# **The Wind That Carries New Beginnings**

The morning sun filtered through the blinds of the Narumi Detective Agency, casting familiar patterns across the cluttered office space. Percy Jackson stretched as he woke from his spot on the couch, the same couch where he'd spent countless nights since he and Philip had taken over the agency three months ago. The defeat of Museum felt like a lifetime ago, yet the weight of loss still pressed against his chest whenever he looked at Sokichi's empty desk.

"Good morning, Percy," Philip's voice drifted from behind his laptop screen. The pale boy hadn't moved from his position at the computer desk, likely having been there all night researching something that had caught his interest.

"Morning, Philip. Did you even sleep?" Percy rubbed his eyes and shuffled toward the small kitchenette they'd set up in the corner.

"Sleep is merely a biological necessity that sometimes interferes with the acquisition of knowledge," Philip replied matter-of-factly, then paused. "Though I did take a brief rest around 3 AM."

Percy chuckled, pouring himself a glass of water. Living with Philip had taught him to appreciate the other boy's unique perspective on the world. There was something about Philip's connection to the Earth's memories through Gaia that Percy found oddly comforting—perhaps because it reminded him that he wasn't the only one who was different.

"Oh, before I forget," Percy said, walking over to check the morning mail that had been slipped under the door, "did you manage to download that new Rin Asuka song? 'Naturally'?"

Philip's fingers paused over his keyboard. "Ah, yes. Musical expression as a form of emotional communication—fascinating how humans can convey complex feelings through arranged sound waves." He pulled out his phone and tapped the screen. "I've downloaded it. Shall we listen?"

The gentle melody filled the office as Percy sorted through the mail. Bills, advertisements, a thank-you letter from their last client—the usual mix. Then his fingers froze on an envelope that looked different from the rest. The paper was thicker, more expensive, and his name was written in an elegant script that seemed almost ancient.

"Philip," Percy said slowly, "have you ever heard of something called 'Camp Half-Blood'?"

Philip's head snapped up from his laptop. "Camp Half-Blood? Searching the Earth's memories..." His eyes took on that distant look they always got when he accessed Gaia's vast repository of knowledge. After a moment, he frowned. "Strange. There are fragments, whispers of such a place, but the memories are... protected somehow. Shielded from the Earth's consciousness. What prompted this question?"

Percy held up the letter, his hands trembling slightly. "I think I just got invited there."

He tore open the envelope carefully, unfolding the letter within. As he read, his face grew paler with each line.

\*Dear Percy Jackson,

If you are reading this letter, then you have reached an age where you can no longer ignore what you are. The incidents in your past—the unusual events, the feeling that you don't quite fit in the normal world—these are not coincidences.

You are a half-blood, the child of a mortal and a Greek god. Your divine heritage has been awakening, and with it comes both great power and great danger. Monsters will be drawn to you, if they haven't been already.

Camp Half-Blood is a safe haven for others like you. Here, you will learn to harness your abilities, discover which god is your divine parent, and train to defend yourself and others from the threats that come with your heritage.

A satyr will be sent to escort you safely to camp within the week. Pack light, tell no one of this letter, and be ready.

Your survival may depend on it.

Chiron Activities Director Camp Half-Blood\*

Percy's legs gave out, and he sank into the nearest chair. The letter fluttered to the ground.

"Percy!" Philip was at his side instantly, picking up the fallen letter. As he read it, his expression shifted from concern to fascination to worry. "This... this explains so much about you."

"What do you mean?" Percy's voice came out as barely a whisper.

Philip sat down across from him, laptop forgotten. "Your unusual strength, your reflexes during our investigations, the way water seems to... respond to you sometimes. I've noticed, even if you haven't. And there was always something in Gaia's memories whenever I tried to search for information about you—a barrier, as if something divine was protecting your true nature from being discovered."

Percy looked up at his partner, his best friend, the person who'd become like a brother to him over the past few years. "Philip, I can't leave Futo. I can't leave you. We're partners—we protect this city together. What about the agency? What about our work?"

Philip was quiet for a long moment, then reached for the W Driver that sat on Sokichi's old desk—their Driver now. "Percy, do you remember what Sokichi told us? About how being a detective means seeking the truth, no matter how difficult it might be to face?"

Percy nodded, remembering their mentor's words.

"Then perhaps this is a truth you need to face. If what this letter says is correct, if you truly are the child of a god, then ignoring it won't make it go away. And if monsters are drawn to you..." Philip's voice grew serious. "They could threaten Futo, threaten innocent people, threaten me."

The weight of that realization hit Percy like a physical blow. Everything he'd fought to protect could be endangered by his very presence.

"But I don't want to lose my family again," Percy said quietly. "First my mom when she moved us here to keep me safe from Gabe, then Sokichi when we saved you from Museum. I can't lose you too, Philip."

Philip reached across and clasped Percy's shoulder. "You won't lose me. We're partners, remember? Kamen Rider W—we're two people who become one. Distance cannot change that bond." He paused, a small smile crossing his usually serious face. "Besides, someone needs to keep the agency running while you're gone. Consider it... field research. You'll learn about this other side of yourself, and I'll continue to search Gaia's memories for any information about this Camp Half-Blood."

Percy looked down at the letter again, then at the W Driver, then at Philip. His partner in fighting crime, his connection to the Earth itself, his family.

"When this satyr comes," Percy said slowly, "I want you to scan them with Gaia's memories. If this is real, if this camp is what they say it is, then I need to know I can trust them."

"Of course," Philip nodded. "And Percy? If your father truly is Poseidon, god of the sea... that would make you incredibly powerful. Perhaps powerful enough to protect not just Futo, but many more people."

Percy picked up the letter again, reading it once more. A Greek god for a father. A camp for people like him. Training to fight monsters. It was almost too much to process, except...

Except it explained everything. The way he'd always felt different, the way water seemed to calm him, the strength that had helped him become such an effective detective despite his age. Even the way he'd been able to sense Philip's connection to Gaia when they first met.

"Three months ago, we took down an entire criminal organization that was terrorizing this city," Percy said, standing up. "I think I can handle summer camp."

Philip smiled—a rare, genuine smile. "That's the spirit. Though I suspect this will be unlike any summer camp you've ever imagined."

As if summoned by their conversation, there was a knock at the office door. Percy and Philip exchanged glances.

"Expecting someone?" Philip asked.

Percy shook his head, walking toward the door. Through the frosted glass, he could make out a figure—someone about his age, but there was something unusual about their silhouette.

He opened the door to find a boy who looked to be around seventeen, with curly hair and what appeared to be... were those small horns poking through his hair?

"Percy Jackson?" the boy asked with a nervous smile. "I'm Grover. I'm here about that letter you received."

Percy glanced back at Philip, who was already reaching for his laptop, no doubt preparing to scan their visitor through Gaia's memories.

"You're early," Percy said. "The letter said within the week."

"Yeah, well," Grover shuffled his feet—hooves, Percy realized with a start—"your scent has been getting stronger lately. We need to move fast before something dangerous picks up your trail."

