



# Goddess of Storms

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**Category:** Romance, Paranormal

**Description:** It's crazy how one storm can change your life.

As a U.S. Forestry agent, I'm used to being out in adverse weather. The adventure of the job has always excited me, but being paired up with my crush, Stone, on a rescue mission to save some survivors stranded by a nasty storm makes my heart race more than adrenaline ever has.

However, our easy mission quickly turns dangerous when another lightning storm rolls in.

One strike on the night of the Blood Moon and my life is forever changed.

Armed with a flood of unlocked memories I never knew existed, I'll have to rely on the three new men in my life when old threats emerge -- a task that's easier said than done.

But I'll weather any storm if it means getting back what was rightfully mine.

Even if it means embracing the thunder.

**Total Pages (Source):** 47

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

Harper

The sweet downpour of rain pinging on the metal roof was a welcome change from the buzzing of my alarm clock. With one hand, I fumble and turn off the alarm. I lay there a few more minutes, enjoying the storm that's raging. As long as I can remember, storms have soothed my nerves, no matter how severe. Rising from my bed, I head straight to my bay window, pulling the curtains back just as the first lightning strike hits.

Mesmerized by the light show, I am brought back to reality when my cell starts ringing. No doubt it is my boss, calling me in early to scour the forest once this storm passes. When I reach my phone, I hesitate, the name on the screen is not the one I expected.

My heart beats faster with each ring, taking a deep breath, I answer.

“Morning, Morganite, what’s up?”

“Boss wants all hands on deck, he is pairing the agents up, and, sweetheart, you’re mine.”

“I...I...” I stammer, flustered for words. “I’ll meet you in fifteen at the office.”

He confirms and hangs up.

Smacking myself on the forehead, I run to my closet and grab my clothes. I shed my pajamas on the way to the bathroom and shimmy into my uniform. Running a brush

through my blonde mane, I pull it up into a tight ponytail. After a once-over in the mirror, I decide that a little makeup is in order. Satisfied with my look, I head down the stairs to the door for my boots and keys. I grab my rain jacket and I'm good to go.

A fresh shower has my silver Jeep looking the same as it did when it rolled off the lot. I scramble in to avoid getting the interior wet. She roars to life as I shift her into gear, making the short trek up the hill to the U.S. Forestry office.

Pulling into the parking lot, I'm excited to see that my favorite spot is still open. Today must be my lucky day! Once parked, I pull the keys from the ignition then a knock on my window scares the crap out of me. Jumping in my seat, I turn left to spy the smirking face of Stone Morganite.

I jerk the door open, hitting him with it, "Asshole. That wasn't funny. You just wait, I will get you when you least expect it."

The smile is still on his handsome face as he rubs his shoulder, "It was, but you didn't have to hit me with your door."

"That I did. Let's head in. It's about to pour, and I don't want to get caught out here."

He raises an eyebrow, "Afraid of a little water?"

"Pssh, no. You can stay, A shower may do you good. I've told you to stop bathing in that cologne," I snark back, waving my hand in front of my nose as if he stinks. Though he does just the opposite. I have to resist the urge to step closer for a whiff. Damn, why is he so sexy?

Pushing past him, I close my Jeep's door and head for the office. As I reach the door, lots of drops of rain fall from the sky. I'm holding the door for the now drenched Stone. He cusses as he runs in.

“I told you, Morganite.” My laughter’s barely contained. That is until I notice the black tee he is wearing clinging to him as a second skin. My mouth waters at the sight until Stone opens his mouth.

“Like what you see?” he asks with a wiggle of his eyebrow.

“If I did, your mouth ruined it.” I shrug and walk by him as he gapes at my words.

Once the door closes behind me, I head towards my desk. A memo lays on the top of my stack of paperwork. Ugh, I really should file all of that.

Pairs of agents are to head out after the storm lifts. Prepare for overnight camping, we have to ensure that all this lightning hasn’t started any fires. Pairs as below.

Reid/Riley

Arthurs/Morganite

Morse/Childress

Fuck, Stone wasn’t lying when he said we were paired together. Overnight camping? Shoot me now, that cocky, yet sexy, ass so close? He’d better bring his own tent, because we aren’t sharing one.

I start to make a list of what I’ll need to gather before Stone and I head out. The dread of working with him is outweighed by excitement of being out in the forest for a couple days. I hate being cooped up in the office, I long to be dancing in the downpour.

Lost in my thoughts, Stone taking a seat on my desk brings reality crashes back.

“Someone itching for some field time?” He smirks as he reads over my list.

“And you’re not? Oh no, I forgot you’d rather stay in with all the other rangers pawing over you. ‘Oh look at that Stone, ain’t he delicious?’ ‘Oh, Stone, help me reach that binder.’ Gag me with a spoon, I’m nauseous just talking about it. This is a place of work, not the Stone dating game.” I huff, snatching my list from his hand.

## Page 2

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“Aww, is little Harper jealous that I get all the attention? Or maybe you’re upset because you secretly want me as well.”

“I...I...why would you say that? They can have you, I don’t want or need their sloppy seconds.” I finish as I rise from my chair and escape to the supply room.

Closing the door and locking it, I start to gather some first aid supplies, making them into a make-shift kit. I add in a few thermal/fire blankets, and once I grab a few more essentials, when the door begins to shake.

“Arthurs, did you lock yourself in the supply closet again?” The boss's voice booms from behind the door.

“Yes, sir.” I holler back. Slowly walking to the door, the lock clicks under my wrist.

“Arthurs, how many times have I told you not to lock this door?” Forest Ranger Nicks questions. He looks ridiculously like Santa but in a green uniform and shorts.

“Sorry sir, you know me, I like to work in peace. It will not happen again.” I slide out through the door and head back to my desk.

I check through my little pack, marking off what I have inside as I go. Once satisfied, I head to Nicks’s office.

“Boss, okay if I head back to my house? This storm will lift in a couple hours, I’d like to be packed and ready to head out then. Will you have Stone do the same? And tell him to bring his own tent.”

Nicks just snickers as I speak, “Yes, of course, and I will talk with him now. You know I paired you with Stone because you’re the only one not following him like a lost puppy. The other agents don’t think I see it. I’m not as blind as they think.”

“I never thought you were, and that was a smart move. I bet the others are whining to each other about it. Have they all come in and complained yet?” I ask truthfully.

He shakes his head in reply, “Not yet. You better get out of here before they corner you, too. You can’t trade partners. If they stop you, that’s an order.”

“Whatever you say, boss,” I say, giving him a little salute.

He snickers and waves me out.

Leaving his office, I take careful steps towards my desk. I only need to grab my jacket and I’m almost home free. The moment that my fingers graze the hood, another hand covers mine.

Glancing up, I see it’s Reid. That bitch scares me a little. She’s always playing with a knife. I sometimes feel as if she is practicing her murdering skills. I mean, what better place to bury a body than in the middle of the forest?

“Keep your paws off of Morganite,” Reid warns, running a thumb across her neck as if to slit it open.

“I have no problem with that; he, on the other hand, might.” I shrug.

Reid eyes me as I put on my jacket. I head to the door. Peeking back over my shoulder, I see her mimic cutting her throat open again.

I jog to my Jeep with careful steps, the asphalt is slick from the rain. I hustle in and

when I close my door there is an echo.

There, in the passenger seat, is Stone.

“Shit, Morganite, why are you in my Jeep?” I sigh, starting the engine.

“I thought you may need help packing. That and Reid was hovering over my desk. I needed some air.”

“So, let me get this straight, you’re hiding from Reid. Is the big bad Morganite afraid of her?” I tease.

“She would destroy me!”

“Stop lying to yourself, you’d be into that.” I laugh. “Will you get out now?”

He shakes his head no. “I’m good where I’m at.”

“Fine, but you are not helping me pack my underwear.”

He chuckles as I reverse out of my spot and make the quick drive home. “You’re no fun.”

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## Page 3

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As I pull into the drive, Stone whistles.

“How do you afford this on your salary?”

“This was my childhood home. When I was eighteen, my parents were killed in a car accident. They left me the house and a little nest egg.”

His expression changes with the news. “Oh, I’m sorry...I...”

“It’s okay, I don’t advertise it. I don’t want or need their pity. It will not bring my parents back. Are you waiting in the Jeep or you coming in?”

“I’ll follow you.” He winks.

Rolling my eyes for the millionth time at him, I say, “Let’s go. There will be another downpour in a few minutes.”

“How do you do that? Are you a weatherman? You always seem to know,” Stone says.

I laugh, “My parents nicknamed me Stormy. Ever since I can remember, I just have a feeling in my bones when it storms.”

Heading in, I take my shoes off at the door. Stone mimics me as he gazes in awe at the huge living room.

“Wow, this is some place you got here. You live here alone?” he asks.

“Yep, want a drink or I can turn the TV on? You are not following me to my room” I warn him.

“I wouldn’t dream of it.” He smirks. “I’ll just lounge on the sofa until you are ready. Maybe kick back and take a power nap.”

“Fine, I’m running upstairs. Even if the thunder scares you, stay here,” I mumble as I climb to the second floor.

There is no way in hell I’m letting him near my panty drawer. He may be sexy as all get out, but I don’t want a fling. I want love like my parents.

Stopping at the top of the stairs, my gaze stops on the master bedroom door. That door hasn’t been opened since my parents’ funeral. I went in and gathered clothes for the funeral and then shut that door, not having the courage to open it again.

“Harper, you done yet?” Stone’s voice floats up the stairs.

Shit, lost in my thoughts, I forgot he was here. “Give me a few.” I call down.

Making a beeline to my room, I head straight to my closet, grabbing a bag and shoving in a couple spare uniforms. Then I hit the intimate drawers and throw in a couple extra pairs of socks. As I cinch up my bag, there is a knock on the door.

“Sorry, it’s a little lonely downstairs. Need any help?” Stone smirks.

“All done, let’s go,” I say as I hook his arm and turn him back towards the stairs. When my skin touches his, electricity courses through me and I shudder a little. If Stone felt it, he didn’t react. I release my hold on him once we reach the landing and follow him down.

“Out to the car, time to go back to the office.”

“No more sight-seeing? This place is huge,” Stone says.

“It’s not that big, shut up and move it.”

Stone laughs and marches to the door and holds it open for me.

“Lock it behind you.” I order.

Harper

After the short drive back to the office, Morganite and I take a seat at our desks then Nicks tries to get our attention.

“Gather round,” he starts. “The storms have run their course. Now I need you pairs to work together and scour the forest. With all the lightning in this storm, there are bound to be a few fires breaking out. We need to locate them and get them extinguished as soon as possible. Reid and Riley-Zone One, Morse and Childress-Zone Two, and that leaves Arthurs and Morganite-Zone Three.” He holds up three maps, “I have taken the liberty of marking the boundaries for you. Morganite and Arthurs, your trip will take the longest as you will not be able to reach some of the zones in a vehicle. Make sure you both take a tent and adequate supplies. Now hop to it, there is only a handful of days before the next storm is scheduled to arrive.”

Pushing back from my desk, I make my way to Nicks. Reid and Morse have already taken their maps. I snap up the last one in his fingers.

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“See you in a few days. Stay alert and check in often. And watch out for the crazies with the Blood Moon rising.”

“You got it, boss,” I say and turn back to my desk. I grab up my two bags and wait for Morganite to do the same. “Come on, pretty boy, you’re burning what’s left of the daylight.”

“I’m coming, I’m coming. I have everything I need in the back of our Jeep. And yes, that includes my own tent. I still think it’s silly that we can’t share. Just more shit to carry.”

“Oh, I thought that’s why you spent hours in the gym?”

“If you’re lucky, on this little journey, you’ll see first-hand why I go.” He winks as he leads us to the door to the garage where the Jeeps are kept.

The others are already checking off the list of supplies each of the vehicles are to be equipped with. I load my bags in the back and take inventory of the first aid kit and the emergency roadside kits as Stone checks the tires and other supplies. Both of us work fast and efficiently. We are the first to leave and head towards our zone. We have to cross the other two zones to get to ours.

With Stone driving, I open the map and locate the best spot for our camp for the night.

“I think our best bet for our first night is just right on the inside of our zone. We will have to walk from there anyway.”

“You lead, I’ll follow.” Stone winks.

\* \* \*

Three hours of Stone karaoke and I'm ready to take Reid up on that offer to slit my throat. When he finally parks at the spot I pointed to on the map, I jump out and head towards the back of the Jeep and grab my pack and tent. I search for the driest area and start to assemble my tent. Even with the storms that rolled through, the ground is hard and with all my strength I can't get the stakes into the ground.

"Need a hand?" Stone whispers in my ear, causing me to jump.

"Jesus, Stone. Creep much? Yes, can you pound these in for me?" I ask, holding up my hammer.

He wiggles his eyebrow as he takes it from me. I stand back and helplessly watch as with one blow each is all it takes him to do what I couldn't with a dozen. I try not to gawk at him as I notice the muscles he flexes with each hit. With a satisfied smirk on his face, he stands back up standing too close for comfort.

"Since I helped, does that mean we get to share?" he asks, handing me the hammer back.

"Not if you were the last man on earth." I smile as I take it from him and continue to finish my tent.

Once I'm done, I throw my pack inside and then call back to Stone that I'm going to gather firewood. I also want to scout the area for fires, because I don't want to wake up to my tent going up in flames.

I don't stray too far, searching for dry kindling and branches, when there is a crunch

of leaves behind me. Twirling around, I find Stone is standing a few feet away.

"Are you trying to give me a heart attack?"

"I came to help, but next time I will announce my presence." Stone smirks.

"Ha ha, you could've been a bear for all I knew," I say exasperated.

"Did you bring anything to protect yourself from a bear?" Stone asks.

Patting my hip, "You're lucky I didn't shoot you. Next time, you may not be so lucky. So, don't just stand there, help me find some firewood. We have a cold front moving in, it's going to get cold once the sun sets."

"Whatever you say, Stormy. You haven't been wrong so far," Stone says as he starts picking up branches.

"Please, don't call me that."

"Sorry," he mumbles.

"You don't have to be sorry. Just painful memories of my parents surface when I hear that name. Enough chick flick moments, we have a job to do."

Stone starts whistling a tune and the time passes faster. Before I know it, we are back at our campsite with the fire going.

"Well, you've learned a little about me, what makes the Stone tick? Why did he become a forestry ranger?" I ask.

"Are you sure you want to know?" he muses.

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"I may regret asking, but we have worked together for a couple of months and I know little to nothing about you."

"Well, like an idiot, I moved here for a woman. Not long after I was settled in and working, she dumped me for her old flame and here we are. I know you think I'm a player, and maybe I am now, but that girl broke my heart and that's how I chose to pick up the pieces. Doesn't make it the right way, but that's all I knew how. My father left my mother when I was just a baby, he was never around, so the endless string of men in her life seemed normal to me."

