dinners and making friends with their kids. The same went for Leo and Calypso's baby boy that was due soon. She just hoped there was enough space at the table. They were a big gang.

Annabeth smiled gratefully in return once the table was set and turned around to grab the main dish and set it down. However, someone had beat her to it. Standing in front of her basically drooling while holding the large bowl was her idiot of a husband. Years had gone by and the male still had no clue what addicting substance was put into the sauce of the all too famous Jackson family recipe. Once Annabeth had married into the family obviously Sally had given her the recipe which against all his efforts, Percy had not managed to get out of her. Annabeth heard excited cheers when the kids laid eyes on the food in his hands as well.

"Ravioli!"

Percy immediately took his seat at the large table, dumping about three servings onto his plate of the Italian dish before passing it around to the others reaching out for it. This was why they always had to make extra. Annabeth saw Percy's eyes light up as he sprinkled some cheese on top of his ravioli. She laughed to herself and sat next to him at the table. He was basically a child himself.

Percy turned to her, a grin on his face the size of Manhattan. "What?"

Annabeth shook her head. "Nothing"

Percy gripped her hand under the table, pulling her into a quick kiss while everyone was distracted by the food. "I love you Princess"

Annabeth's heart melted at those words, and she hated herself for how cringy that sounded but it was the truth. "I love you too Hockey Boy"

She leaned in to give him one last quick peck. When their lips were a centimeter away, she whispered into the air between them.

"But you're still not getting the recipe"

The End

Thank you to everyone who read this! (either on FF.net or here) This story is my baby and I'm glad I got to share it with you all :)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!