Philip appeared beside Percy, laptop in hand. After a moment of concentration, he looked up with wide eyes. "Percy... he's telling the truth. He's not entirely human—part goat, actually. A satyr, just as the letter indicated. And there's something else..." Philip paused, looking directly at Grover. "You're connected to nature itself, aren't you? I can sense it through Gaia."

Grover blinked in surprise. "You can sense that? That's... unusual. Most mortals can't..." He trailed off, looking between Percy and Philip with growing confusion. "Wait, there's something strange about both of you. Your auras are... intertwined somehow?"

Percy and Philip exchanged another look. Their partnership as Kamen Rider W was something they'd kept secret from everyone, but it seemed this satyr could sense their connection on some level.

"It's complicated," Percy said finally. "When do we need to leave?"

"Ideally? Now," Grover said, then seemed to notice Percy's reluctance. "Look, I know this is a lot to take in, but Camp Half-Blood really is the safest place for you. And once you're claimed by your godly parent, you'll understand so much more about yourself."

Percy looked back at Philip one more time. His partner gave him an encouraging nod.

"Alright," Percy said, then turned back to Grover. "But I need one day to arrange things here. There are... responsibilities I need to make sure are covered."

Grover looked nervous about the delay, but nodded. "One day. But Percy, if anything strange happens—and I mean anything—you call for me immediately, okay?"

After Grover left with promises to return the next morning, Percy and Philip sat in the quiet office, the weight of change hanging between them.

"So," Philip said eventually, "the son of Poseidon and the keeper of Gaia's memories. We certainly make an interesting pair."

Percy laughed despite everything. "When I get back from this camp, we'll have to compare notes. Maybe there's more connection between the Greek gods and the Earth's memories than anyone realizes."

"Perhaps," Philip mused. "After all, Gaia is the Greek personification of the Earth itself. There may be more links between our worlds than we initially suspected."

As the sun began to set over Futo, casting long shadows across their office, Percy Jackson prepared for a journey that would reveal the truth about his divine heritage. But in his heart, he knew that no matter how far he traveled or what he learned about himself, he would always have a home here, a partner in Philip, and a duty to protect the city that had given him a second chance at family.

The wind picked up outside, and for a moment, Percy could have sworn it carried the scent of the ocean—salty, powerful, and calling him toward his destiny.

## **The Journey Begins**

*The next morning*

Percy adjusted his backpack straps as he walked through Haneda Airport, glancing sideways at Grover who was nervously checking his watch every few seconds.

"You know," Percy said conversationally, "when you first suggested we could travel by... what did you call them? Pegasi? I thought you were joking."

*Flashback - The previous evening at the Narumi Detective Agency*

"So how exactly do we get to this camp?" Percy had asked, zipping up his travel bag.

"Well," Grover had said, scratching behind one of his horns, "normally we'd arrange for Pegasus transport. Much faster, and it avoids most monster detection—"

Percy had stopped packing and turned to stare at the satyr with an expression of complete disbelief. "I'm sorry, did you just casually suggest we ride flying horses across the Pacific Ocean?"

"Uh... yes?" Grover had replied, wilting under Percy's incredulous stare.

Percy had continued staring for a full ten seconds before slowly shaking his head. "Grover, I've lived in Japan for three years. I've dealt with some pretty weird stuff, but I draw the line at international travel on mythological creatures. We're taking a plane like normal people."

*Back to the present*

"I still think the Pegasi would have been safer," Grover muttered as they navigated through the crowd.

"Maybe, but I promised Philip I'd text him when we landed safely. Kind of hard to get cell service at thirty thousand feet on horseback," Percy replied dryly.

They paused at a small café where Percy's mother, Sally, was waiting with two cups of coffee. Her smile was warm but tinged with worry as she stood to embrace her son.

"Are you sure you have everything?" Sally asked, checking his backpack one more time.

"Mom, it's summer camp, not a permanent move," Percy said gently, though he hugged her tightly. "I'll be back before you know it."

Sally pulled back to look at him, her eyes glistening. "Percy, I... I need to apologize. For not telling you about your father sooner. After everything we've been through, everything with Gabe, and then moving here, and all those strange incidents—"

"Mom." Percy placed his hands on her shoulders. "You did what you thought was best to keep me safe. You moved us halfway around the world to get away from Gabe when he..." He trailed off, not wanting to relive those memories. "You've done everything you could to give me a normal life. You have nothing to apologize for."

Sally smiled through her tears. "When did you get so wise?"

"Learned from the best," Percy replied, kissing her forehead. "Besides, Sokichi always said that sometimes the people we love make difficult choices to protect us. I understand that now."

As they walked toward the departure gate, Percy noticed something odd.

"Hey Grover," he said quietly, "not to be rude, but why isn't anyone staring at you? I mean, cosplay is pretty popular here in Japan, but your horns and hooves are a little too realistic to be fake."

Grover glanced around nervously. "Oh, that. It's called the Mist. It's this... magical thing that makes mortals see what they expect to see instead of what's actually there. So they probably just see me as a regular teenager, maybe with a weird hat or something."

"The Mist," Percy repeated slowly, filing the information away. "So it's like... a perception filter?"

"Something like that, yeah."

"Huh." Percy considered this as they boarded the plane. "Philip would find that fascinating. He's always researching how people perceive and process information."

Grover looked curious. "This Philip guy—he seems really important to you. What's your relationship exactly?"

Percy was quiet for a moment as they found their seats. "He's my partner. We work together at the detective agency. We've... been through a lot together. Saved each other's lives more times than I can count."

"That's quite a bond for someone so young," Grover observed.

"Yeah," Percy said softly, looking out the window as the plane prepared for takeoff. "It is."

*Several hours later, after landing in New York*

Percy stretched as they walked through JFK Airport, grateful to be on solid ground again. The flight had been long but uneventful, though he'd noticed Grover spending most of it looking nervously out the windows as if expecting something to attack them mid-flight.

"So where exactly is this camp?" Percy asked as they headed toward the exit.

"Long Island," Grover replied. "Don't worry, we have a ride waiting."

They emerged from the airport to find a taxi idling near the pickup zone. At least, Percy assumed it was a taxi, though it looked... unusual. The vehicle was sleek and black with an almost otherworldly shine to its surface, and the driver wore dark sunglasses despite it being evening.

"Is that...?" Percy started to ask.

"The Chariot of Damnation," Grover said proudly, as if he'd expected Percy to be impressed or terrified. "Pretty cool, right? It's one of Hades' vehicles, but he sometimes lends them out for camp transportation."

Percy looked at the supernatural taxi, then at Grover's expectant expression, then back at the vehicle. After a moment, he shrugged and walked toward it.

"Okay," he said simply, opening the door.

Grover blinked in surprise. "Okay? That's it? You're not... I don't know, amazed? Terrified? This is a genuine underworld vehicle!"

Percy paused with one foot in the cab and looked back at his satyr guide with mild amusement. "Grover, I've lived in Japan for three years. Trust me when I say this country can be way weirder than most people give it credit for." He settled into the seat and gestured for Grover to join him. "Besides, after flying horses and magical perception filters, an underworld taxi is honestly pretty tame."