"That makes sense, honestly. That had to be hard on both of you. I know I was lucky to have the loving parents that I did have. I'm sorry you didn't have that in your life," I say as tears fill the corner of my eyes.

"Don't pity me, my mother loved me. She was doing what she thought was best for us both, wanting a male figure in my life. She just didn't go about it the right way, and here I am following in her footsteps," he says as he face-palms himself.

"When you find the one, that cycle will break. My parents' love is proof of that," I say.

"If that's so, why haven't I seen you chatting up any men? How will you find your one if you hide in your work or in your home?"

"Ouch, that hurt. I don't think I'm hiding, I just haven't found one that's caught my eye," I threw back.

"Now I'm the one hurt," he says as he places his hands over his chest.

I ignore the gesture and throw an MRE at him.

"How sweet, you made dinner for me. What's next, sharing a tent?"

"We are not sharing a tent, and you'd better have packed some pajamas. The only moon I want to see is the one in the sky." I point with my spork.

He continues to eat with a frown on his face.

Once I have my trash all cleaned up, I turn back to Stone. "I'm going to hit the hay. You okay taking the first shift?"

"Yep, I'll wake you in a few hours. Sweet dreams." He smiles, the flames giving him an eerie appearance.

Stone

I hate having to lie to Harper. Once she regains her memory she'll toast me like a crispy critter with one bolt of her lightning. Her mother sent me to guide her and protect her. That cult that is after her is no joke. The mystery remains how they found out about her in the first place.

A snap of a twig pulls me from my thoughts, reaching for my hammer that I left next to the log, my eyes search in the dark for the cause of the sound. From out behind the trees, step two motherfuckers I haven't seen since I joined Harper here.

"Nile and Phoenix, what the fuck? Slinking in the night? Stalking some poor people to prey on?" I ask. No one told me that these two were coming.



“We were sent in to help, the oracle prophesied that the memories of the Cursed were returning soon,” Nile replies.

“Why do I need sons of Poseidon and Ares? Okay, Ares’s son may be helpful. But you, waterboy, what are you good for? Talking to fish?” I question.

“Ha ha ha, I am a seasoned fighter. All you have is that small hammer, I have this,” he says as he pulls a sword from his belt.

“Don’t discount this hammer, it not only forges weapons but it also cracks skulls with ease. And I can kick your ass any day.”

“That’s enough, we need to form a plan. If what the oracle said is true, we have bigger issues to discuss,” Phoenix states. “How can we keep Harper from the cult as she learns to harness the power that was locked away? I give it to you, man, her mom sending her here was brilliant. Remote location and dense populations, just one problem, too many trees. One bolt from her and this whole place goes up like a match box.”

Once the words are out of his mouth, Harper calls from inside her tent. “Morganite, you talking to yourself?”

“Yes, it’s how I pass the time.”

“I knew you loved the sound of your own voice, can you keep it down? I’m trying to sleep here.”

“Sorry, yes go back to sleep. You have a few more hours until your shift,” I say.

Shooing the other two demi-gods back into the woods, I wait to join them until the light snores are once again coming from Harper’s tent.

“You two trudge ahead of us, we will meet up with you posing as lost hikers. I’ll convince Harper we have to bring you two along as we search for wildfires from the storms. So, if this event happens, maybe all four of us will be together.”

“How pissed is she going to be when she remembers you, Stone? That you knew who and what she was this whole time and didn’t tell her?”

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“We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it. Now off with you two. If you hike most of the night, you will be a half a day ahead of us.”

With a little wave, they head off into the dark and I retake my place on the log. Ears open for any more visitors or Harper calling for me again.

Harper

“Harper,” I hear my name being whispered as I stretch and yawn. Blinking hard, my eyes land on Stone a little too close to my face.

“Whoa, personal space. Heard of it?” I joke.

Stone smirks, “I’m glad you aren’t a slugger. It’s your turn for watch, are you ready?”

“A slugger?” I raise my eyebrow to him.

“Yes, I didn’t know if you would take a swing at me for being in the tent or for waking you.”

“I’ll remember that for next time.” I wink. “I have to pull my boots on and maybe a sweater, there is a chill to the air.”

“How can you know that?” he asks with amazement.

“It’s what I do. Now, get out. This tent isn’t that big.”

He exits and replaces the little flap, but doesn't zip it closed.

Wiggling out of the warmth of my sleeping bag, I throw it to the side. I pull on my boots and grab my bag and search for the sweater I packed in the bottom. My fingers grasp the soft fabric and with a little tug, it is free from the contents of my bag.

Crawling through the flap of the tent, I spot Stone perched on a log near the fire, his eyes mesmerized as the flame dances in the small breeze. He has a tight grip, knuckles white, on the hammer he used earlier on the tent stakes.

"You really fancy that hammer, huh?" I tease.

My voice interrupts his thoughts, "What?"

"Are you attached to that hammer?" I say.

"Oh, this?" he asks as he raises it. "It was the only thing my father ever gave me."

"Well, it's a nice hammer," I shrug.

Stone's lips tip into a smile, "That it is. I am going to hit the hay. Only a couple hours until sunrise, we should start our hike then."

"Sounds like a plan, now go get your beauty rest, Sleeping Beauty," I joke as I pull on my sweater and take a spot close to the fire.

Stone stands and heads toward his tent behind him, hammer in hand.

"I wasn't going to steal it," I call after him.

Turning as he reaches his tent, he gives me a little salute with his hammer and then

heads in.

He must have a special relationship with that hammer.

I settle in for the hours until daybreak, the crackle of the fire is relaxing, and I'm wishing I would have brought a book with me. I then remember I tucked a notebook and pens in my bag. Ducking in my tent, I grab them both and return to the log and doodle for a while.

My cell vibrates in my pocket. Surprised, I retrieve it, I sigh when I notice the name on the screen. I told him to lose my number, why is he texting me, and at 5 am?

Me: Why are you texting me at 5 am? Are you drunk again?

Nile: No, I miss you. Honestly, I didn't think you would answer.

Me: I wouldn't have but I'm bored and on watch. So I wanted to see why you were messaging.

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Nile: On watch? Out in the park?

Me: Yes, lightning storms tore through the area and we are out searching for fires.

Nile: We?

Me: Ugh, you never listen to me do you? I told you a million times we go out in pairs.

Nile: I remember, just being nosy.

I laugh to myself; that sounds like him.

Me: Yes, I was paired with the asshat, Stone. I think I told you about him, the player that makes all the other rangers go crazy for him.

Nile: Not you?

Me: He is cute, but he knows it. There's one ranger that is possessive of him. The others all stroke his ego, but not me. I keep my head down and work. No drama for me.

Nile: I always knew you were a smart girl. Why did I let you go?

Me: If I remember correctly, I let you go. You wanted more and I wasn't ready.

I delete the last sentence, and wait for his reply.

Nile: Yes, sadly I didn't forget. I'm waiting for the day that you call me and tell me, you made a huge mistake and want me back.

Me: Only in your dreams. Go back to sleep. It was nice to hear from you but I have a job to do.

Nile: What sweet dreams those will be. Good night Harper.

Pocketing my phone, I return to my doodle only to gasp and drop my pen as Nile's face stares up from my paper. I rip it from my notebook and ball it up. Throwing it into the flames, I decide no more drawing for the night.

Starting my exercise routine helps me pass the time. Jumping Jacks, lunges, squats, you name it, I am a sweaty mess once Stone wakes.

"What the hell happened to you?" He smiles, kicking dirt onto the fire, dousing it's flames.

"I woke up this way," I shrug. "I'm going to the stream to freshen up and fill the canteens."

"Give me a minute to get my shoes on and I'll help you. Never know what is lurking out there," Stone calls back.

"Fine, but when I change clothes you better not peek," I state.

I duck into my tent and grab my pack. Might as well brush my teeth while I'm at it. I trade my boots for some waterproof sandals.

"Come on, Princess, we are burning daylight."

Ignoring him, I take lead and head to the shore of the stream, stopping at a flat-top rock and setting my bag on it. I grab a rag and soap I packed and place them in my pocket. I then take the plunge stepping into the cold mountain water. Goddess, that is fracking cold.

“Cold is it? Your headlamps are shining bright this morning.” Stone motions to my chest area.

Instead of blushing, I stick my tongue out at him and retort, “Mine may be pointy and knock out an eye but can you say the same?” I motion to his crotch.

That shuts him up. Good, I think he just likes the sound of his own voice. I pull my blonde hair down from the braid it was in and then twist it into a bun on the top of my head. With the rag and soap from my pocket, I start to clean the sweat and dirt from the morning workout.

“Howwwww...c-c-c-can you st-st-st-stand th-th-th-that c-c-c-cold?” Stone whines.

“I am almost done. If you’re that frozen, go back and start packing up camp. I’ll be a few minutes behind you,” I call over my shoulder.

“N-n-n-no, I’ll w-w-w-wait.”



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Once I'm satisfied, I step out of the stream and grab out a dry rag and start drying off. "Okay, Morganite, I am going to change, avert your eyes."

I turn to check if he did turn, a smile tips my lips with I notice that he has.

"I am not just a player, I can be a gentleman."

"Good to know, I'm sure Reid and Riley would like to know that tidbit."

This gets a laugh from him. "I'm serious about Reid, she scares me. Always playing with a knife, she's a little too comfy with it."

Laughing, I switch my shirts and shorts fast, tucking my soap into a baggie and then tying the rags to my pack, so they can dry out.

"Let's go, slacker, we have a way to hike today," I call to Stone.

Mentally, I make a checklist on the short walk back to camp: pack up the tent, dig and bury the fire, check for trash, and clean up the site.

"Earth to Harper," Stone states.

"What's up?"

"I was talking to you and you just seemed to zone out."

"Oops, sorry, one-track-mind. Going through a list of what needs to be done before

we head out.”

“That’s what I was saying to you. You start on your tent and I’ll dig a pit and bury the fire and then get to my tent. You okay with cleaning up the site?” Stone asks.

“Perfect, divide and conquer.”

Stone

Harper doesn’t realize just how beautiful she is, blonde hair and icy blue eyes just like her father. She has a temper to rival his. What is it with gods and not being in control of their emotions? They are always complaining about mortals, but they are just as bad if not worse.

When the curse took her memories of us, I was a wreck. Not being a selfish dick, I let her go.

Then almost a year ago, her mother came to me worried to death about Harper and the approaching blood moon. The oracle had told the gods that any curses or spells could be lifted on that magical night. So, I packed up everything I owned and wormed my way into where she works. The old man was grateful just to have another male in the building and not be so out-numbered anymore.

While I have been trying to soften her up, my rep as a player is going to get me in it deep when the memories of us surface.

Playing the part of a guy that dates multiple women at once is a harder charade to keep up than telling her the truth. Her mother warned me to stay away but close enough to keep an eye on her.

“Stone, are you ready?” Harper’s icy blue eyes stare into mine.

“Yes, I was waiting on you,” I reply, lost in my own head. “I buried and covered the fire and packed up my tent.”

“Ha, I’ve been watching you work for the last ten minutes on auto-pilot. Are you sure you are okay?” Her voice is full of concern.

“I am fine, just not used to four hours of sleep,” I lie.

“Well, maybe you should do what I do and exercise when you get up. Get those endorphins flowing,” she suggests.

“Maybe tomorrow we can do some cardio together.” I wink.

“Grow up, we have an important job to do. Besides, you couldn’t keep up.”

My jaw drops at her words, maybe her flirty side is starting to come back.

“Oh wow, you got skills, girl. Why are you not using them?” I joke.

“Ha ha, I’m always awkward. That’s part of my charm.”

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

I hate this pretending. It kills me not to be next to her, caressing her face, or kissing her lips. Hell, I'd take a handshake at this point.

"Awkward can be hot, some guys dig that," I finally say.

"Why are you so interested in my love life? Doesn't yours keep you busy enough?" she asks.

"You have no idea." I laugh as we head away from our campsite.

"Keep your eyes peeled, I got a whiff of smoke. We may have a fire close."

"You got it, boss," I say as I scan the area for any sign of flames.

Harper always seemed to have a connection to nature, even past her goddess gifts from her parents.

"Morganite, this way." Harper points to her left.

"Want me to lead?" I question.

"Please, that way I know you aren't staring at my ass," she says.

"Nope, you'll be staring at mine. Do you want me to move my pack, so you can get a better view?" I joke.

She rolls her eyes but doesn't say a word.

“So, I’ll take that as a yes,” I state as I take a few steps in front of her.

The green grass thins as we walk higher up on the side of the mountain, Not a lot of trees here.

“Harper, you can see the middle of the lake from here. Did you bring a suit?”

She raises an eyebrow at me. “No, we are on a mission to stop random fires. Why would a swimsuit be on my to-pack-list?”

“Yeah, I didn’t pack one, either, so you know what that means right?” I ask as I wiggle my eyebrow at her. “Skinny-dipping.”

Her lips tip into a smile, “Do you ever think with anything but your dick?”

“Nope, that’s where my brain is.” I shrug.

Harper

Damn Stone and his charming smile. His flirtation has a familiar ring to it, instead of feeling creeped out, it makes me want to go to him. Everything about him seems like home, but how can that be? I have only known him for less than a year.

“Morganite, we need to focus and find this fire. Your teasing has to wait, best not to let this place burn so that you can get in my pants.”

A little blush grazes his cheeks and he glances back at me. “Call me Stone and we are nearly there. I can hear the crackle of the wood.”

We hike for five more minutes or so when the heat wave hits. It is a small fire with a handful of downed trees. As we approach, Stone pulls out his camping shovel and I

do the same. Dropping our bags, we get to work. The best way to put out fires this far from water or the office is to cover it with dirt and let it burn itself out.

Making quick work of it, the fire and its embers are covered and there is now a thick coat of ash on us both. I wipe the beads of sweat from my forehead.

“I may take you up on the swim,” I call to Stone.

He gazes at me, raising an eyebrow at me. “Oh?”

“We aren’t too far from the lake, one little dip can’t hurt right?” I ask as I fold my shovel and pick up my pack.

“Fuck, you think I’m gonna turn you down?” He smirks and takes my hand, leading us back to the body of water in the middle of the park.

When our skin touches for the first time, a pulse of electricity runs through me. His touch seems familiar. How can that be?

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

We don't stop until we are at the shore and Stone drops my hand. He sets down his pack and then he starts stripping.

I can't tear my eyes away from him as he lifts up his shirt after kicking off his shoes. He is all hard muscle—a six pack and fuck that V that disappears into his pants.

“You gonna stare at me all day or join me?”

“The sun was in my eyes,” I lie and unlace my boots. “You go ahead. I'll meet you in a minute.”