As Grover climbed in beside him, looking somewhat deflated that his supernatural reveals weren't getting the dramatic reactions he'd expected, Percy pulled out his phone to send a quick text to Philip:

*"Landed safely. On my way to the camp now. The transportation is... unique. Will call when I can. -P"*

The response came back almost immediately:

*"Glad you arrived safely. The city is quiet tonight. Be careful, partner. -Philip"*

Percy smiled and put his phone away as the Chariot of Damnation pulled away from the airport, carrying him toward a destiny he was only beginning to understand.

## **Welcome to Camp Half-Blood**

The Chariot of Damnation dropped them off at the base of a hill just as dawn was breaking. Percy shouldered his backpack and followed Grover up a winding dirt path, noting the way the satyr seemed to relax with each step they took.

"Almost there," Grover said, slightly out of breath. "Just over this ridge."

They crested the hill, and Grover gestured grandly toward the valley below. "Welcome to Camp Half-Blood!"

Percy's eyes swept across the scene methodically, cataloging details the way Sokichi had taught him. The valley was larger than he'd expected, nestled between rolling hills and bordered by what looked like a strawberry field. A river wound through the landscape, and he could see various buildings scattered throughout—some looking like normal cabins, others more elaborate, almost temple-like structures.

"The barrier extends all around the valley," Grover explained, pointing to what looked like empty air but shimmered slightly in the morning light. "Magical protection. Nothing can get in without permission."

Percy nodded, noting the strategic positioning. "Good defensive location. High ground, natural boundaries, controlled access points."

They walked down the hill, and Grover began his tour in earnest. "Those are the strawberry fields," he said, gesturing to rows of perfectly cultivated plants. "Mr. D—that's Dionysus, our camp director—he grows them. They help fund the camp."

Percy observed the fields with interest. The plants looked healthier than any he'd ever seen, and there was something almost supernatural about their uniformity. "Efficient operation. Who handles distribution?"

"Uh, satyrs mostly," Grover replied, looking slightly confused by the practical nature of Percy's questions.

They passed the volleyball courts where several campers were engaged in what looked like a rather intense game. Percy noticed their reflexes were faster than humanly possible, and one player seemed to be glowing slightly.

"Demigods," Grover explained. "Children of different gods have different abilities."

"Makes sense," Percy said. "Inherited traits from divine parents would manifest in enhanced physical capabilities."

Next, they approached a large blue farmhouse that served as the main office building. "That's the Big House," Grover said. "Chiron—he's our activities director—has his office there. So does Mr. D."

Percy examined the structure, noting the wraparound porch and multiple entry points. "Central command location. Good sightlines of the entire valley."

"I... guess?" Grover said, increasingly bewildered by Percy's clinical observations.

They walked toward the heart of the camp, passing an amphitheater carved into a natural hillside. Even though it was early morning, Percy could see some campers practicing what looked like combat demonstrations.

"Combat training," he observed. "Smart. If these kids are really in danger from monsters, practical self-defense skills would be essential."

"Right, that's exactly—" Grover started, then shook his head. "You're really not reacting the way most new campers do."

They continued past the arts and crafts cabin, where Percy glimpsed kids working on what looked like celestial bronze weapons, then by the climbing wall, which was apparently lava-powered and changed its configuration regularly.

"Adaptive training equipment," Percy noted approvingly. "Keeps the challenges fresh, prevents trainees from getting too comfortable with static obstacles."

At the archery range, Percy watched a girl who couldn't have been more than twelve consistently hit bullseyes from an impressive distance. Her arrows seemed to glow silver in flight.

"Daughter of Apollo," Grover explained. "Natural archer."

"Genetic predisposition enhanced by divine heritage," Percy translated. "Interesting how the abilities seem to correlate with their godly parent's domain."

They passed the canoe lake, where Percy paused for a longer moment. Something about the water called to him—not just its beauty, but something deeper. He could almost feel its currents, sense its depth and temperature. But he filed that observation away for later analysis.

"The lake connects to the ocean," Grover said, noticing Percy's attention. "Some water-based training happens here."

Percy nodded, though he didn't mention the strange connection he'd felt.

Their next stop was the forge, where the sound of hammering echoed from within. Through the open doors, Percy could see several campers working at anvils, their skin seeming to glow with internal heat as they shaped celestial bronze.

"Hephaestus kids," Grover explained. "They make most of our weapons and equipment."

"Practical skill specialization based on divine parentage," Percy observed. "Efficient division of labor."

Finally, they approached the cabin area—a large circle of buildings, each distinctively designed and decorated. Grover pointed to each one in turn.

"Cabin One is Zeus's—Big Three god, so it's usually empty. Cabin Two is Hera's, but she doesn't have demigod children, so it's honorary. Cabin Three is Poseidon's—also usually empty, another Big Three situation."

Percy examined each cabin as Grover explained their purposes. The Zeus cabin was imposing, all white marble and electric blue trim. Hera's was more elegant, with peacock motifs. But it was the Poseidon cabin that drew his attention—sea-green walls that seemed to shift like ocean waves, and he could swear he heard the sound of waves despite being inland.

They continued around the circle: Demeter's cabin with its growing roof garden, Ares's cabin that looked like a military bunker, Athena's with its precise architectural lines, Apollo's that seemed to glow with internal light, Artemis's silver cabin (also honorary, Grover explained), Hephaestus's that looked like an extension of the forge, Aphrodite's that somehow managed to look both beautiful and slightly different to each observer, Hermes's overcrowded cabin that served as the default for unclaimed demigods, Dionysus's with its grape vine decorations, and several others.

"Organized by divine parentage," Percy noted. "Logical system for managing different types of abilities and temperaments."

The tour concluded at the dining pavilion, where breakfast was being served. Percy observed the organized chaos of hundreds of demigods gathering for their morning meal, noting the way different tables seemed to have their own distinct atmospheres and energy levels.

"And that's Camp Half-Blood," Grover said proudly, gesturing around the valley. "Home to demigods from all over the world. What do you think?"

Percy stood quietly for a moment, hands in his pockets, surveying the entire operation. The strategic layout, the specialized training facilities, the organized cabin system, the defensive positioning—it was actually quite impressive from a tactical standpoint.

Finally, he turned to Grover with a completely deadpan expression.

"Why a camp?"

"What?" Grover blinked.

"Why a camp?" Percy repeated in the same flat tone. "I mean, why not a training academy or just, you know, a military school? You've got combat training, specialized education, strategic defense positioning, organized housing by skill specialization. This is basically a military installation with arts and crafts. So why call it a summer camp?"

Grover stared at him for a long moment, mouth slightly open. "I... that's... I don't think anyone's ever asked that question before."

Percy shrugged. "Just seems like calling a spade a shovel, is all."

## **The Poseidon Cabin**

Grover led Percy toward the cabin circle, stopping in front of the sea-green structure Percy had noticed earlier. Up close, it was even more impressive—the walls seemed to shift and flow like water, and the interior was visible through windows that looked like they were made of crystallized sea foam.

"This is Cabin Three," Grover said, opening the door. "Poseidon's cabin. It'll be your home while you're here."

Percy stepped inside and immediately noticed how empty it was. The cabin was beautiful—walls that captured the essence of ocean depths, bunk beds that looked like they were carved from driftwood, and a subtle sound of waves that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere at once. But it was clearly designed for multiple occupants, and he was the only one there.

"So," Percy said, setting his backpack on one of the beds, "I'm guessing I don't have any roommates."

Grover shifted uncomfortably. "Well, no. Poseidon is one of the Big Three gods—Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. After World War II, they made a pact not to have any more demigod children because their kids are too powerful and tend to attract... attention. You're actually the first Poseidon kid to come to camp in decades."

"Huh," Percy said, looking around the spacious cabin. He walked over to a window and gazed out at the lake. "That's actually perfect."

"Perfect?" Grover blinked. "Most kids would be upset about being alone, especially when they're new and don't know anyone."

Percy turned back to him with a slight shrug. "I value my privacy. Back in Futo, Philip and I had the detective agency to ourselves most of the time. I'm used to quiet spaces where I can think."

"Oh." Grover seemed to process this. "That... actually makes sense. You're not like most campers."

"Speaking of which," Percy said, settling onto one of the beds to test the mattress, "there's going to be some kind of orientation tomorrow for new campers, right? Standard procedure?"

"Yeah, tomorrow morning," Grover confirmed, then clapped his hands together with visible relief. "You know what? You seem pretty comfortable here. I was worried about leaving you alone on your first night, but if you're actually okay with it..."

"Go ahead," Percy said with a wave. "I could use some time to process everything anyway."

"Great! I'll come get you in the morning for orientation." Grover headed toward the door, then paused and looked back. "You really aren't like most campers, are you?"

Percy looked up with a humorous smile. "How exactly am I supposed to act?"

Grover caught the sarcasm in his tone and grinned. "Well, usually there's a lot more awe, amazement... some kids are scared when they first get here..."

Percy read between the lines. "You mean most kids have a hard time processing that they're the children of actual gods. Olympian gods who are supposed to be myths but are apparently very real and have been... busy."

"Yeah," Grover said with a slightly awkward shrug. "That's honestly how a lot of them feel at first. But they get used to it. Eventually." He tilted his head curiously. "What about you?"

"Hm?"

"I mean, didn't finding out who your dad was invoke even a little bit of a strong reaction? This is Poseidon we're talking about—god of the sea, one of the most powerful beings in existence."

Percy stared at Grover for a moment, then broke into a genuine grin. "Not really, no."

"Not really?" Grover looked genuinely baffled. "How is that possible?"

"Because I already had a father."

Grover's expression shifted to understanding. "Your step-dad?"

Percy's smile fell immediately, and his voice turned flat. "Gabe got arrested for domestic abuse."

Grover flinched. "Oh. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to—"

"No," Percy said, waving off the apology. "The man who really raised me was Sokichi Narumi. He was a detective, helped me out when I first started living in Japan, and the rest..." Percy's voice grew softer, tinged with both fondness and grief. "Let's just say he was everything Gabe and Poseidon weren't."

Grover was quiet for a moment, sensing the weight behind Percy's words. "He sounds like he was important to you."

"He was," Percy said simply. "He taught me that being a protector isn't about having power—it's about choosing to use whatever abilities you have to help people who can't help themselves. He showed me what it means to be a real father, even though we weren't related by blood." Percy looked out the window again. "So when someone tells me that my biological father is some powerful god who's been absent my entire life? It doesn't really change anything. I already know who raised me, and I already know what kind of man I want to be."

Grover nodded slowly. "That explains a lot about why you're taking all this so calmly."

"Besides," Percy added with a slight return of his earlier humor, "Philip always says that the most important relationships are the ones you choose, not the ones you're born into."

"This Philip guy really is important to you," Grover observed.

"He's my partner," Percy said. "In every sense that matters."

As Grover left him alone in the cabin, Percy unpacked his few belongings, placing a photo of himself, Philip, and Sokichi on the nightstand beside his bed. Tomorrow would bring new challenges, new training, and probably more revelations about his divine heritage. But tonight, in the quiet of Poseidon's empty cabin, he allowed himself a moment to miss the family he'd chosen back in Futo—and to steel himself for whatever this new chapter would bring.

## **Morning Preparations**

Percy woke to the sound of waves—not real ones, but the gentle ambient noise that seemed to be a permanent feature of the Poseidon cabin. He stretched and checked his phone: 6:30 AM. Early, but he'd always been a morning person, a habit picked up from his detective work with Sokichi.

He took stock of his belongings as he prepared for the day. Clothes for a few days, toothbrush, underwear—the basic essentials he'd packed in a hurry. But these weren't the only essentials he'd brought.

Reaching under his bed, Percy pulled out a small, reinforced briefcase that had been carefully concealed in his travel bag. He popped it open, revealing the contents that were truly important to him: the Double Driver, the Lost Driver, and his personal collection of Gaia Memories—Heat, Metal, Trigger, and a few others he'd collected during their battles against Museum.

The Memories seemed to pulse faintly in the morning light filtering through the cabin windows. Percy ran his fingers over them thoughtfully. He wasn't sure if he'd need them here, but he wasn't about to leave them behind either. Too many people had died to obtain these, and they were his responsibility now.

His phone buzzed with a message from Philip:

*"Good morning, partner. Hope you slept well. I've been researching your Camp Half-Blood, but I'm running into something unusual. Several cases of mysterious phenomena that could be linked to the Olympians keep surfacing in my searches, but every time I try to access detailed information, it gets blocked. It's as if Gaia's library has a 'closed off' section that's actively preventing me from getting the full details. Have you encountered anything similar there? -Philip"*

Percy read the message twice, frowning. Philip had never mentioned Gaia's memories being restricted before. Whatever was blocking his access must be powerful—and intentional.

*"That's interesting. Haven't encountered any restrictions here yet, but I'll keep an eye out. Everything else quiet in Futo? -P"*

*"Surprisingly quiet. Almost suspiciously so. Be careful, Percy. Something about this whole situation feels... orchestrated. -Philip"*

Percy stared at the last message for a long moment. Philip's instincts were rarely wrong, and if he sensed something was off, Percy would take that warning seriously. He closed the briefcase carefully and slid it back under his bed before finishing his morning routine.

## **Orientation**

The orientation for new campers was held in the amphitheater, where Percy found himself sitting among about a dozen other teenagers who all looked various degrees of overwhelmed, excited, or terrified. He recognized the look—it was the same expression people got when they first realized their normal world wasn't as normal as they'd thought.

A cheerful counselor was explaining the basics of camp life when a girl with perfectly styled hair and an expensive-looking camp t-shirt slid into the seat next to him.

"Hi," she said with a bright smile that somehow managed to be both welcoming and calculating. "I'm Drew Tanaka, daughter of Aphrodite. You must be new too."

"Percy Jackson," he replied in the same casual tone he'd use to introduce himself to a client. "Son of Poseidon."

Drew's eyebrows shot up. "Big Three god? Nice. That explains the whole..." she gestured vaguely at his general appearance, "mysterious loner thing you've got going on."

Percy glanced at her with mild amusement. "How'd you get here?"

Drew rolled her eyes dramatically. "Pegasus. It was honestly the worst—wind in your hair sounds romantic until you're actually flying at a thousand feet with no safety equipment. I bet it was terrible for you too."