“Don't get shy on me now,” he teases and tugs his pants and underwear down all in one swoop before he wades in the water. “Stop watching my ass and get in. I'll stay turned around until you say so.”

“What a gentleman you are,” I respond wryly as I peel off my clothes as fast as humanly possible. My entrance into the water is less graceful than Stone's but true to his word, he hasn't turned around.

“This water is so refreshing. It's nice to wash away all this ash, too,” I say as I step closer to Stone. I near him and whisper in his ear. “Why is your touch familiar?”

He turns to me, without touching me, “Do you want me to do it again?” His face is serious and solemn.

“What?” I gulp.

“Touch you.”

“I don’t know,” I answer honestly. My emotions are a mess and I’m torn. My heart is telling me to do it, while my brain is screaming no.

He lifts a hand to my cheek and with a gentle touch, he says, “When you ask me to, I will. Until then you’ll have to settle for you just staring at me.”

“Asshole.” I smirk and slap water in his face. “Come on, as nice as this is, we need to get moving to the outer edge of the park. Stay turned around, no peeking or I will kick your ass.”

“On my honor,” Stone says.

I scurry from the lake and dress in a hurry. Gazing over my shoulder, I see Stone is still turned the other direction. Maybe I am too hard on him.

As I gather my hair up into a ponytail, I holler, “Stone, your turn.”

“Don’t you dare peek,” he laughs as his voice goes closer.

While I wait for him to finish dressing, I pull my phone out and check our location on the map. We are still about a four-hour hike from where we need to be.

“Hope you are wearing your comfy boots,” I call over my back to Stone. “We have a long hike ahead of us.”

“So, more quality time, just the two of us.”

“Are you ready? If we hurry we’ll make it before nightfall. It’s a full moon tonight, maybe an eclipse, so the weirdos will be out.”



“We are the weirdos.” Stone laughs.

“As true as that is, the wrong kind of ones are out,” I state.

“Wrong kind?” Stone raises an eyebrow as he stands next to me.

“Yes, the ‘murdering, leave you in the woods’ kind.”

“Oh,” is all he says as he starts walking.

I follow with one last glance for smoke, it’s all clear, so I jog to get back on pace with Stone.

\* \* \*

“Are we there yet?” Stone asks.

Sighing, I check the GPS on my phone once again. “No, we still have about forty-five minutes before we hit our campsite. I can’t wait to get off my feet.”

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

Stone gazes over his shoulder at me, “What? Do my ears deceive me? You’re the one always dying to get out into nature and now you can’t wait to sit?”

“Har, har laugh it up, Hammer boy. I love being out here, but I don’t get to do it as much as I’d like.”

“That’s a shame. You should talk Nicks into it more often,” Stone says.

“I think I’m wearing him down, he sent me to the far side of the park with you.”

Stone laughs, “Wearing him down or annoying him?”

“Potato, Patato.” I shrug.

As the words leave my mouth, Stone stops with a hand up, shushing me.

“We are lost, Phoenix, where’s your phone?” a familiar voice calls.

“Dead, just like yours, asshat!”

“This was your idea, why didn’t you come prepared?”

Just then, a red-haired male a little taller than Stone walks into sight. He is lean and muscular, with flame tattoos on his forearms. There is a 5 o’clock shadow on his chin and a smirk on his full lips, and then out walks Nile. He looks the same as when I last saw him, his black hair a little longer on the side and his sea-green eyes staring into mine. Still maintaining his swimmer’s body he’s always had.

My jaw falls open, I can't talk or move.

He nears me, "Harper, what the hell are you doing here?"

"Me? I told you I was out in the field. You're the shithead that didn't tell me you were in the state or my park," I say as I hit him in the chest.

"You know him?" Stone asks.

"Intimately," Nile replies with an eyebrow wiggle, earning him another hit.

"I mean it wasn't a big thing." I say, holding up my index and thumb close together.

This gets a howl from Stone and the redhead.

"Hello, Harper is it? I'm Phoenix." The redhead introduces himself and holds out his hand.

I take it, I get heat like flames from his touch. Similar to the same electricity I got from Stone's touch but different. "Yes, Harper and this here is my partner, Stone. What are you two doing out here?" I ask, trying to shake off the connection drawing me to the three of them.

"Burying a body, then we got lost on the way back to the truck," Nile says.

"Shut up, Nile," I snap.

"Fine, Phoenix had some time off and wanted to go hiking. What better place than here?"

"You're not wrong, but we talked yesterday and you didn't say anything," I say

dryly.

“I wasn’t sure you’d want to see me. It was dumb luck we ran into you,” he replies innocently.

“Well, this is awkward, we have a way to go to our campsite. You’re welcome to camp with us. As for your dead phones, I have a power pack you can borrow to charge them. Then you can be on your way in the morning,” Stone tells the guys. “I’m Stone by the way.”

“Lead the way,” Phoenix winks at me.

“Oh, you’re winking at the wrong person. Stone takes lead, so I know he’s not staring at my ass.”

Stone laughs and starts toward our final destination.

“After you two,” I say, gesturing for them to follow.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

Nile follows Stone and Phoenix takes a place by my side.

“What made you want to be a park ranger?”

“I have always loved being outside. When I heard there was a job you got paid for and you worked outdoors, I knew it was for me, so I signed up to be a ranger.”

“That's awesome, what are you guys doing here now? A top secret mission?” Phoenix asks as his hazel eyes light up.

“No, actually we are out scouting for fires. We had a couple big storms roll through with massive lightning strikes. I have a feeling there will be another one tonight. Hope your tent is waterproof.” I smile.

“But Nicks said it would be clear tonight,” Stone argues.

“I have a feeling,” I state.

“Well, if you need help putting out the fires, that's my job. Back home, my sister and I are firefighters,” Phoenix offers.

“That's good to know, may come in handy, but let's keep our fingers crossed that they have all burnt themselves out. We don't have the resources on hand to fight a huge wildfire.”

“What do you do if that happens?”

“We radio it in, and hope that the fire jumpers can get it out before most of the park burns.”

“So, basically, you’re helpless unless backup puts it out,” he says.

“Yep.”

“Harper, we got one!” Stone calls back.

“Phoenix, you’re the firefighter you take the lead,” I tell him as I hand him my shovel.

“What am I going to do with this? Fan out the flames?”

“If you don’t want it, give it back.” I sigh.

“No, no, I’ll hold it for now,” he says, hugging it.

Stone

I’m not liking Phoenix being so close to Harper, nor the way he was eyeing her. It’s bad enough that I have to share her with Nile. What’s a soulmate to do? She told me that she loved me, but she had a connection to Nile. She begged me not to make her choose, so I didn’t. I couldn’t bear the thought of not having her in my life or bed, so we made it work.

“This is just a little guy, we can cover it and it will put itself out. Not too much to worry about,” I states as placing a shovel-load of dirt on the embers.

In a matter of minutes, it is out and we are back on our way.

“How much farther till camp?” Phoenix asks.

“We are nearly there, we will set up camp. Nile, you and Phoenix will collect firewood as Harper and I secure the area. Let’s try and set up our tents around where we decide to set up the fire. This will help block the wind and we will be close to each other but not too close.”

“Oh, this is a side of Stone I’ve never seen,” Harper teases.

“Do you like it?” I ask with a smile wide.

“Nope, you’re still an asshole.” She smiles.

I’ll take the teasing, she may hate me when her memories come back. Her mother told me to stay close but to keep a distance. Nile was supposed to do the same but he didn’t listen. They had a relationship for a little over a year before she broke it off and Nile came crying to me about it. Idiot, that was his fault for not listening.

“Earth to Stone, we are here, you ready to secure the area?” Harper asks, waving her hands in my face.

“What? Yes, let's get to it.”

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:05 pm*

Nile and Phoenix head out of the circle of trees in search of firewood and kindling. Harper and I check for signs of wildlife, we don't want a visit from a bear in the middle of the night.

It doesn't take us long as there is no sign of animals anywhere close. When we return, the other two have the fire set up and are working on their tents. So, Harper and I get set to work on ours.

"Harper, would you like some help?" Phoenix asks.

"Nope, I got it. Looks like you might need help. Nile, you're done, why don't you help him?"

I laugh to myself. Nice try, Phoenix. He doesn't know she is stubborn and independent. Harper's tent is almost complete when I stroll over with my hammer.

"Allow me?" I ask as I spin my hammer in my hand.

"Have at it, you haven't had a date in a while, so I bet you to have some pent-up aggression to get out."

"Oh, you're one to talk. When was the last time you were on one? I've been here for almost a year and have yet to hear you talk about one," I remark.

"Unlike you, I don't flaunt my business around the office. If you're not going to pound in my stakes, I will," she says as she tries to pull the hammer from my grasp. The touch of her hand on mine brings all my emotions and feelings for her back.



“You want me to pound what?” I ask with a smirk.

“Shut up and get it done, or I’ll go ask Nile or Phoenix for help. Asshole.” She smiles.

“I’m wounded,” I say as I beat the first stake into the ground.

Phoenix walks up as I finish with the last stake, “I thought you didn’t need help?”

As I stand and wipe dirt and sand from my pants as Harper replies, “His hammer does a better job, but he doesn’t like people touching it.”

“What’s so special about it?”

“No idea.”

Harper

I’m still questioning the appearances of Nile and Phoenix. I mean what are the odds that they would come camping the same time Stone and I would be out in the field? That just doesn’t set well with me. I was excited to see Nile, it had been almost a year since I broke up with him and he moved away. But I just can’t shake the feeling there is more going on than what they are telling me.

Once Stone was done securing my tent with the stakes, I went in to pull out my mat and pillow, grateful for the extra MREs I packed. I grab the food and leave the pack, heading back to find the three each sitting on a log of which there are four. I take the last log and once I’m seated I throw each of the guys one of the MREs.

“Harper is a wonderful cook,” Stone teases.

“Well, if not for me and my MREs, you’d starve.”

“You’re not wrong, I never was much of a hunter. Besides, I don’t know how to clean and cook a bear.” Stone winks.

“Ha, you would say the same if it was a squirrel.” I laugh.

“Probably true. I think we got lucky with the fires, we have only come across two.” Stone glances at his watch. “Almost time to check in with the boss. Your radio charged?”

“Does a bear shit in the woods?”

“Shut up, wiseass, and hand it here. I’ll check in,” Stone says, grabbing the radio from my hand.

“You just want to see if any of the other rangers are asking about you,” I tease.

“All of them?” Nile pipes in.

“Yes, all the others are women, except for our boss. They all want a piece of him, but he just strings them along. Well, all but Reid, she's kinda scary, even too much for him.”

“Are you guys going to turn in soon? It’s not long before it will rain.”

## Page 14

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

“Maybe. All the hiking wore me out, what about you?” Nile asks.

“Gotta talk to Stone, we split the night and stay up in two shifts. Someone has to make sure that no animals try to carry you two off.”

“You guys must be worried about animals,” Phoenix says.

“That and with the rain coming in, you never know when or if another fire will start due to lightning,” I say.

“How do you know it will rain?” Phoenix asks.

“It’s just what I do. What did I throw to you two? I got spaghetti, it’s not my favorite. Anyone want to trade?”

“I got roast and mashed potatoes, I’ll trade,” Stone butts in, standing behind me.

“Perfect,” I say, raising my food to him.

“You two seem to make a good team,” Phoenix notes.

“We have to, the boss throws us together because he is afraid he won’t get Stone back in one piece if he partners him with another ranger.” I laugh.

“It’s not my fault. I was hired to do a job, not all the rangers,” Stone counters.

“Eww, can we talk about anything else? I want to keep my food down,” I complain,

turning to Stone. “You want to take the first or second shift?”

“First, I’ve slept since you have and since we got here a little earlier, we can both get a little extra shut eye if you head off soon.”

“Once I’m done with my feast,” I say holding up my MRE, “I will turn in. It will be nice to kick off these boots for a couple hours.”

Returning to stare at the fire, my eyes travel over the flames and meet Nile’s eyes. Once I finish chewing the bite in my mouth, I ask, “What have you been doing since you left? Last night was the first I’ve heard from you and now you’re sitting in front of me.”

“You said you needed space, so that's what I was doing. I work as a captain on a cruise ship. Not a bad gig, out at sea a lot and I get to travel the world.”

“Sounds like you got your dream job, water and travel. I’m happy you found it,” I smile and take the last bite of my meal. “Well, that’s all folks. I’m going to kick back for a few hours, Stone, here’s my trash you know what to do. Wake me when it’s time for my shift.”

I don’t give any of them a second look and I crawl into my tent and zip it up behind me. Kicking off my boots like I said I was going to, I wiggle my way into the sleeping bag and fluff my pillow just a bit. And I’m gone just as the rain starts hitting my tent.

Sleep came easy but the dreams she brought were a different story. The first one was a memory of the night Nile and I broke up, only bits and pieces. All the emotions from that night came with it, the anger in his voice and eyes, the tears from both us and then the slam of the door as he left. I bolt up as the sound from my dream coincides with a strike of thunder. My heart beating fast, I get my bearings and glance

at my watch, it's only been an hour since I laid down.

From inside my tent, I can hear the laughter of the guys. For some reason, that brings a smile to my lips as my head returns to my pillow. Sighing, I roll onto my side and wait for sleep to take me once again.

“My love, come back to bed,” I call to the figure in the dark.

“As you wish,” a male voice calls back, that is one I know.

He slips back under the covers, his rock-hard body next to mine. He pulls me close to him and trailing kisses along the nape of my neck, heading lower when I moan his name as those kisses light my body on fire. “Stone.”

I awake this time to Stone yelling my name, but there is pain and worry in his tone. Once my eyes open, I know why. My tent is on fire, as are my clothes. I shimmy out of the sleeping bag as the tent is ripped open and strong arms pull me from the wreckage.

Stone

My heart sank when the bolt hit her tent; without her powers, I wasn't sure if she would survive. The red cast on the moon told me this was the night we were here for. Without a second thought about her tent on fire, I ripped it open and pulled her out to discover her clothes on fire. I pull her to her feet and tear them off of her. Wordlessly, she lets me touch her, but my hands don't stray from their task. Once the clothes are off, Nile throws one of my extra tees over her head.

“Harper, are you alright?” I ask her, my hands on her arms.

She doesn't flinch when I caress her cheek. “This whole time, you knew me, what

you meant to me. Why didn't you tell me? I remember it all." A small tear rolls down her cheek.

I pull her to a log and set her in my lap while Nile and Phoenix put out the tent fire.

"You are my heart, your mother told me to keep my distance for your safety. There were many times that I wanted to tell you. The words on the tip of my tongue but I bit them back. I have counted the days until you were to come back to me," I say.

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

She takes my face in her hands, “You were the ache in my chest, the thing I was missing but didn’t know it. I’m glad to have you and my memories back.”