"I only took the plane," Percy replied matter-of-factly.

Drew stared at him for a moment. "Seriously? I could have gotten here by plane? Or just the regular bus?" She groaned and slumped in her seat. "Ugh, nobody told me that was an option."

Percy grinned sympathetically. "Shikata ga nai," he said with a slight shrug.

Drew straightened up, looking at him with interest. "You speak Japanese?"

Percy awkwardly scratched the back of his head. "Ah, sorry. That was more out of reflex—I've lived in Japan since I was eight. It just means 'it can't be helped.'"

"It's fine," Drew said, waving off his apology. "Actually, I know some Japanese too. My dad does a lot of business there, so he made sure I picked up the basics." She tilted her head curiously. "What's it like living there? Must be pretty different from wherever you're originally from."

"New York originally, but yeah, Japan's... different. Good different, mostly." Percy thought about Futo, about the detective agency, about Philip. "I have a life there. People who depend on me."

"And now you're stuck at demigod summer camp," Drew said with understanding. "I get it. I had to leave right in the middle of my modeling contract negotiations. Being a demigod really messes with your scheduling."

Percy looked at her with genuine curiosity. "Modeling?"

"Daughter of Aphrodite," Drew said, as if that explained everything. "We're all naturally photogenic. It's basically a genetic requirement." She studied his face for a moment. "You know, you've got good bone structure. Ever consider it?"

"Not really my thing," Percy said diplomatically. "I'm more of a... problem-solver."

"Ah, the mysterious detective type," Drew said with a knowing smile. "I can work with that."

As the orientation continued around them, Percy found himself wondering what Philip would make of Drew Tanaka. Probably analyze her conversation patterns and social manipulation techniques with academic fascination. The thought made him smile slightly—he missed his partner's analytical observations about people already, and it had only been a day.

## **Investigating the Grounds**

After orientation ended, Percy decided to explore the camp on his own. The detective in him wanted to get a better understanding of the layout, the routines, the people—information gathering was second nature to him now, a habit ingrained by years of working cases with Sokichi.

He walked with purpose but without obvious destination, observing the way different groups of campers moved through the space. There were patterns here, social hierarchies and territorial boundaries that weren't immediately apparent but became clearer the longer he watched. Some cabins clearly had more influence than others, some areas of camp were busier at certain times, some activities drew larger crowds.

Percy was mentally mapping the camp's social dynamics when he rounded a corner near the dining pavilion and nearly collided with someone coming from the opposite direction at a steady jog.

The collision was avoided by inches, both of them pulling up short with reflexes that were faster than average. The other person was a girl about his age with blonde hair pulled back in a practical ponytail, wearing athletic clothes and barely breathing hard despite clearly being in the middle of a run.

"Oh! Sorry about that," she said, jogging in place slightly to keep her heart rate up. "I wasn't paying attention to where I was going."

"It's fine," Percy replied, automatically stepping aside to give her room. "No harm done."

The girl studied his face for a moment, her gray eyes sharp and assessing. "You're one of the new campers, aren't you? I don't think we've been introduced."

Percy extended his hand in greeting. "Percy Jackson."

She took his hand with a firm grip. "Annabeth Chase." Her handshake was confident, direct—the kind that suggested she was used to making quick assessments of people.

"Are you new too?" Percy asked, though something about her comfortable familiarity with the surroundings suggested otherwise.

"Oh no," Annabeth said with a slight laugh. "I've been coming here since I was seven."

Percy blinked in mild surprise. That meant she'd been at Camp Half-Blood for nearly a decade. "Then you must know your way around pretty well."

"You could say that," Annabeth agreed, not denying the obvious. She tilted her head, studying him with what looked like professional curiosity. "You must still be trying to get acclimated to everything. It's a lot to take in at first."

"Yeah," Percy confirmed. "Still figuring out how everything works here."

"It gets easier," Annabeth said, resuming her jogging motion. "The key is understanding the patterns—social, strategic, operational. Once you see how the system functions, you can navigate it more effectively."

Percy found himself nodding. That was exactly the kind of analysis he'd been doing, though he hadn't expected another camper to articulate it quite so directly.

"Well, I should let you get back to exploring," Annabeth said, clearly eager to continue her run. "Sorry again for almost running you down. Good luck with the acclimation process."

"Thanks," Percy replied, watching as she resumed her jog with the easy rhythm of someone who made physical fitness a regular habit.

As she disappeared around another corner, Percy found himself intrigued. Most of the campers he'd met so far seemed to approach camp life with either wide-eyed wonder or social maneuvering. Annabeth Chase had spoken about it like a system to be understood and optimized—an approach that reminded him of the way Philip analyzed complex problems.

He made a mental note to learn more about her later. In his experience, people who see patterns and systems were often the ones worth knowing.

## **First Day of Training**

The next morning, Percy found himself standing in the training area with the other new campers, listening as Chiron addressed them from his wheelchair. The centaur's voice carried easily across the group, authoritative but encouraging.

"Welcome to your first day of combat training," Chiron said, his eyes scanning the assembled teenagers. "Here at Camp Half-Blood, we believe that physical prowess must match mental acuity. You will learn not just how to fight, but when to fight, and perhaps more importantly, when not to fight."

Percy listened attentively, hands clasped behind his back in a relaxed stance that Sokichi had drilled into him during their training sessions. Around him, the other new campers shifted nervously—Drew was trying to look confident but kept checking her appearance, while others fidgeted with their practice weapons or whispered anxiously to each other.

Percy remained perfectly still, his expression calm and attentive. Chiron's eyes lingered on him for just a moment longer than the others, a subtle observation that didn't go unnoticed.

"You'll be paired with more experienced campers who will help assess your current skill level and guide your training," Chiron continued. "Remember, this is not about winning or losing—it's about learning."

As assignments were called out, Percy heard his name paired with someone called Luke Castellan. A boy who looked to be about nineteen approached him with an easy smile and confident bearing. He was tall, athletic, with sandy hair and the kind of natural charisma that suggested leadership experience.

Percy bowed respectfully—a precise fifteen-degree bow that had become automatic after years in Japan—before extending his hand for a Western-style handshake.

"Percy Jackson," he said simply.

Luke's eyebrows rose slightly at the bow, but he took Percy's hand with a firm grip. "Luke Castellan. That was a pretty formal greeting—you military?"

"I lived in Japan for half my life," Percy explained with a slight shrug. "Some habits stick."

"I see," Luke said, studying him with interested eyes. "Well, Percy from Japan, ready to see what you can do with a sword?"

Percy glanced at the practice weapon Luke was offering him—a well-balanced celestial bronze blade, similar in weight to some of the weapons he'd trained with under Sokichi's guidance. "Sure," he said with another casual shrug.

Luke's smile widened, and Percy caught something in his expression that suggested the older camper thought he was in for an easy training session with a naive newcomer.

Several minutes later, that assumption had been thoroughly dispelled.

Percy moved with fluid precision, his blade work clean and economical. Every strike served a purpose, every defensive move flowed seamlessly into the next action. He read Luke's attacks before they fully developed, responded to feints without falling for them, and maintained perfect balance throughout their engagement.

What shocked the watching campers—and clearly surprised Luke himself—was that Percy was not only holding his own against one of camp's most skilled swordsmen, but doing so while obviously holding back. His movements had the controlled restraint of someone who knew exactly how much force to use and was deliberately using less.

Luke pressed his attack, testing Percy's defenses with increasingly complex combinations, but Percy met each one with calm efficiency. There was no wasted motion, no flashy technique—just solid, practical swordwork that suggested extensive training.

Then, just as Luke was beginning to push harder, really testing Percy's limits, Percy made what looked like a small timing error. Luke's blade slipped past his guard, and Percy allowed himself to be backed toward the boundary of their sparring circle.

"Yield," Percy said, stepping back with his weapon lowered. "Good match."

But both Chiron and Luke had been watching too carefully to miss what had really happened. Percy's "mistake" had been too clean, too perfectly timed. He had deliberately thrown the match.

"Wild workout, huh? Whew," Percy said, wiping imaginary sweat from his forehead with an easy grin that didn't quite reach his eyes.

Luke stared at him for a long moment, really looking at him—taking in the way Percy stood, the calluses on his hands, the complete lack of surprise at his own performance. There was calculation in Luke's gaze now, and something that might have been respect.

"Yeah," Luke said finally, his own smile returning but with a different quality to it. "It was." He extended his hand again, and this time when Percy shook it, Luke's grip lingered just a moment longer than necessary. "Really interesting workout."

From his position observing the training, Chiron stroked his beard thoughtfully, his ancient eyes missing nothing of the exchange between the two young men.

## **Settling In**

Over the next few days, Percy found himself falling into a routine at Camp Half-Blood. Morning training, afternoon activities, evening campfire gatherings—it was structured in a way that reminded him of the disciplined schedule he'd maintained while working cases with Sokichi, though considerably more social.

He'd started getting friendly with more of the campers, finding that his calm demeanor and genuine interest in listening made him surprisingly easy to talk to. Drew had adopted him into her circle with the determination of someone collecting interesting people, while others seemed drawn to his lack of drama and straightforward conversation style.

Today he was having lunch with Grover at one of the picnic tables near the dining pavilion, enjoying the relative quiet of the afternoon break between activities.

"So tell me more about Japan," Grover said, picking at his meal of tin cans and aluminum foil with obvious enjoyment. "What did you actually do there? I mean, besides go to school."

"Mostly studying, yeah," Percy replied, taking a bite of his sandwich. "But I also worked as an assistant to Sokichi—he was a private investigator. Started helping him out when I was around thirteen, officially became his assistant when I turned fourteen."

"The one who raised you, right?" Grover said gently.

"Yeah." Percy's voice softened slightly. "He saw something in me, I guess. Taught me how to observe people, how to piece together clues, how to think through problems logically. Most importantly, he taught me that being a detective isn't about being the smartest person in the room—it's about caring enough to find the truth for people who need it."

Grover nodded, then asked very carefully, "How did he...?"

Percy was quiet for a moment, staring at his food. "It was during a case. We were going after this criminal organization that had been terrorizing the city. One of the guys we were investigating got lucky." His voice was matter-of-fact, but there was an underlying tension that suggested the memory still hurt.

"I'm sorry," Grover said softly.

Percy shrugged, though the gesture wasn't as casual as he probably intended. "The job was always going to be dangerous. He knew that. Now I'm just trying to take up where he left off."

"A regular boy detective, huh?" Grover said, clearly trying to lighten the mood. "Kind of like that... uh... Japanese comic thing I've been seeing around."

"You mean manga?" Percy provided, a small smile tugging at his lips.

"Yes!" Grover said, looking embarrassed. "I've been reading some ever since I came across one at a bookstore. They're actually pretty interesting."

Percy chuckled. "Which one caught your attention? There's actually a whole sub-genre in Japan for that kind of story—shōnen tantei, or boy detective series."

"Case Closed, I think it was called," Grover replied.

"Ah," Percy nodded with approval. "A classic. You could even say THE most famous boy detective in Japan, though not exactly the first of the genre."

"Really? There are more?"

"Oh yeah, tons. The boy detective thing has been popular in Japan for decades. Case Closed is probably the most internationally known, but there are others—some more realistic, some more... fantastical." Percy's smile grew slightly wider. "Though I have to say, my detective work was considerably less murder-heavy than Conan's cases tend to be."

"That's probably a good thing," Grover said with a laugh. "I don't think I could handle that much crime drama in real life."

Percy's expression grew more thoughtful. "You'd be surprised how much crime there actually is, even in a relatively safe place like Futo. Most people just don't see it because they're not looking for it, or because someone is working to keep it hidden from them."

"Someone like you and Sokichi?"

"Someone like me and Sokichi," Percy confirmed. He looked around the peaceful camp grounds, taking in the laughing campers and the serene valley setting. "It's nice being in a place where the biggest daily concern is whether you'll get picked for capture the flag teams, instead of wondering if some criminal organization is planning their next move."

Grover studied his friend's face. "But you miss it, don't you? The detective work."

Percy considered the question seriously. "Yeah, I do. It gave me purpose, you know? Here, I'm learning about being a demigod, which is important, but back in Japan I was actually helping people solve their problems. Making a real difference in their lives."

"Maybe," Grover said thoughtfully, "you'll find a way to do both eventually. Use your demigod abilities to be an even better detective."

Percy looked at him with interest. "You think that's possible?"

"Why not?" Grover shrugged. "You're already good at reading people and solving puzzles. Add some divine powers to that mix, and you'd probably be unstoppable."

The idea intrigued Percy more than he wanted to admit. He'd been thinking of his time at Camp Half-Blood as separate from his life in Japan, but maybe Grover was right. Maybe there was a way to integrate both parts of who he was becoming.

## **Divine Concerns**

High atop Mount Olympus, the great throne room of the gods crackled with tension. Zeus sat upon his throne, lightning flickering around his form as his mood darkened with each passing moment. The other Olympians were arranged in their respective seats, the atmosphere heavy with unspoken concerns.

"Well?" Zeus's voice boomed across the chamber. "Has our investigation yielded anything regarding my stolen Master Bolt?"

The gods exchanged uncomfortable glances. Hermes shifted in his seat, his usual jovial demeanor subdued. "Whoever took it was thorough, brother. They've managed to shield it completely from divine sight."

"Every tracking method we've attempted has been blocked," Athena added, her gray eyes troubled. "The thief clearly understands our capabilities and has taken extensive precautions."

Zeus's expression darkened further, electricity dancing across his beard. His gaze swept the assembled deities before settling on his brother. "And what of your son, Poseidon? How is he settling into camp?"

Poseidon, who had been silently contemplating the churning seas far below, looked up with a measured expression. "Pretty well," he said simply. "A little too well, actually."

Zeus raised an eyebrow, his paranoia immediately sharpening. "What do you mean by that?"

It was unusual—almost unheard of—for any divine child to settle so seamlessly into the reality of Camp Half-Blood. Most demigods required weeks or even months to fully adjust to learning about their heritage and the mythological world suddenly thrust upon them.