That smile on her face, that smile for me, has me weak in the knees. I don’t take my eyes off her until I spot movement from the corner of my eye.

“Nile, Phoenix, there is someone out there!” I exclaim.

Setting Harper down in a rush but gently. I take off for the place where there is a rustle of grass. Nile and Phoenix are on my heels but we have lost the figure to the dark.

Walking back to Harper, she is still on the log and lightning dances on her fingertips.

Phoenix walks up to her in awe, “That is amazing. How can you do that?”

“I am a daughter of Zeus and my mother was a lightning goddess, you can say it’s in my genes. I didn’t realize how much I missed this,” she remarks with a smirk.

“All I got from my dad was an ass kicking and a sword,” Phoenix complains.

“Son of Ares?” Harper asks.

“How’d you guess?” He smirks.

“So, back to the matter at hand, who was so far out here and what did they see? Harper will no longer be safe here. We’ll have to get an escape plan in place, have

bug out bags ready if we have to go into hiding. I will not lose her again,” I state.

“First, we need to get some sleep, I don’t know about you but I’m kicked from that hike,” Nile yawns.

“I’ll take watch, you three get some rest,” Harper says.

I stop before my boots hit my tent, “I don’t know if that is a good idea. I’d feel better if you were next to me.”

“I promise, I’m fine, this will give me time to think on things and what is to happen next. Park Ranger just doesn’t have the same appeal it once did.” She winks.

That smile from her is enough to assure me that she can handle herself.

Harper

Each of the men slowly entered their tents, Stone was the last, giving me a little wave before zipping his tent completely. I realize that I am sitting on a log with nothing but a t-shirt on; all my clothes and supplies were burnt to ashes.

A figure approaches from behind the fire. Without seeing his face, I know exactly who it is.

“Father, to what do I owe the pleasure of a visit?”

“What, I can’t surprise you, daughter?” He raises an eyebrow at me as he asks.

“Zeus doesn’t just stop by and say hi. What do you want?”

His dark hair is short on the side and longer on the top and brushed to one side. He is



a ruggedly handsome man, nothing like the statues and history books would have you believe.

“Your mother is worried, she knew what the blood moon would do. I promised her to check up on you. Okay, this is too much. I can’t talk to you in nothing but a shirt.” With a snap of his fingers, I am clothed in a purple gown.

“Come on, father, you’ll have to do better. Do you really think that this is what I would wear out here? I need hiking boots, not heels. Will you try again?”

“Ungrateful child, fine.” He snaps them again and I’m in exercise attire and hiking boots.

“Well, this will do; not my style but much better than the gown,” I complain.

Zeus rolls his eyes at me, “I see that you are fine, I’ll be on my way. Your mother’s fears were unwarranted. It was nice chatting with you again, Hazel.”

“Seriously, you have so many children and you can’t remember their names?” I grit through my teeth.

He throws his head back in laughter, “Harper, I know your name, I was just making sure you were listening.”

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

“Tell Mother hello for me, when you see her next,” I say softly. I swallow hard against the emotions rising and give him a tearful smile. “And that I miss her.”

In a flash of light, he disappears, leaving behind a lightning-shaped pendant which materializes on my neck, and a pack at my feet.

When you are in need of assistance, Daughter, use the bolt.

“Thank you, Father.” I call to the air.

Adding a few more logs to the fire, it flares a little as I dig through the pack I was gifted. A few sets of clothes, similar to the one I’m wearing and more MREs. What I find at the bottom is a couple of sweet surprises. Some nectar cakes and a letter from my mother.

Lost in my letter, I didn’t hear the unzip of a tent. I’m brought back to the present by a set of muscular arms wrapping around me.

Judging by the tattoos and the musky smell, I know it’s Stone.

“Are you alright? A gust of wind hit my tent, waking me. I saw the tears on your cheeks, so I wanted to comfort you. If that’s okay with you.”

I turn towards him with a smile on my lips, “Yes, I would like that very much, unless I’m going to be another notch on your belt.”

He returns the smiles and whispers, “You are the only notch.”

My eyes grow wide, “What about all the women you paraded in the office?”

“They were just for show, I’d treat them to a meal and that was all. You have my heart completely, no one else, only you.”

I lean forward and our lips meet, at first his kisses are gentle, but then they continue with greed and passion. Gods, I have missed him. Maybe that’s why Nile and I didn’t work. Just the two of us, Stone was the missing link.

He pulls me to him, my hand landing on his chest, he deepens the kiss.

“Uhhh, am I interrupting?” Phoenix asks.

Stone breaks the kiss and with an annoyed glare, he simply says, “Yes.”

Twisting in Stone’s arms I glance at him, “Did you need something?”

“Well, you’re the one that zapped me, look at the hole in my tent,” Phoenix complains.

“Oops,” I laugh. “I mean at least you still have a tent. Does that mean you are volunteering for watch? My rest was cut short as I was on fire, my tent and all my belongings burnt to a crisp.”

“You have clothes on and a pack at your feet. I thought you said it was burnt?” he asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Gifts from my father,” I state.

“How did you get gifts out here? We are in the middle of nowhere.”

“Son of Ares, are you just trying to pick a fight? I know that your dad’s an asshole, met him a few times, but you don’t have to follow in his footsteps.” I say before asking. “Now that you are awake, why don’t you take watch?”

“Fine, but if that tent starts rocking or anything, I’m out,” Phoenix states.

I peek at Stone, a smile wide on his face, then back to the solemn look on Phoenix and reply, “No, only sleep tonight. Tomorrow, I can’t guarantee it.”

“Well, if you are going, go. I can tend the fire and watch for lightning fires. I mean I am a fireman.” He shrugs.

“You are the right man for the job. Thank you,” I say as I take Stone’s hand and lead him into the tent.

I lay down on my side and Stone does the same behind me, but pulls me into his arms. I float off to sleep as he whispers, “I have missed this.”

Phoenix

Jealousy welled up inside me when I saw Stone’s lips on Harper’s. How is this possible? I only just met her and I want to be with her. I kick the dirt when she goes into Stone’s tent. Shit, I have to stop thinking about her. So, I pull my phone from my pocket and check my logs to see if I’m missing anything from back home. I’m kind of lost, I haven’t been on a vacation in I don’t know how long. Damn, Nile and ‘let’s go hiking. The fresh air will do you some good’ bullshit. He really wanted to get back with his ex.

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

Out of the corner of my eye, I swear there was movement. “Who’s there?”

There is a rustle behind me, startled I stand and spin around and a figure steps out of the shadows.

“Is she still here?” a woman asks.

“Who?” I question with an eyebrow raised.

“The one that was on fire?”

“What? No one was on fire. An ember hit one of our tents and set it on fire. Nothing more.” The lie rolls smoothly off my tongue.

“The video I have says otherwise.” She smirks.

“Huh? Video?” I play the dumb guy, seeing if she will bite. “Why are you out here?”

“Camping, with the blood moon, I wanted to see if I could get anything wild on my camera and your girl was it. What else can she do?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about?”

She takes a few steps towards me with her phone held up and a video playing. It’s what happened earlier, Stone pulling Harper from the tent and her standing there with her clothes burning on her.

Taking the phone from her, I hit the delete button and glance at her and ask. “Oh, that’s an awesome clip, what movie is that from?”

“Are you stupid? You can see you in the video, give it here. I’ll rewind it and show you.”

Smiling, I hand it back to her.

“Dang it, what did you do?” she yells.

“I only watched it, did something happen to it?”

“You deleted it, good thing I sent it to my sister to load to my youtube account.”

Fuck, how can we get that off of the internet? This is really bad.

The rustle of a tent, Nile pokes his head out and says, “Phoenix, dude, I’m sleeping. Shut the fuck up.”

“That is your cue to leave, the lady you were looking for is not in the camp. Please leave.”

She smirks at me, nods, and heads off.

I wait for a good fifteen minutes before I pace the camp in hopes of finding a decent signal. When I do, I stop and go to Youtube and search for the video and pray that it’s not that there.

My heart sinks when it pops up on the page. Harper’s no longer safe, do I wait to tell everyone in the morning or wake them now? I decide that waiting until morning is the best, we can rest and plan their next steps with clear thoughts.

Stone

I awake to the sun blazing through the window I left open to keep the fresh air circulating in the tent. On an elbow, I glance down at Harper as she sleeps, I carefully remove a strand of hair that has fallen in her face.

Gods, she is beautiful. I hope she believed me when I said she was my only one.

Pops told me I was a fool, chasing after her, but he didn't believe in soul mates. I mean what god would. They can change forms and fuck any one they want and their kids, fuck they don't usually care about them. There are a few that are favored by them, but not many of the thousands. I was sent to work the forges when they saw that I was gifted with a hammer. Pops put me to work like all the rest of my brothers and sisters. My life changed the moment she set foot in the forge. I knew she was mine and I was hers. My father told me I was foolish for pining for her, but it was great until we were out at the beach with mortals. One spark from her fingers in front of the wrong person and she was hunted.

"Stone, get your ass out here!" Nile yells.

Harper didn't stir at this, so I carefully removed my arm from under her and quietly unzipped the tent and stepped out.

"I was just about to get up, what's the fucking problem?" I ask, raising an eyebrow.

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“The fucking problem is that this asswipe didn’t wake us when there was a visitor last night! Some lady came into the camp with a video of you grabbing Harper from the burning tent and her standing there with her clothes covered in flames!” Nile spits out.

Phoenix pipes in, “I deleted the video from her phone but she sent it to her sister, who put it on the internet. I was able to get a signal and find it online. A satellite phone would have been handy.”

“Fuck,” is all I can think of to say,

Harper

I got the best rest of my life, or at least that I can remember. Sadness overwhelms me when I pat behind me and the coldness of the spot greets me. I will not cry, he can’t be far. Why am I getting worked up that he isn’t here?

Slipping out of the tent, I spot all three of them in deep discussion. I pause to stretch before heading over to join them. I am rested but my back didn’t enjoy a second night of camping. I wish I had all the powers of father, summoning a big cushy bed would be nice right about now.

“What’s going on? Big meeting and I’m not invited?” I tease.

Stone’s face is solemn when he turns to face me. “Well, there was a visitor last night, she got a video of when the lightning hit your tent. She’s loaded it on the internet. You are no longer safe here. We need to find you a place to lay low until we can get



this off as a hoax.”

“Frack, I guess we need to break down camp and get headed back. We can put out any fires we see and still save the park if we can. Stone, radio in and tell the boss I’m sick and we are coming back early. There is no way we can’t check in, we have to keep up appearances until we have figured out our next move.”

Nile pipes up, “My father has a fishing cabin about four or five hours from here. You remember the one Harper?”

I nod in reply as he continues.

“We can stay there for a while and see if any of the cult crazies show,” he concludes.

I hold up a hand, “Let’s get out of the park and back to civilization and see how much this has gotten around. It may be nothing. There might be nothing to worry about.”

“You could be right, but I’m going to radio in and you guys start breaking down camp. I think the sick story will work for a bit, but we need to plan what’s next carefully,” Stone states with concern written on his face and in his tone.

“On it,” is my reply as I head to the tent we share and duck inside to wrap up the sleeping bag and whatever loose items are inside. Stone kept his tent orderly, so there isn’t much for me to pick up.

I tuck the shirt he wore yesterday into the top of his bag and felt a picture in here. I pull it out and it’s an old photo of Stone and me, at a beach. The worn corners tell me that he has carried it for some time, and that warms my heart. But I stuff it carefully back in and continue on, once I’m done I start with the tent.

“Let me do that, you want to bury the fire and by that time, we will be ready to move

out?” Stone asks, holding out his shovel.

I stand and face him, take a few steps forward, and take it from him. “I may have lost my memories for a while, but I didn’t forget who wears the pants.”

A smile tips his lips as he sets to work on the tent, I head the few paces to the fire and start covering it with the loose sand around. Most of the branches are all almost nothing but embers, so it doesn’t take much time or effort.

All three men are staring at me as I finish this easy task.

“Why are you all looking at me? We have over half a day's hike to the Jeep, lets move those asses.” I laugh.

Stone hands me my pack and I gaze into his eyes, “You know one of the best things about getting my memories back?”

He smirks, “What?”

“I can zap your ass from across the room, and on this hike I can create a breeze.” I laugh.

“Knowing you, you’ll do it, too.”

I return his smirk. “That I will do.”

He doesn’t say anymore, just takes my hand and we start our hike.

Stone

The hike has been different this time. We made it to the same spot we stopped at last

time at the lake to take a breather. Nile and Phoenix seem to be in worse shape this hike than the day before.

“What’s wrong with you two? We have a couple hours left before we hit the spot where the Jeep is.”

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“Dude,” Phoenix sucks in a breath, “I thought I was in shape, but this hiking bullshit tells me I’m a liar.”

“You’re a fireman, this should be a breeze for you,” Nile chirps in.

“Well, mister fucking boat captain, you’re having a hard time, too.”

“Yes, I’m a boat captain. We don’t move a lot, mainly standing in one spot.”

“You two are being too hard on yourselves. Think of it this way, if you were a weightlifter and you tried to run a marathon, it’s not what you’ve trained for. This is the job Stone and I train for and it’s not always easy for us. Take a rest and we will keep going,” Harper pipes in.

I watch as the tension in both their shoulders eases and they slump a little farther against the rock they are leaned against.

The crystal-clear water is calling my name, and the sweat is begging to be washed from my skin. “Harper, want to take a dip?”

She smiles and nods as we both forget the other two are here and shed our clothes and head for the cool water before us. Our feet splash as we run into the water, not stopping until we are enveloped in the cool liquid.

We glance back to shore and Nile and Phoenix’s eyes are wide and their jaws on the floor.

“You’re welcome to join us,” Harper laughs and she links her arms and legs around me.

Her hot breath fans my neck as she whispers, “Gods, I have missed this.”

“You don’t know the agony it was for me to be so close to you and you didn’t know who I was. I hated the lying and the parading of women, but your mom insisted I keep my distance.”

“I always felt off, that there was something missing in my heart, that was one reason it didn’t work with Nile,” she explained. “You were the missing link.”

Crushing my lips to hers, I pull her tighter to me, letting all the emotions I’ve held in flow into it.

“Dude, let her breathe,” Nile says, ruining the moment.

With my hand, I send a wave of water to his face. He swims through it with ease, I mean I would if my father was the god of the sea, I wouldn’t have any trouble, either.

He just grins as he positions himself behind Harper.

“Always, the third wheel, Nile.” I laugh.

His face turns sour, “You’re still not funny.”

Phoenix calls to the three of us from the shore, “We should leave soon.”

Nile huffs, “But I just got in the water.”

Harper smiles at us both, “Race you to the shore.”

She doesn't give us a chance to reply as she starts to swim to the sandy beach.

Fucking son of Poseidon. Nile overtakes her with ease as I start towards her. Once we get to where we can stand, I hollar at Phoenix. "Avert your eyes."

"Dude, you don't have to tell me twice," he answers, turning his back to the lake.

Nile is almost fully clothed when our feet hit the shore. Harper and I scramble back into ours and then grab our packs and we are ready to get moving.

"That water hit the spot," Nile comments.

"Of course, you'd say that." I huff as I roll my eyes.

Harper takes my hand, "No fighting today, please. I know he isn't your favorite but be civil for me?"

"Anything for you." I whisper back.

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We are headed for the Jeep, when a woman appears out of nowhere. “There’s the girl that was on fire.” She’s holding her phone up.

“Ma’am, are you lost?” Harper asks.

“How are you alive? I witnessed you pulled from a tent and your clothes were on fire.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I was in the tent with my boyfriend here,” she says as she intertwines her fingers with mine.

“No, I saw it. I’m not crazy!” The strange woman cries.

“We didn’t say you were, ma’am. Are you lost? Can we help you back out of the park?” I ask.

“She was on fire, I took a video of it. Why won’t you just admit it?”

“You have me confused with someone else. I’m sorry. We have to get back to town. Do you need a ride?”

She ignores my questions, and walks off in the other direction.

“That was weird,” Nile comments.

“She’s the same one that came to the camp last night. I wondered if she would pop up again,” Phoenix states.

“I hated lying to her, but what else could we do? It’s bad enough that she uploaded the video, but to come back here. Wow, she’s got some balls on her,” Harper says.

“Let’s forget her, we have a lot to figure out,” I tell her.

“So, what did Nicks say?” Harper asks.

“He laughed at first, he was like ‘She’s never been sick a day in her whole career here. I find that hard to believe.’ So, I told him you were throwing up and had a fever with chills.”

“Nicks isn’t wrong, I haven’t. So, we radio in when we get to the Jeeps and I’ll pretend to throw up in the background. Think that will convince him?” Harper smirks.

“With as much as he freaks out when someone is coughing, I think that is a solid yes,” I reply.

“If he does, you can take me and the guys back to my house to lay low. As much as I’d hate to be away from you, I think it’s best you finish out the day at the office and see if there is any flaming girl talk.”

“You’re right as always, my love.” I smile.

Nile chirps in, “I think a nap is in order. I don’t know why anyone in their right mind would enjoy sleeping on the ground.” He wraps an arm around Harper’s waist and gives me a smug look.

“You’re welcome to use either of my guest rooms, you will have to work to make it back to my bed,” Harper states, removing his hand from her hips.



Phoenix and I both fail at covering our laughs, earning us each a dirty expression from Nile.

“Yeah, bro. Never assume anything!” Phoenix says.

“Okay so, I’ll go to the office and on my way back to your place, I can pick up dinner. Any suggestions?”

“Fish,” Nile says.

“Thai,” comes from Phoenix.

“Pasta,” from Harper.

“You three couldn’t say pizza at the same time? Pasta is it. What the lady wants is what she gets,” I state.

Groans come from both of them.

“Just text me what you want and I call it in before I leave the office. That is unless Reid tries to get her claws into me.”

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“Reid?” Phoenix asks.

“Didn’t you listen when I complained about her earlier? She is hot but she has an obsession with knives and death.”

“So, maybe a descendant of Hades?” Nile laughs.

“Could be, or just crazy? I’d have to get near her to tell and I’m not getting close to her.” I shrug.

Harper sighs and smiles when the Jeep is in sight. “I’ve never been so happy to see the Jeep! I love hiking but I want to enjoy it, this was too fast of a trip.”

Nile

Does Stone ever shut up? It’s only been an hour in the Jeep and I’m sick of listening to him already. Every time I try to chat up Harper, he blocks me and takes control of the conversation again.

“So, how much longer until we are back to civilization?”

Harper turns from the passenger seat and smiles at me while reaching a hand back for me. “We still have a couple hours. Why not kick back and take a nap? I can see the bags under your eyes.”

“I thought about it but then all my dreams would have Stone in them. All I’ve heard for the last hour is his voice,” I complain.

“Well, count yourself lucky. On the way here, it was a three-hour Stone karaoke show,” Harper says, a smile on her lips and a sparkle in her eyes.

Shit, he’s wormed his way in her heart again already.

“You have no reason to be jealous, Nile. I love you both. Not one more or less than the other,” she reminds me.

I return my gaze out the window. “I know, it's just hard to have to share you again.”

“How do you share?” Phoenix asks.

“Do you want details?” I ask as I turn to face him with a smirk.

“Gross, dude, not really,” he replies with disgust.

“It’s an open relationship. I get them both and they get me. Simple,” Harper states.

“I just don’t see what the perk for the guys are?”

“We are soulmates, it is the only way we can all be together, not always happily but we manage,” I tell him.

“Still seems weird to me.”

Harper turns further around in her chair so that she can see Phoenix. “And if it was a guy with two girls would you bat an eye? No, you’d high five him and ask him how he scored. It’s a double standard, if you ask me.”

With that, she turns back around, takes Stone’s hand and turns up the radio.

Harper

The ride back to my house was awkward; one, because of Phoenix—he's a dickhead—and two, because I realized that I grieved for my parents that weren't really mine. I still have my mom and dad even though they are at Olympus. I'm unsure how I should feel honestly. One thing I did know, it was wonderful to have Stone and my memories of us back, like a piece of the puzzle inside me was found.

"Harper, you okay?" Stone asks from the driver's seat.

"Yep, just thinking back on it all: my parents that died, who I really am, and my life the last few years. I missed out on so much because people want to use me. Sometimes, it would be simpler to just be a human." I sigh.

"As much as I agree, if you were, we never would have met and I'd still be in the forge with my father, a mindless drone," Stone states.

"I don't regret anything about my life with you or Nile, I am just tired of running. Can't a girl just live in peace with her guys?" I laugh.

"All in due time! We will deal with this cult once and for all," Stone vows.

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Nile pops his head up between the seats, his black hair falls in his face as eyes bore into mine. “We will not rest until you’re safe.”

He stretches forward and kisses my cheek as if to seal his promise. Where his lips touch my skin, it sends a cool, calming affect along my spine. A familiar tingle that I have missed.

I smile at him as he sits back in his seat. Phoenix has been watching the exchange and my smile changes to a smirk.

“You like to watch?” I ask.

He is speechless and I notice the flush in his cheeks.

Satisfied, I turn my attention back to the road our tires just crossed on to. The butterflies in my stomach start up again. Is the cult here? Do they know where I live? Am I putting my co-workers in danger? So many unknowns.

I close my eyes and send a silent prayer to my father.

Father,

Please guide me. Help me protect my men and any innocent lives that may get in the line of this cult’s fire. Help me hone these gifts I have received from you and mother once again.

When I open my eyes, we are rolling through the middle of town towards my house.

Nothing seems out of place, no new svans, seems like business as usual. I breathe a sigh of relief until we approach my drive and there is an unknown vehicle in my drive.

Stone just drives right by and squeezes my hand. “Don’t worry, we will go to my apartment for now and I’ll stop at your house on the way back from work. If they are still there, I’ll keep driving.”

He heads to the other side of town, and pulls into an apartment complex. It is one of the older buildings in town, but well constructed, “Home, sweet home. Sorry it’s kind of a dump, but it will do for the night,” Stone states.

“I’m sure it’s just fine,” I try to reassure him.

“You three wait in here. In case they got my address, I don’t want you in danger’s way.”

“Stone, I can take care of myself,” I state, flickering lightning between my fingers.

He laughs, “You just had it mastered before you lost your memory, best not burn down my temporary home.”

I roll my eyes, but I know he is right. “I get it, we will stay and play nice. Maybe freak Phoenix out a little more.”

“Ha ha,” Phoenix remarks.

Stone kisses my hand before letting go and climbs out the door. I watch as he jogs into the building and disappears.

Nile’s breath is hot on my neck as he whispers, “I still don’t see what you like about

that asshat.”

Musing, I reply, “Funny, he says the same about you.”

At that, Phoenix laughs. “Is this how everyday is? These two complaining about each other and you stuck in the middle?”

“Not always complaining, but I’m usually in the middle,” I explain as I turn to face them both.

“Woah, too much information.”

“Oh, so you don’t want details?” I smirk.

The flush on his cheeks gets me the answer I seek.

“Nile said you were a firecracker, but I didn’t think you had the mouth to match.”

Just before I can say my witty remark, Stone is jumping back in the Jeep.

“My place is burned, too. They have people sitting on it waiting for us to show. We have to hope that they don’t have someone watching the office. Or we need to figure out a new plan,” Stone ponders.

“Drop Phoenix and I off at the store. We can stock up on supplies, Nile can grab my Jeep and you can check in with the boss. By that time, we can all meet up and head to the cabin that Nile was telling us about,” I tell the three of them.

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“Sounds like you have it all planned out,” Nile states before asking, “Why does Phoenix get alone time with you?”

“To make him more uncomfortable, of course. You idiot, the cult knows us together. If I’m with him, they are less likely to recognize us. Now is not the time to be a jealous asshat,” I remark.

“Harper, there’s a ball cap in my bag, why don’t you slip that on. Maybe it will help you blend in,” Stone tells me.

“Sure I’ll try it, what can it hurt?” I say as I rummage in his bag.

By the time my fingers grasp his cap, we are at the store. I tie my hair up in a ponytail, pulling it out the back and checking in the mirror to check if it disguises me at all. Maybe at first glance, they won’t notice me.

Turning back, all eyes are on me. “What?”

“Be safe, and you,” Stone points his finger at Phoenix, “Keep your hands to yourself.”

Phoenix raises his hands in no contest, as Stone and Nile laugh.

Nile chirps in, “You idiot, to protect her you will have to act like you two are together. They will be on the lookout for a blonde all alone. And her spark is worse than her bite.”



Phoenix

Fuck, I don't know if I can pretend. I have a strange pull to her, to touch her, and be near to her. I'll try and keep as much distance as I can.

Harper hops out of the Jeep, pulling the seat forward for me, I join her.

"Excited to be my shopping buddy?" Harper asks, taking my hand in hers.

Where her fingers touch mine, it's like wildfire and I want more. "Do you feel that?" I question her as we walk into the market.

"What? The air conditioning? It's a gods-send really!" she replies.

I breathe a little easier, knowing it's just me. How would I explain it to Nile and Stone? Oh by the way, Harper is my soulmate, too. But I don't want to share. Yep, I can see that going over really well.

Harper releases my hand but pulls my arm around her waist and she guides a cart down the first aisle.

Stopping, she scans the shelves and pulls some refried beans. Holding them up, she then turns to me, "This kind okay?"

Still milling over my thoughts and what the fire embrace could mean to me, I just nod and she throws them in the cart. I'm in a daze, aisle after aisle. Until I remember, fuck I'm here to protect her and I'm acting like a lovesick teen. Maybe I should kick my own ass.

"That should about do it, let's get some fresh fruits and veggies, then we can check out. Unless there was something else you wanted?" she asks.

I scan her cart. It's a good staple to junk ratio, so I can't complain. "Looks like you're a pro. Let's get the rest and get out of here. You head to the produce, I'm going to grab some extra bottled water. And I'll meet you over there."

Harper frowns, "I'll turn around and go with you. I don't want to lose you in the store."

I start to argue and then I remember we are supposed to stick together. These emotions inside of me have me all sorts of confused.

"You're right as always," I walk around behind her and place my hand on the small of her back as we head towards the water.

"Sorry," I whisper, "This lack of sleep must be getting to me. I wasn't thinking."

"Is it that or the bond that is forming between us?" she asks lightly.

I drop my hand and her smile returns.

"Did you think I didn't notice? This isn't the place or the time for this talk. We will have a little chat when we get to the cabin," she promises.

A lump is stuck in my throat and all I can do is nod. We reach the water and I grab a couple cases and add them to the bottom of the cart.

"Produce here we come," Harper states a little too enthusiastically.

Harper

Phoenix thought that I missed the clues about our bond. It's not everyday that a man's touch sets you on fire. He seems on edge as we stand in the check out line, I don't know if it's the cult coming for me or that it's sunk in that we are connected.

Placing a hand on his, I watch as he gives me a weak smile. "Relax, we will be out of here in a few minutes and with any luck, Nile will be here with the Jeep."

He leans in close, "There are a few weirdos that keep eyeing you. We need to make sure we aren't followed."

"Frack, so much for a smooth grocery trip," I complain. "Let's just act normal and maybe, just maybe we will get out of here in one piece."

We pay the cashier and are loading up the bags on our arms when Nile pulls up in my Jeep. Sending a silent prayer to my father, I follow Phoenix out and load it into the back of the Jeep before climbing in.

Nile eyes me, but doesn't say anything as the car starts to move. Phoenix and I click our seatbelts in at the same time as Nile speaks.

"What's wrong? There has to be something going on. I know you and how much you love this Jeep, why are you allowing me to drive?"

"There were a few people watching us at the store. I want to get out of here and get on the road. We have to make sure we don't have someone tailing us," I reply.

“That makes sense. I’m on it,” Nile states with confidence.

“Did you give Stone directions to the cabin? Was there anyone at the office?” I assaulted him with questions.

“Yes, they were inside. Stone went in and grabbed your keys and brought them to me. I didn’t stay around to ask questions. I told him where the cabin was and how to find it. He also has my number if he gets lost.”

“I hate having to leave him there, but it’s only an hour before the office is to close. Hopefully, he won’t be too far behind us.”

“He’s got his hammer, he’ll be just fine.” Nile laughs.

“Thanks, as much as you hate him. I appreciate you trying to reassure me,” I smile.

“I don’t hate that douche, I just like you better.”

“What are the plans when we get to the cabin?” I ask.

“Well, I may have to do a little cleaning, it’s been a year or so since anyone’s been there. It will be a little colder, so we will have to gather wood for the fireplace. You and Phoenix got enough food to feed an army. What do you have planned for dinner?”

“I think Phoenix mentioned something about chili?” I say, and turn to peek at Phoenix in the backseat.

“Sure, I make it for the guys at the firehouse all the time. We got all the supplies, it should be about an hour to prep and cook.”

“Perfect, that will give me time to tidy up as Nile gathers firewood, and then maybe Stone will join us.”

“If you don’t mind, can I kick back for a little nap?” I ask Nile.

“Anything you want my love,” he replies, his eyes never leaving the road.

If he thinks all this sucking up will gain him an invite to my bed, he is sorely mistaken.

I lean back and close my eyes and it’s not long before sleep overtakes me.

\* \* \*

Stone

I hated the idea of being separated from Harper once again, but I had to keep up appearances and lucky for me, my shift ended today with the weekend off. I ran in and grabbed the keys for Harper’s Jeep before anyone could corner me, they were all in Nicks’ office when I arrived. After I handed the keys off to Nile, I went back in and sat at my desk and pretended to do paperwork.