Poseidon, well aware of his brother's tendency toward suspicion, chose his words carefully. "He helped out a private investigator in Japan," he explained, deliberately keeping the details vague. "This experience has instilled a certain... maturity in him. His life as an assistant to one Sokichi Narumi taught him to adapt to unusual situations and process complex information without panic."

Zeus stared at his brother for a long, uncomfortable moment, his electric blue eyes searching for any hint of deception or hidden meaning. The silence stretched until even the other gods began to shift uneasily.

Finally, Zeus spoke, his voice carrying the weight of impending doom. "If the Master Bolt isn't found, we all know what the consequences will be."

The assembled gods nodded gravely. War between Zeus and Poseidon would tear apart both the mortal and divine worlds.

"We are all aware of the stakes, Father," Athena interjected diplomatically. "But we must approach this with caution. The more we show our hand, the more Kronos's forces will be emboldened to act."

Zeus's eyes flashed dangerously. "I am aware, daughter. But the more time we waste, the closer the inevitable becomes. So what, exactly, do you suggest?"

Athena was quiet for a moment, her tactical mind weighing possibilities and probabilities. Then she glanced meaningfully at Poseidon, who caught the look and sighed deeply.

He knew what she was thinking. He knew what she was about to suggest, and he didn't like it one bit.

## **Summons**

The next day at Camp Half-Blood seemed to be proceeding normally when the camp's PA system crackled to life with an announcement that made Percy pause in his sword practice.

"Would Peter Johnson please report to the head counselor cabin immediately," came Mr. D's distinctly bored voice.

"Percy Jackson," Chiron's patient correction followed moments later.

"Right, whatever. Percy Jackson to the head counselor cabin."

Percy set down his practice sword and made his way across camp, drawing curious glances from other campers. Being called to see both camp directors usually meant either serious trouble or serious news, and Percy had been careful to avoid the former.

The head counselor cabin was a modest building that served as the administrative heart of camp operations. Percy knocked and entered to find both Dionysus and Chiron waiting for him. The wine god was lounging in his chair with a Diet Coke, looking as perpetually irritated as ever, while Chiron maintained his usual composed demeanor from behind his desk.

Percy had formed his opinion of Dionysus pretty quickly during his time at camp. The god was difficult to get along with, contributed little to the daily operations unless Chiron actively pushed him to participate, and seemed to take petty pleasure in making unreasonable demands of campers and deliberately mispronouncing their names. He spent most of his time drinking Diet Coke and being generally unpleasant to everyone around him.

Still, Percy had dealt with some similarly difficult clients during his time working with Sokichi—people who were rude, dismissive, or actively hostile but still needed help. He'd learned that sometimes you just had to work around difficult personalities to get the job done.

"What is it I've been called for?" Percy asked, keeping his tone respectful and professional.

Chiron leaned forward slightly, his expression serious. "Your father would like to speak with you, Percy. The matter is of grave importance."

Percy blinked once, processing this information. After a moment, he nodded. "Sure."

Both Dionysus and Chiron seemed taken aback by his casual acceptance. Most demigods would be either terrified or overwhelmed by the prospect of a direct meeting with their divine parent.

"Ooh, look at Mr. Detective," Dionysus said with petty sarcasm, taking a sip of his Diet Coke. "Already thinks he's such a big shot after chasing missing purses and lost pets."

"Mr. D," Chiron said with gentle reproach, then turned back to Percy. "When would you be able to make the journey?"

"Now would be good," Percy replied with the same matter-of-fact tone he'd use for scheduling any other appointment.

Chiron nodded approvingly. "Very well. You'll be going to New York. Grover will accompany you to help show the way and ensure your safe passage."

Percy glanced between the two authority figures. "Is there anything specific I should know about this meeting beforehand? Any particular protocol or information I should be prepared to discuss?"

Chiron's eyes held a glimmer of something that might have been approval at Percy's practical approach. "Your father will explain everything when you see him. Just... be prepared for the conversation to be rather different from your usual camp activities."

"Understood," Percy said, already mentally shifting into the same focused mindset he'd adopted when preparing for important cases with Sokichi. Whatever this was about, it was clearly serious enough to warrant divine intervention.

And in his experience, when powerful people called emergency meetings, it usually meant someone was in significant trouble.

## **Road Trip to New York**

The drive to New York started off less than smoothly. Grover had volunteered to drive, but after a few clumsy turns and one near-miss with a mailbox, Percy diplomatically suggested they switch seats.

"Do you even have a license?" Grover asked as they pulled over to swap positions.

"I had to get one," Percy replied, adjusting the rearview mirror. "I rode a bike back when I was still in Japan for work with Sokichi. Sometimes cases required getting around the city quickly."

Grover perked up with interest. "You actually have a bike? That's cool. What model?"

Percy shrugged as he settled into the driver's seat and checked the mirrors. "A Honda. I personally named it the Hardboilder."

Grover blinked. "Weird name."

Percy chuckled as he started the ignition. "Yeah, not exactly what you'd call a 'cool' name, but I chose it. Had some sentimental value."

Once they got onto the highway, Percy rolled down the windows, letting the summer air flow through the car. Grover visibly relaxed as the breeze hit him, his nature-connected spirit clearly appreciating the open air. The tension from the camp summons began to ease as they settled into the rhythm of the road.

"Mind if I turn on some music?" Grover asked, already reaching for the radio dial.

"Go for it," Percy said, keeping his eyes on the road.

Grover found a classic rock station just as a familiar opening guitar riff began to play. Both boys recognized the song immediately and, without any discussion, began singing along with The Killers, their voices mixing with the melody as the landscape rolled past the windows.

It was one of those perfect moments of camaraderie that happen on road trips—two friends, good music, open road, and the kind of easy companionship that made even a potentially serious divine meeting feel less daunting.

Percy found himself genuinely smiling for the first time since arriving at camp. Despite everything—the missing Master Bolt, the strange new world of demigods, being away from Philip and Futo—there was something reassuring about simple human moments like this.

As they drove through the afternoon, taking turns picking songs and talking about everything and nothing, Percy almost forgot they were heading toward what might be one of the most important conversations of his life.

## **Highway Encounter**

They had been driving for about two hours when Percy noticed a sleek convertible gradually catching up to them in his rearview mirror. Two women were in the car—the driver was rather attractive with dark hair flowing in the wind.

As the convertible pulled alongside them, the driver lowered her sunglasses and gave them a flirtatious wink. Grover smiled at first, clearly enjoying the attention, but then his expression changed dramatically as he got a better look at the women.

The passenger was turning toward them, and as she did, Percy caught a glimpse of something that shouldn't have been possible—fangs extending from her mouth and what looked like wings beginning to unfurl from her back.

"Furies!" Grover cried out in terror.

Percy didn't hesitate. He stomped on the gas pedal, the car lurching forward as he tried to put distance between them and the supernatural convertible. But the other vehicle easily kept pace, its occupants clearly not bound by normal automotive limitations.

"What do they want?" Percy shouted over the roar of the engine and the wind.

"They work for Hades!" Grover yelled back, gripping his seat. "They're agents of vengeance! But I have no idea why they would come after us!"

Percy kept his eyes on the road while monitoring the Furies in his rearview mirror. The situation was escalating quickly—the passenger had taken to the air and was now swooping toward their car with predatory intent.

Suddenly, the flying Fury landed on their roof with a metallic crash that made the whole car shudder. Her claws scraped against the metal as she tried to find purchase.

"She's trying to run us off the road!" Grover shouted, holding on as the car rocked under the creature's weight.

Percy fought to maintain control of the vehicle as the Fury on the roof used her supernatural strength to try to force them toward the guardrail. His knuckles were white on the steering wheel as he resisted her efforts.

"Grover," Percy called out, making a split-second decision, "open the glove compartment."

"What?!" Grover looked at him like he'd lost his mind, but complied anyway. Inside the compartment was a strange-looking device—black and red with mechanical details that seemed far too advanced for normal technology.

"I placed that there earlier, just in case," Percy explained tersely, still fighting to keep them on the road. "I need you to place it in front of my waist."

"Why?!" Grover demanded, though he was already reaching for the device.

"Just trust me!" Percy yelled back.

Grover was moving to position the device around Percy's waist when the Fury on their roof suddenly pulled at the car with a burst of supernatural strength. The vehicle veered sharply off the road, Percy's desperate attempts to regain control failing as they crashed into a large oak tree with a sickening crunch of metal and glass.

Steam rose from the crumpled hood as silence fell over the crash site. The Fury dismounted from the roof with satisfaction, her partner landing nearby after abandoning their convertible.

"Are they dead or alive?" the driver asked, approaching the wreckage with casual interest.

The first Fury moved to check the car's occupants, leaning down to peer through the shattered windshield.

She was rewarded with a fist to the face that sent her staggering backward, completely caught off guard by the unexpected counterattack.

Her partner tensed in shock, taking a step back and preparing for a fight, when the car door was kicked open with tremendous force. A figure emerged from the wreckage—humanoid but clearly no longer entirely human. The being that stepped into view wore sleek, form-fitting armor that was primarily black with purple accents and silver details. Most striking were the red compound eyes that flashed from behind an insectoid helmet, conveying an intensity that made both Furies instinctively step back.

In a burst of inhuman speed, the armored figure closed the distance to the standing Fury, connecting another devastating punch that sent her flying backward into a tree trunk. The second Fury recovered quickly, lunging at the mysterious warrior with furious determination and razor-sharp claws extended, but a casual backhand was enough to send her sprawling across the asphalt.

Meanwhile, Grover managed to extract himself from the passenger side of the wrecked vehicle, shaking off glass and debris. He turned toward the ongoing fight and his jaw dropped in unbridled shock. The armored figure could only be Percy—but Percy transformed into something that defied explanation.

"Why did you attack us?" Percy asked, his voice now modulated by the helmet's systems, giving it a mechanical edge that made it sound both human and otherworldly.

The Furies responded with hisses and snarls, baring their fangs. "Where is it?" the passenger demanded.

Percy tilted his helmeted head. "I'll give you an answer if you tell me what you're looking for."

"Lord Zeus's Master Bolt," said the passenger Fury.

"And Lord Hades's Helm of Darkness," added the driver.

Percy's mind immediately registered these as important clues—missing artifacts that could explain the divine tension he'd sensed. "I didn't take either of them."

"You lie!" the driver Fury accused, her wings spreading menacingly.

Percy marched directly toward her, and she tensed for another fight. But instead of attacking, he did something completely unexpected—he cancelled his transformation. The armor dissolved in a cascade of light, returning him to his normal human appearance.

"Look me in the eye," Percy said quietly, meeting the Fury's gaze directly. "Find any sign of dishonesty. I didn't take either item."

The Fury stared at him in surprise. Such an act—voluntarily making himself vulnerable in front of agents of vengeance—was either the mark of complete honesty or absolute insanity. She shared a meaningful look with her companion, who seemed equally stunned. They both recognized the gesture for what it was: a sincere attempt to prove his truthfulness.

A long silence stretched between them as the Furies seemed to communicate silently, weighing his words and actions.

Finally, the driver spoke. "Where were you heading?"

"To see my father," Percy replied. "Poseidon called for a meeting."

The two Furies exchanged another loaded glance, processing this information. After a moment of silent deliberation, the driver reached into her pocket and tossed Percy the keys to their convertible.

"The gods will judge you," she said begrudgingly, her tone suggesting this was as close to an apology as he was likely to get.

Without another word, both Furies took to the air, their dark forms disappearing into the afternoon sky and leaving the two boys alone beside their wrecked car and an undamaged convertible.

Grover stared at Percy with a mixture of awe and confusion. "Percy... what the hell was that?"

## **Revelations on the Road**

They drove the convertible in what could generously be called comfortable silence, though the tension radiating from Grover suggested it was anything but comfortable for the satyr. He kept glancing sideways at Percy, then down at the device still secured around his waist, clearly struggling to process what he'd just witnessed.

Finally, Percy broke the silence. "It started three years ago, back in Japan."

And then he explained everything—or at least the significant details. The first monster attack that had brought Sokichi into his life. The discovery of the Gaia Memories and what they could do. The formation of their partnership with Philip. The long campaign against Museum and the criminal organization's use of Dopant technology. Sokichi's death during their rescue of Philip. Their eventual victory and the responsibility that came with protecting Futo.

Grover could only stare at him in stunned silence, his eyes occasionally drifting down to the belt device that had somehow transformed his friend into an armored warrior.

"What did you call that strange flash drive again?" Grover asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

"Gaia Memories," Percy repeated patiently. "They contain the memories of the Earth—knowledge about the planet's experiences, its elements, its forces."

Grover's mouth went dry as the implications ran through his head. "You mean... THE Gaia? As in... the primordial Earth goddess?"

Percy sighed, running a hand through his hair. "I wasn't entirely sure at first, but ever since I first came into contact with one, I've always felt this strange resonance. Like the flash drive felt... familiar, somehow."

"That can only be recognition from your divine heritage," Grover said softly, eyeing the seemingly innocuous device still secured in Percy's belt with a mixture of awe and fear. As a being closely tied to nature and the earth, he was beginning to notice the energy emanating from it—or perhaps he'd sensed it earlier, which would explain why all the hairs on his body had stood on end when he first saw Percy in that armor.

"Percy," Grover said slowly, "do you even understand what it means to be carrying a piece of Gaia with you? What it means for a mortal—even a demigod—to have access to that kind of power?"

Percy glanced at him while keeping his eyes on the road. "I've been using them to fight Museum, along with Philip. Like I told you, we took them down completely—the Gaia Memory trade is finished. Before all this demigod stuff came up, we were still working to clean up what was left of their network in Futo."

"That's not what I mean," Grover said, his voice growing more urgent. "Percy, Gaia is one of the oldest, most fundamental forces in existence. She's the Earth itself, the mother of the Titans, the grandmother of the Olympians. If these memories are truly connected to her..." He trailed off, shaking his head. "The power you've been wielding... it's older and possibly more dangerous than anything the gods themselves possess."

Percy was quiet for a moment, processing this information. "Are you saying I shouldn't be using them?"

"I'm saying," Grover replied carefully, "that you might be carrying around pieces of a power that predates the entire pantheon. And if that's true, then there are going to be a lot of very interested—and very worried—immortal beings who want to know how you got them."