Nicks and a couple suits I’ve never seen before stop in front of my desk. I throw on my best smile as I gaze up at the three of them.

“What can I do for you three?” I ask.

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“Agents Starkel and Thornton here have a few questions about Harper,” Nicks states, “Seems a couple of her college friends are in trouble and they named her as an accomplice.”

I laugh at that, “You two haven’t met Harper then, she is the most down to earth person I know. For gods’ sakes, she locks herself in the supply closet just to get away from her co-workers. There is no way she’s been an accomplice to anything.”

“See, ladies, I told you that our Harper was on the straight and narrow. I believe you are chasing bad leads, and I don’t appreciate you trying to soil her good name,” Nicks says as he faces the agents.

The one with long blonde hair shoves a card in my face. “If you see Harper, please give her this, we would still like to question her.”

I take it as she and the other agent head towards the front doors, four more follow behind like drones.

“Between you and me, those 'agents',” Nicks says with finger quotes, “aren’t real ones. I don’t know what they want with Harper but it’s not what they are stating it is.”

“I got that vibe, too, Boss. She is sick as a dog, I’ve never seen her green like she was. I dropped her at home and told her to rest. Also, I plan to stop by after work, just to check up on her.”

“You’re a good friend, Stone. Keep it up, Harper is one of the best agents in this

department, I want her rested and ready for work on Monday.” He pats my desk before heading back to his office.

Waiting impatiently for the clock to tick to five, I’ve completed all my busy work, so I’m just tapping my thumbs on my desk. Reid and Riley stride up with smirks on their faces.

Reid has her pocket knife out and is picking her nails with it, “So, where’s Harper?”

“I’m sure you heard, she is sick,” I reply.

Riley, the quiet one, speaks up, “Harper has never taken a sick day since I’ve been here, what is really going on?”

“Must have been a bad MRE, I mean if you want to check on her and hold her hair up as she yaks, be my guest.” I shrug.

“Hard pass for me,” Reid says, “unless there’s blood?”

“You are one freaky chick,” I remark as I punch out on the computer, “Well, I’ve had all the fun I can stand. See you two Monday morning.”

With quick steps, I head to the back of the building and to my car, not glancing around until I am safely tucked behind the steering wheel of my locked car.

After a fast scan of the area, I turn the key and my baby roars to life. I type in the coordinates that Nile gave me before he ran off and make my way back to my heart.

I send a quick prayer to the gods that my journey is swift back to her and that she will be waiting for me with open arms.

Harper

A little refreshed from my nap, I smile when my Jeep pulls up to the familiar cabin. Oh, if the walls could talk, Phoenix wouldn't set a foot inside.

"There's that smile I love," Nile states.

"Stop sucking up, you're still in hot water for not listening to my mother. What if you led the cult to me? My powers were bound, and I would've been at their mercy," I tell him.

"Ouch," Phoenix remarks from the back seat.

Once Nile parks, we all hop out and unload the groceries from the trunk.

"Did you leave anything at the store?" Nile complains after his third trip.

"I remember how much you eat, I don't think we got enough food." I huff, taking two arms full of bags to his two bags.

"You're not wrong," he says, trailing after me. "I'm going to make sure the fridge is plugged in and cold. Do you remember where the pantry and cleaning supplies are?"

I nod and start sorting the groceries and point Phoenix to the pantry. "Can you make sure there are no critters in there?"

"Critters?" He raises an eyebrow.

"Mice, spiders, anything that crawls," I reply with a shiver.



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“Let me get this right, you are a goddess and you’re afraid of mice and bugs? How can you love nature but hate bugs.”

“Stop laughing at me and check,” I command, sending a little zap towards him.

“Ouch, what was that for?” he asks.

“You want more? That was just a taste of my power.” I wink.

Nile walks up behind me, “Why are you flirting with him? Aren’t Stone and I enough?”

“I have no control over the connections to my heart. Blame my father, but with a quiet tongue. His temper is worse than mine.”

The stunned look on his face is priceless, and for the first time since I’ve known him, he is speechless.

“Don’t you have some firewood to collect?” I ask.

“What? Oh yeah, no funny business while I’m gone,” he orders.

“With Phoenix, not yet. We have to get to know each other more first. I mean I didn’t just jump into bed with you when the bond formed,” I remind him. “If Stone gets here, all bets are off.”

He gags a little as he heads to the back of the cabin.

“What’s up with Nile? He was a shade of green when he walked by,” Phoenix notes.

“You’ll match him if I repeat my words,” I smirk.

“Oh.... I’m good, nevermind. The pantry was clean, nothing but empty shelves. Want me to start filling them?”

“Yes please, I have all the items sorted, I can fill the fridge while you do the pantry. Once that’s done, if you would start on dinner, I’ll do some dusting and tidying up as you do.”

“Sounds like a plan,” is all he says as he takes the first load of food.

Piling all the groceries in the fridge takes no time at all, Phoenix and I are done at the same time.

I point out the pots and pans and he starts to work his magic as I do mine. I open all the windows in the kitchen and living room and with a wave of my hand, all the dust and dirt flies out and the place doesn’t have the musty smell anymore. I set the little table for a party of four.

Then I check on Phoenix, he hums a happy tune as he’s stirring ingredients. “Got some moves to go with that melody?”

Startled, he drops the spoon in the sauce and turns to smirk at me. “Those are saved for private audiences only,” he states with a smoulder on his face and fire in his eyes.

“Easy there, son of Ares,” Stone calls from the front door.

He shrugs as Stone wraps me in his arms. “I’ve patiently waited for her to remember me. I don’t usually pull rank, but I will this time.”

“No contest from me this time, hammer boy. This bond or whatever it is, is so confusing, I need to figure it all out,” Phoenix replies.

“Besides,” I smile, “You both forgot who the real boss is.”

This time, Nile pipes in, “And what a beautiful boss you are.”

“I told you before that you will have to earn your place beside me back. Sucking up isn’t going to make me change my mind. Stone and I are going for a little walk. Phoenix, continue cooking and it smells delicious. Nile can assist you.”

Stone spins me around in his arms and kisses me on the lips. It’s a short and sweet kiss, then he whispers, “Ready, my love?”

“Always,” I reply.

He doesn’t loosen his grip on me as he steers me out of the cabin and towards the lake it sits on.

“I have missed this, the smell of your hair and the smoothness of your skin.”

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“I’m in need of a shower, I doubt my hair smells like you remember,” I state.

“Okay, in general, I do agree with the shower.” The vibration of his chest rattles mine.

“Stop laughing at me.”

“Never at you, with you,” Stone says.

“I’m not laughing.”

My statement shuts him up.

“How were you able to keep your self control for so long? I honestly don’t know if I could have. Are you that scared of my mother?”

Untangling himself from me, he still has a hold on my hip and a blanket I didn’t notice before. “No, I was more worried if I tried something it would make the curse worse. When Nile didn’t stay away, I blew my chances with you, because you thought I was a playboy.”

“There was always an attraction or pull to you, but I fought it. I didn’t want to be a notch in your belt. So I tried to keep my distance and then Nicks kept throwing us together. I was nervous and excited to be alone with you, but I didn’t know why.”

Releasing me, he lays the blanket on the grass under a big shade tree. He takes a seat and pats for me to join him.

“This soulmate bond is no joke, it’s almost a curse itself. So, tell me, what’s up with Phoenix?” he asks, raising an eyebrow.

I shrug, “When he touched my skin, there was fire. When it’s you, it’s like electricity or Nile’s, his is cooling. It’s all so confusing. I was perfect with you, when Nile came, it was like a puzzle piece snapped into place, and with Phoenix, that puzzle is complete. I didn’t realize anything was missing because I was so happy. Do you hate me?”

He places a finger under my chin and raises my head to gaze into my eyes. “Why would you think that? It’s not as if you are out chasing men or women, like some that are in your family.” He pauses and glances at the sky.

“You’re safe with me, Father wouldn’t dare strike you down for speaking the truth. Plus, he doesn’t want to deal with my wrath if he did it.” I smile.

He moves a little closer, “Is that so?”

“How about a swim?” I wiggle an eyebrow at him.

“I thought you’d never ask, but won’t it be cold?” he asks.

“Don’t worry, I’ll keep you warm.” I smirk as I glance around, making sure there are no wandering eyes on the shore. It is almost winter here, so not many people are out at the lake.

“Are you chicken?” I ask him.

“What? Me? No, I was waiting to follow your lead.”

“Oh sure you are,” I say as I rise and pull my shirt over my head, throwing it at him.

It lands on his smiling face.

“Hey!” he exclaims as he removes it, and his own.

Damn, he is ripped. I draw a finger down along his biceps, tracing the lines of his chest to that V that disappears into his pants.

“Did you bring protection?” I ask.

“Of course,” he replies holding up his hammer.

I can’t contain the laugh that slips through my lips, “Not what I meant.”

“Oh,” his cheeks flush when he realizes what I was talking about.

Sucking in a breath, he removes his pants and underwear at the same time. I have missed this sight for too long. I don’t wait long as I shimmy out of the rest of my clothes; I stand there and curl a finger for him to come to me.

He does just that and grips my hand, leading me to the still water.

Our toes skim the cool liquid as he turns to me, “You really are beautiful. You know that, right?”

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Smiling, “Well, you aren’t so bad yourself,” I reply, bumping my shoulder into his.

He raises an eyebrow, “‘Not’ bad, that’s all?”

“You’re fucking hot, and you know it. Do you really need me to tell you?”

“No, but it’s nice to hear,” he shrugs.

By now, the water has passed our hips and he pulls me in close. Our lips meet and my heart begins to race, even though we’ve kissed many times before, it always seems like it’s the first time. Where his lips touch mine, it’s electric, and I want more.

I wrap my legs around his waist as he moves deeper into the water. When our kiss breaks, he continues trailing them down my neck.

“Don’t stop.” I pant. “More, I want all of you.”

“Anything for you.” he says between kisses as he makes his way back to my lips and shifts under me. When he lands on mine and he enters me, a rogue lightning bolt zaps us both.

He yelps but doesn't stop, until he is all the way in.

“Back to the blanket,” I order.

“Yes, ma’am,” he laughs.

He makes quick work of getting us back to the blanket, laying me on my back as he starts to shift his hips.

The sensation of his skin next to mine will never get old. He picks up his pace and I smile at him. I can't believe how much I crave his touch, how much I have missed not just him but his body against mine.

"I've missed you."

He smirks at me, not slowing for a moment as he cups my breast and teases it with his tongue, raising a moan from my throat, he then sucks on it, causing me to arch my back.

He glances at me, and smiles. "I didn't forget what you liked."

"You better not have," I reply breathlessly.

I roll my hips up to meet him, at his pulses inside me.

"Right there," I moan.

"What was there?" he jokes.

"Harder," is all I reply.

He doesn't disappoint, and we both hit our peaks at the same time. Wave after wave rolls over me as he finds his release as well. He collapses next to me and we are laying on the blanket, still tangled up together.

"This was fun," Stone states breathlessly



“Only fun? Satisfying is more like it,” I say and reach for my clothes.

“Leaving so soon? Guess I have two more men to share you with now.” He sighs.

“Nile has to beg for forgiveness, I’m pissed he didn’t stay away like he was told. And Phoenix. Well, he and I have to get to know each other first, he is resistant to the bond. If he decides he doesn’t want this, then I won’t force him to stay.”

“How will that affect you?” he asks.

“Honestly, I don’t know. You and Nile were perfect for me, I never thought that I would have another man thrown in my life. So, only time will tell. Besides, you and Nile make me happy. What more can a girl need?” I ask as my stomach grumbles.

Stone laughs and replies, “Food.”

“Phoenix is cooking up some chili. Get dressed, let’s see if we can help him with anything. I kinda pushed him into making dinner.” I smile.

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“Well, I knew it wouldn’t be you cooking.” Stone smirks.

I stick my tongue out at him, “I’m a Goddess, I don’t cook.”

Standing, I finish dressing and fold up the blanket as Stone slips his shirt over his head.

“How jealous do you think Nile will be?” he asks.

“For being a son of Poseidon, he has the temper of Ares. But he made his choices and now he has to pay for them.” I reply, handing the blanket back to Stone, who takes it...and my hand as well.

“You may want to smooth down your hair. You have grass in it, too.”

I let go and pull my hair up into a messy and high ponytail. “The grass will have to wait. I’m ready for dinner.”

“I only hope that Phoenix is a good cook.”

Phoenix

Working in the kitchen never bothered me, it kept my mind off the bond and whatever Harper and Stone were up to on their walk. I was busy browning the meat and tasting the sauce, the door swung open and Nile came in with a handful of firewood.

“That smells good, I’m a little surprised,” he spouts off.

“You’re just jealous of my skills.”

“What do you think Stone and Harper are really doing? I doubt it is just walking,” he complains.

“That is their business,” I counter.

“It’s our business, we are bonded to her,” he spits.

“Even if that may be, if this will work with all three of us, space is important. Every relationship needs time. So, stop your whining and get that fire ready. Dinner is almost finished.”

“Yes, master. Your wish is my command.”

“Damn, Phoenix, what did you say to Nile?” Harper asks. “He never listens to me.”

“I hold the food, plain and simple.”

“Hum, I hold other things, guess he doesn’t need what I have any more,” she shrugs.

Stone pipes in, “I’ll take it if he doesn’t want it.”

“Hey now, I never said I didn’t. She doesn’t seem to want to share it with me,” Nile comments.

“We’ve had that talk, now let’s eat. I’m ready to shower and sleep on a real bed,” Harper says.

“You’re just in time, it’s ready now,” I tell her as I ladle the chili into bowls.

Harper grabs two of the bowls and carries them to the table, as I take the other two and set one in front of Nile.

“Smells delicious, Phoenix!” Harper exclaims as she digs in.

It is a quiet and awkward meal. The others seem to like the chili. Their grunts are the only compliments I get. Harper finishes her meal first and gets up and starts on the dishes.

“Harper, you don’t have to do those,” I tell her. “I was going to clean up my mess.”

“Oh hush, you enjoy the chili. A few dishes are no match for me,” she comments.

Stone finishes next and starts drying the dishes, they are a great team.

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Nile and I hand over our bowls, Harper takes them with a smile. Nile takes this as an opening to wrap his arms around her waist.

“Nile, what did I say earlier? Hands off.”

She hands the last bowl to Stone then she removes Nile’s hands from around her as she takes mine.

“You, on the other hand, are welcome to join me in my bed.”

Her invitation shocks me.

She runs her other across my cheek, “Don’t worry handsome, it’s just for sleep. No rushing into anything more then you are comfortable with. Promise. Stone and I are going to shower, we all need rest. Nile, if Phoenix doesn’t want to share you get the couch.”

I love that she is so take charge. Fuck, am I falling for her?

Harper

Stone and I took a nice and hot long shower; after being in the forest for a couple nights it hit the spot. “It is wonderful to get all this grime off.”

“Yes, and it’s great to do this,” Stone pulls me close.

“That it is.” I smile at him, everywhere I touch skin still has that electric feel to it.

“Let get dried off and we can cuddle.” He wiggles an eyebrow at me.

Playfully slapping his chest, I say, “I remember what your snuggles lead to.”

“Can’t blame a guy for trying can you?” Stone smirks.

“Nope, but you’ll have to behave, I invited Phoenix to share the bed, too.

There is a knock on the bathroom door as I towel dry my hair. “One moment.”

Once I get it twisted up, Stone pulls on his clothes and helps me maneuver my tank round the towel on my head. Satisfied, I remove the towel and shimmy into my pants.

“Ready?” I ask Stone.

“Yep,” he replies as another knock raps on the door.

“We’re done and coming out, hold your horses!” I call.

I open the door to Phoenix, “Did you want to join us?”

His cheek flush, he stutters, “I...uh...”

Stepping back, Stone and I exit the bathroom. I turn back to Phoenix and say, “That invitation is still open.”

He shuts the door fast.

Stone is laughing, “Guess that’s a no.”

I playfully push him, “Shut up and move. I’m ready for bed.”

He grabs my hand and heads to the bedroom at the back of the cozy cabin. Stone opens the door and closes it back twice as fast.

“Nile, get your clothes on,” Stone yells.

“Is he sprawled on the bed naked?” I huff. “Let me in and I’ll zap his hairy ass, that will get him moving.”

“Nile, if you’re not out in a minute. I’m sending in Harper with her zappy fingers,” Stone calls.

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Not even a second later, Nile is rushing past us, his clothes in his hand.

I call upon my lighting powers and give him that little bolt he deserved. “I told you Nile, you have to earn me back. That is not the way to do it.”

Stone stifles a laugh and enters the room. “I’m just glad he wasn’t under the covers.”

I shiver, “Me, too.”

We both flop down on the bed at the same time. So much more comfy then sleeping on the hard floor. Why the fuck do I like camping so much?

“This is almost like heaven after laying on the ground,” Stone comments.

“So, you did the whole ranger thing for me? I remember that you hate being outside.”

“Well, that was the only way I could be near you and keep an eye on you. I know you can hold your own, but you can be a troublemaker, too.”

“Me?” I ask, pretending hurt.

“You were a little different than your normal self. Not as much confidence as before, I hoped once your memories returned that it would, too.”

Just as we are about to kiss, there is a knock on the door frame.

“Too late to join?” Phoenix asks.



“Not at all, Stone, move your ass over, unless you want to snuggle with him and not me.” I say as I raise an eyebrow at him.

“Seeing as he isn’t here for me. I’ll scoot over.”

He does that and I make room for him on my other side. “Don’t worry, I don’t bite unless you ask,” I tell him as I pat the spot next to me.

Slowly, Phoenix edges his way towards the bed.

“Phoenix, you don’t have to, no pressure. I will never ask you to do something you aren’t comfortable with,” I remind him.

He gulps and slides next to me as I roll on my side, and curl up next to Stone. This leaves him enough room to lay down and not touch too much of me until he wants to.

On his side, he faces me. “Are you sure about this?” So much concern is written on his face and a tone of worry is in his voice.

“Yes, we are just sleeping, I promise. Nothing more until you ask. Relax and sleep, we don’t know when the cult will find me. So, let’s enjoy this while we can.”

Stone wraps an arm around my waist, and Phoenix takes my hand. He looks into my eyes, “I will protect you.”

And I believe him.

Nile

Still fuming from my rejection once again by Harper, I rub my neck as I make my way to the local bakery. She’s gonna be pissed I took her Jeep, but maybe she’ll

forgive me when I show up bearing sweets.

I should have heeded her mother's warning, but the pull to Harper was too strong. It was great when we first met again, and we were so in love, but she told me that something was missing. I knew what it was—Stone—but I was hoping that we'd work out without him.

Lost in my thoughts, I almost missed the little shop. I quickly park two spots down from the bakery and hop out and head for the busy little shop.

The bell clangs as I enter and the sweet smells hit me head on. There is quite a line, I hope I can get something good. I eye the cases; they are still pretty full.

Humming a happy tune as I wait, I glance at my phone and will Harper to text me. At least texting, she didn't seem as angry at me. No luck, so I text her first.

Me: I hope I'm not waking you. I ran to get some goodies from the bakery. Let me know if there is anything you want.

Tapping my foot to the beat of my own tune, I stare at the screen when I see the bubbles of her replying pop up.

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Harper: That's a great idea! Can I get a cinnamon roll or two? Stone says apple fritter and Phoenix says anything with blueberries. Thank you.

Me: What's the plan for the day? Fishing? Sleeping?

Harper: Nothing planned, fishing could be fun. Do you have a boat still? Maybe we can hang out on the water for the day.

Her text brings a smile to my face, maybe she doesn't hate me all that much.

Me: Yes, still have the boat. We can see if it's seaworthy. Tell Stone to find the fishing gear, it was in one of the closets the last time I was there.

Harper: Stone says go fuck yourself. But I'll find the gear. You bring the sweets.

Nile: You got it.

Harper: smiley face.

Once I glance up again, I'm almost at the front of the line. Man, are they fast here. The lady in front of me pays for her order and it's my turn. Luckily, they have everything everyone wants, especially Harper's. I smile and pay the teen working the counter and head back to Harper's Jeeps.

I breathe in the fresh air, then I notice the suits walking around the shops and the Jeep. Shit, they are here. How did they find us? Trying not to act weird, I head down the opposite way from the vehicle and get some distance between me and them before

pulling out my phone.

Dialing Phoenix, I raise it to my ear. “Fuck, answer the phone.” I mutter as it is ringing.

“Sup?” Phoenix answers.

“We have to move. I can’t get the Jeep, the suits are here and swarming it. It’s a little too hot here for us,” I tell him.

“Got it, we will get loaded up in Stone’s car. Somewhere we can pick you up?” he asks.

“I’m walking towards the cabin, just pick me up on the way. Hopefully, we will meet up out of their sight. I’m not sure how many are here. Keep Harper in the cabin as long as you can. I don’t want to chance her being seen.”

“For sure. Be safe, if something else comes up, let me know. Asap.”

“You got it, don’t worry too much about me, protect her.”

Her life is more precious than mine. She never believed me when I told her I would die for her. I may be many things but I’m not a liar. Harper never doubted my love, but sometimes my words. I may be an asshole but she is my life. The love of my life as well.

Harper

I didn’t like the look on Phoenix’s face when he was on the phone with Nile.

“What? What is wrong?” I ask.

“We have to pack, they are here. Nile’s abandoned the Jeep in the town and is walking here. Harper, I’m not telling you what to do. They could have eyes out there right now, please stay inside as we load the car. It’s gonna be a tight squeeze but we will all fit.”

Sighing, “Fine, but I will help where I can. My memory is back for a day and I can’t even enjoy it. What the fuck is wrong with these people? I will not be their plaything.”

“We can’t keep running. They will not give up until they find me. I will have to face them, that will be the only way I can get rid of them. What do they want from me, anyway?”

Stone steps up to me, wrapping his arms around my waist, “If you want to fight, that’s what we will do. I have my hammer.”

Gazing up at him, I see he is smiling from ear to ear. “You and that fucking hammer.” I smirk.

“Are you jealous?” he teases.

“Maybe,” I reply.

A gagging noise comes from Phoenix, “Do I need to wait outside?”

“Ha ha, remember this will be you someday,” Stone reminds him.

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“Not with a fucking hammer, I have a sword,” Phoenix counters.

“Boys, are we comparing who's bigger now?” I joke, then my face becomes serious, “Because if we are, I wanna see.”

This gets a laugh from both of them.

“Good try, Harper. We don't have time for that. Besides, Stone doesn't need another reason to be pissed at me.” Phoenix winks.

“Get to packing. We need to grab Nile and come up with a plan.”

“You're right as always.” Stone sighs.

I kiss him on the cheek, and head to find my pack from my father. It had another set of clothes in it. I'd have to stop on the road and get some more. I can't just recycle these, and I want new underwear. Those I won't rewear. I shudder at the thought. The bag was thrown in the corner of the small room. Digging the set out, I place them on the bed and start to change. I pull my top off and then the sweaty bra. I'm standing there topless when Phoenix walks back in.

I don't try to cover up, and he doesn't look away, but he does stutter his words. “I...I...am sorry.”

I raise an eyebrow at him, “For? If I didn't want you to see me, I could've covered up or locked the door.”

He doesn't reply as I pull on my new set, but as soon as I start to tug my pants down, he bolts.

Stifling a laugh, I continue changing. I repack the old set and shoulder the pack, making my way to the living area.

Stone and Phoenix were rushing around like mad men, packing up the food we just unpacked yesterday.

"What can I do to help?" I ask. I hate standing around helpless.

"We are almost done. You just stay here for a couple minutes. Once we are all loaded, we will come back for you and head out," Stone replies.

I huff and cross my arms. I would have stuck out my tongue at him, but Stone didn't stop long enough for me to do so. I thought about Nile, sending a silent prayer to my father. Please guide Nile from harm and back to me.

Pulling my cell from my pocket, I scroll back to his last message.

Me: You ok?

My heartbeat races faster with each second that he doesn't answer.

Nile: You're worried about me?

Me: Yes, asshole. I am.

With a smirk, sent that back to him.

Nile: I love it when you call me by a nickname.

Me: Please be careful.

Nile: Always, my love.

“Why are you smiling at your phone?” Stone asks.

“Nile’s an asshole, that’s all,” I reply.

“Yes, that he is. You ready?” Stone questions.

“When you are. Can you pull the seat forward and signal when I can run out?” I ask.

“Of course, good thinking.” Stone gently presses his lips to mine and ducks back out the door.

I haven’t seen Phoenix in a few minutes, he must be in the car already and waiting. Inching forward, I wait for the sign from Stone. He gives me a thumbs up, I pull the cabin’s door closed behind me and dart to the driver’s side door. I dive into the back seat and Stone rights his seat then climbs in.



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The engine is already humming and Stone pulls the car into gear and we are rolling backwards.

“Please stay down, Harper. Once we get Nile and are on the open road, it should be safe to sit up,” Stone says.

“I just request that Phoenix sit back here with me. Not to make him uncomfortable but I’m not hiding with my head in Nile’s lap. He will think he has won me back. I’m not giving in that easy to that fucker, cult or not.”

Stone laughs and I think Phoenix was blushing, it was hard to tell with my head in the seat.

“Harper, sit up for a minute, but low in your seat, so Phoenix can go ahead and climb back there with you. Then Nile can jump in the passenger seat and we will be off.”

I do as he says and Phoenix awkwardly maneuvers his body into the back seat and somehow lands in my lap.

“I mean, if you want to stay where you are, they won’t see me underneath you.”

He hops off in a flash, buckling into his seat and looking out the window.

To make it even more weird for him, I lay my head in his lap. “I told you, I wasn’t going to put my head in Nile’s lap.”

Nile

A pool of sweat is starting to form from this unplanned walk. Fuck, what is taking them so long? Trying to fit in or look natural I pull a pastry from the box and take a bite. Damn, that is the best donut I've ever tasted. Light and fluffy, not overly glazed. Did I die and go to heaven?

Musing, I don't notice the men in the suits walking towards me. Panic has my heart beating faster, but I'm never unarmed. I search for a place for my box if a confrontation arises, I'll be damned if these asshats are going to ruin these donuts for me.

They are just a mere block away and I'm pumping myself up for a fight when Stone's car pulls up to the curb and the door flings open.

I shove the box at him and climb in. "Took you long enough. I thought I was going to have to fight my way out."

Stone hands the precious cargo back and slams his foot on the accelerator and those suits are ants in the side mirrors as we speed away.

Peering in the back, I spot Harper with her head in Phoenix's lap and he gives me an awkward wave.

"Where's my Jeep?" Harper questions.

"Parked in town, there was a set of people standing guard and others strolling the town. I had to leave it behind and act natural. Sorry, babe, as of now it's a lost cause."

"How much longer until we are out of town?" Phoenix pipes up.

"A few more miles. A little uncomfortable back there?" I ask.

“No, Harper’s stomach is growling so loud it’s a little scary.” He laughs.

I glance back just at the right time to catch her smack his leg.

“I’m a girl that likes to eat, got a problem with that?” She smirks up at him.

Phoenix doesn’t reply, only shakes his head no.

“Are you that scared of her, son of Ares?” I laugh.

“Shut your mouth, seaweed licker, “ he snaps back. “Besides, she’s zapped me with a bolt once and I’m not keen on her doing that to me again soon.

Harper

The ride to grab Nile was short, I knew that Phoenix wasn’t keen on my head so near his dick, but to be honest I wasn’t, either. He is fighting our bond and as much as I long for him to be close, I will not force it on him.

Of course, once Nile joins us, he has to poke at us. Why did the gods curse me with him as a soul mate? For a while, it was great, but at the moment, he is getting on my last nerve. If we weren’t in a metal box I’d zap his ass just for the fun of it.

“Nile, can you chill out? Your attitude, it’s not helping anything. We have a crazy cult chasing us. We have more important things to worry about than whose dick is bigger!”

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I hear the heavy sigh from the front seat, “You’re right. But I have breakfast. We are in the clear, you can sit up.”

Pushing up from Phoenix’s lap, I sit up in my seat as Nile hands me a pink box of deliciousness. As I open the lid, the sweet of the sugar hits me in the face. Did I just die and go to Olympus? Pulling out a cinnamon roll as big as my head, I hand the box over to Phoenix.

“Are you going to eat all of that?” he asks, eyeing my cinnamon roll.

“Yes, and I will zap your ass if you try and take a bite,” I warn him.

Stone breaks his silence for the first time since we picked up Nile, with a laugh. “You’ll learn in time to never get in the way of Harper and her food. Especially anything sweet.”

“Damn straight,” I offer up. “Now that we have that figured out, we need to discuss what we are going to do about this cult.”

That statement shuts them all up.

“I will not spend my life running. We are going to have to stand and fight. Tell them that I will not be their caged animal to control, I am not a weapon to be used for their every whim.”

Stone pipes up, “I will fight at your side until my last breath. If you don’t want to run, we will make a stand. What are you thinking?”

Ever the dramatic and heartfelt Stone.

“Let’s take the fight to them, they have been in my home and my place of work. It’s time I got a little up in their business,” I reply.

“Do we even know where they are?” Nile asks.

“No, but I bet that they are still sitting on my house. We could tail one of them back to their compound or whatever it is. Doesn’t that sound like a plan?” I counter.

“One small problem. We don’t have a car to trail them in. Your Jeep is at the bakery and they saw Stone’s car. What are we going to use?” Nile questions.

“How’d you and Phoenix get here? Fly? You have to have a car somewhere in the park. Why did the Gods curse me with your stupidity. I swear you’re an idiot sometimes.” I sigh.

I notice Phoenix palm his forehead. “Nile, it’s your fucking car and you forgot you brought it?”

“Now, I remember. We parked near the park’s entrance. It’s a big Dodge pickup, black. You can’t miss it, Stone,” Nile says.

“Always trying to compensate huh?” Stone pokes at him.

Nile doesn’t reply. He just sulks in silence.

Phoenix leans over to me, “Do these two ever stop?”

I shake my head, “Nope, when it becomes too much, I just zap them and they cool off a bit.”

This gets a laugh from Phoenix. Raising an eyebrow he asks. "What other powers do you have?"

"Lightning is my favorite, total control over wind, from a breeze to a tornado. I can't make rain, but I can stop it or make it heavier. Just depends on my mood. Do you have any powers demi-god?"

"If fighting is a power then yes, I have never lost a fight. I credit it to my father but no more than that," he replies.

"Fights? What kind of fights?" I ask.

"Just scraps with friends and sometimes bullies. I was a tall and skinny kid growing up, that was a "kick me" sign for all the jocks that were thicker and more muscular. What they didn't count on was I had been trained to fight since I was four. My bastard of a father saw to that, but that was about all," he spits.

He was not angry with me, but Ares. That asshole. He was known for having a lot of kids and if they were male they were ordered to learn to fight. If they were girls, he acted as if they didn't exist.

"My father is distant, too. My brother and sisters think he favors me because I have powers much like his, but he really doesn't. In times of trouble, my mother will plead for him to intervene. If not for her, I doubt he'd give a rat's ass." I shrug.

Phoenix thumbs the charm I wear, "This looks like a token from a caring father."

"Nah, he just did it before my mother would nag his ass to help me. I mean I know he loves me, but I'm definitely not his favorite."

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“Why are gods such dicks?” He huffs.

“The Fates are cruel bitches, too, I thought that two soulmates were more than enough, but here you sit, too,” I remark.

“I didn’t mean to reject you or anything,” Phoenix swallows hard, “this is all new to me. But if you want me, I’d like to give us a try.”

His words bring a smile to my face. “That makes me happier than you’ll ever know. If it becomes too much, or you aren’t comfortable with something, please tell me. I never want you to do something you don’t like. Stone, Nile and I have boundaries. Those help us not kill one another.”

He links his fingers with mine, no reply necessary.

Stone

Listening to the radio helps to drown out the conversation between Phoenix and Harper. Through all the years together, one thing I’m good at is giving her privacy when it’s needed.

Nile starts to fiddle with my music, I slap his hand away.

“Dude, the fuck is wrong with you? You don’t mess with a man’s stereo. Keep your hands to yourself, I will smack you again,” I warn him.

“Well, your music sucks, can’t we change it to some country?” Nile complains.

“My car, my tunes. Rock is my jam and there will be no country playing in here,” I reply.

He sighs and turns to stare out his window.

A smirk perches on my lips. Damn right, he better keep his hands to himself if he knows what’s good for him.

“Last gas station for a few hours, anyone need a pit stop?” I ask.

All three of them say ‘yes’ in unison. So, I pull off and head to the little mom and pop store. The world needs more of these quaint places. As my tires pull up to the pumps, a bell sounds, a tall and lanky teen runs out of the store and up to my window as it rolls down.

“Filler up, sir?”

“Please and thank you,” I reply.

Once he steps to the back quarter panel where the fuel goes, we exit the car. Stretching my legs after our drive feels like heaven. I’ve never liked long drives.

Harper strolls over to me, “I’m going to use the restroom. You load up a few snacks?”

“Whatever you want my love. I want Nile or Phoenix with you, why they have the bathrooms on the back side of the building is beyond me.”

“Yes, Father,” she teases. Standing on her tiptoes, she plants a kiss on my lips.

I stand there for a moment and watch her walk with both men at her sides.



Fuck, she is beautiful; the thought of losing her to the cult is like a stab in the gut. I will not let that happen.

The service attendant tells me that the car is full, I head inside to pay and grab Harper the snacks she loves.

A bell chimes as I enter the quaint little store, there aren't many places like this anymore. The selection is slim pickings and I'm hoping that they have Skittles. When my eyes spot the red package on one of the shelves, I perk up a little bit. This will make her day.

I grab a couple more candies with the Skittles and head to the coolers for a drink. When the bell clangs again, a smile tips my lips when I notice that it's Harper. She makes her way back to my side.

"You haven't shaken these losers, yet?" I joke.

"Ha ha, are you ready to hit the road? We need to get back to their truck as soon as possible," she reminds me.

"I need a drink, do you want anything?" I ask, showing her the candy in my palms.

"You really know how to make me happy," she squeals. "I don't think I've had any of these in years, I forgot that they were my favorite."

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I hand them to her and grab a Coke, “I’m ready now.”

Harper links her arm with mine as we head towards the sweet old lady smiling as we approach her.

“Will that be all? What are you two doing way out here?” she inquires.

“Just out for a drive, the weather is nice out today,” I reply.

She gives me the total. Harper and I say our goodbyes and join the fellows in my car.

We are about an hour from the park. I have been thinking that this is going too smoothly, someone had to notice our quick grab of Nile. If the cult were as good as Harper worried, they'd have my tags and car description to all their members.

Stopping at the intersection just before we were to get back on the interstate, I look both ways. The roads are empty as my car rolls forward.

The next thing I know is pain, there is a sickening crunch of metal and screams mingled together. What the fuck just happened? I gripped the steering wheel so tight that it warped in my hands.

My head and side hurt, then I hear the most frightening sound in the world to me. Harper.

Pinned in my seat, my eyes searched for her. Harper had taken up residence in the passenger seat when we left the store. With care, I turn to see her just in time to see

her being dragged away by two men in suits.

"Harper, I will find you!" I yell as I struggle to get out of my seat, but there is no luck, helplessly I watch as she disappears from my view.

"Nile, Phoenix, are you two fucknuts okay?" I pause before I call them again.

A tiny groan escapes one of their lips. Phoenix was behind me and the impact was on our side.

"Nile, call 9-1-1. Those cult fucks hit us and took Harper. I'm fucking pinned in this car. I watched them take her." There is a little break in my voice with that last sentence. I fucking hate being helpless.

Nile doesn't reply to me, but I hear the sound of the numbers as he hits them in. From the backseat, I hear, "Yes, someone hit my friends car, he is stuck and bleeding and our other friend is unconscious. We need help now."

"No, I don't know our location. Do your fucking job and track my phone." Then he hangs up.

Those are the last words I hear before I black out.

Harper

Our plan to get the cult off my back was coming together until a car came out of nowhere and rams into the side of Stone's car. It jars me and my head hits the side window, but thank the gods I'm wearing my seat belt.

Once my head clears, I start checking on the guys. Stone is bleeding but breathing. Nile is out of my line of sight, but Phoenix is draped over the middle seat with blood

gushing from his head.

I reach out for Stone when the door beside me is wrenched open. Two strong arms pull me from the car. Just before I could call on my powers, they drop something around my neck. I was too busy trying to fight them to glance down, but my powers only felt like a hum under my skin, whatever they did, I would have to fight this fight as a mortal. My powers were somehow bound.

They drag me towards a car farther down the road, I scream and fight for all I'm worth. Just before they shove me into the car, I hear Stone's vow.

"Why can't you asshats just let me be? I don't want anything to do with you all or your cult!" I spit.

"You are ours," is the only reply I get from the suit driving.

"Yours?" I laugh. "I belong to no one. You two are really tough, huh? How is it that you bound me? Release me, If you don't, I promise you won't like being on the other end of my wrath. I will be free and you will get what you deserve."

They don't reply to my threats, the silence in the air could be cut with a knife.

"Why me?" I let the question linger in the air before repeating it again.

Suit two answers this time, "You are our Goddess."

Nile

Where did that car come from? I watched as Stone checked both ways before continuing on. They had to be hiding in wait. Those fuckers hit the car just to steal Harper. I can't wait to plunge my trident into a few of their chests just for the fun of

it. They took her from me once, I'll be damned if they will do it again. I know that Stone and I don't get along, but on this, we will both agree. While we are waiting for the police to arrive, Stone and Phoenix are both bleeding. I pull off my shirt and wrap it around Phoenix's bleeding head, hoping that it will stop some of the bleeding. What the fuck is taking them so long?

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I assess Stone next, having to crawl into the front seat. I notice he has some blood on his face but it isn't gushing like Phoenix. The glass from the window showered him. His plain back t-shirt is shredded, but nothing life threatening is to be seen from my vantage point.

Harper's door is still wide open. I smacked my head on the window, my gaze was fuzzy but her screams will haunt my nightmares. Never have I heard that kind of fear in her voice, and I don't ever want to again.

A moan comes from Stone.

"Easy big guy. Don't move too much. I have called 9-1-1, they should be here soon. I hope," I tell him.

"Harper," he croaks.

"I promise you, we will get her back and those cult fucks will get what is coming to them," I vow.

His words are faint, and they are drowned out by the sirens. It is a welcome sight. I exit the car and wave my hands like a mad man. The ambulance and fire truck stop mere inches from each other and men and women pile out of both.

A police officer walks up to me from his car behind the other two vehicles. "Can you tell me what happened here?"

"It's a little fuzzy, but my friend there getting cut out of his car with the jaws of life,

had stopped at the sign right there and looked both ways. The road was clear and a black sedan came out of nowhere, rammed us and they high-tailed it out of here. I hit my head at the time of the impact and when I came to, Phoenix was bleeding and Stone was passed out. After I called 9-1-1, I wrapped my shirt around Phoenix's head and made sure Stone was still breathing and then you all showed up."

The office just nods and takes notes.

"Are my friends okay?" I ask.

"Once I have some info, you'll be the first to know," he states as he walks back to Stone's car, eyeing it as if he is making sure that my story checks out.

The whining of the saw finally stops, in awe, I watch as they remove the twisted metal that was encasing Stone from the car. My breath catches a little as the EMTs work to lift him from the car. Stone lives up to his name, he is not a light boy, pure muscle from swinging that hammer in his father's forges.

I stroll over there and butt in, "Here let me help."

They start to protest until they notice I can lift him. A couple of them grab his legs and we heave him onto the gurney. They start to cut the car again to get to Phoenix. He was the one that I was worried about. I have never seen that much blood in my life. Can a human/demi-god body contain all of that?

As I watch the sparks, my mind returns to Harper and her screams haunt me once again. What I wouldn't give just to hold her in my arms. I know she is pissed that I didn't listen to her mother, but I have never been able to stay far from her.

I remember the first time that we met, it was a perfect summer day at Huntington Beach. Her blonde hair was shimmering in the sunlight. She radiated like a god, and

when those icy blue eyes landed on me, I was a goner.

I was hooked on her from that moment forward. She was surrounded by friends, and a buff guy who had an arm around her waist. Fuck, how would she be mine? For a minute, I thought she smirked at me, maybe I do stand a chance.

One of my friends hit me in the head with a volleyball. "Dude," I whined.

"You know you can't hit the ball with your head," he joked.

I watched as the ball rolls towards her, the goddess, and bumped her foot. "Miss, a little help please." I smirked.

"Oh, I love volleyball, can I join?" She perked up, twirling the ball in her hands.

"Whatever you want, beautiful," I replied.

The jock at her side frowns as she asks, "Do you mind, Stone?"

"Not at all, baby, go have fun," he replied with a dirty look thrown my way.

She gives him a peck on the cheek and heads towards me.

She extends her hand to me, "I'm Harper."

Her touch has the same cool and calming effect as the water. How can she feel like home?

"Harper," Phoenix's voice rouses me from the memory.

I'm grateful to hear his voice. Maybe his injuries aren't as bad as I thought. The



officer I talked with earlier comes over to me.

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"From what I see your story checks out. Who is this Harper, the redhead is moaning about?"

"His cat, she ran away before we came out here to hike." I shrug.

Harper

The more I struggle the weaker I become. Each time I try to remove the necklace, the weaker I am. Where the fuck did they come up with something to cage me? It is a small trinket and yet I am stuck.

"Where are you taking me?" I demand.

"Home," the one in the passenger seat replies.

"Really? Home? Let me go! If you don't, once I get this necklace off, I will destroy you and your home," I state.

The pair of them laugh. Are they fucking serious? Do they really have a clue who I am? My blood boils and my power surges enough that I have hope that I will be able to get this blasted thing off me.

My head aches. I gingerly run my fingers over the spot where I hit the window. A goose egg has started to form. Leaning on my palm, I close my eyes and focus, willing all my power towards the tiny prison on my chest. What little I have left I pray to my father to make my bolt straight and true. When my collective of energy and power hits the metal it sizzles. I'm now able to touch it, I lift it to my view and

notice the mark where my bolt broke the powers.

If they don't check the necklace when we arrive, I will bide my time and let my powers restore themselves until it's the perfect moment to strike.

Satisfied with my handiwork, I close my eyes but don't really relax. This headache has to go. Sleep has always been the best cure for it.

Stone

I come to and the lights above me are blinding, the fluorescents flicker and tell me what I already know. I'm in a hospital room.

"It's about time. You looked like Sleeping Beauty, but there was no fucking way that I was going to kiss you to wake you," Nile pipes up.

"Keep your filthy mouth away from me," I joke. "How's Phoenix?"

"He had to have a couple of stitches, but he is fine. We were lucky, if they had gone any faster when they rammed into us, you two would have died. They were after Harper and they have her. Can you get your ass out of that bed and help me?"

There is a seriousness in his eyes, determination, like I have never seen before.

"I'm always up for a fight, but can you get me some clothes? I don't think my ass hanging out the back of this gown will do much more than scare them off." I laugh.

"Fuck, that would have me running for the hills."

"Har har. Get the clothes. What about Phoenix? Will he fight?" I question.

"He was my next stop once you were up. I have no doubt that he'll take up arms and help us get our girl back," he assures me.

"Let's blow this popsicle stand." I smirk, slowly rising to my feet.

"Dude, ass," is all he says as he leaves my room.

Harper

After driving for what seems like days, as the sun sets, we pull into a long drive. They slow their speed on the gravel, coming to a stop at a large wooden barrier, along with giant gates in the middle.

Two suits exit a little door that's located on the side of the gates, they check the vehicle and nod to the driver as the whine of the gates sounds as they open.

Laying behind them is a mini town, we travel down their main street complete with a grocery store. What the fuck? How is all this hidden away from everyone? These people are serious about themselves. The whole thing is normal until we get to the middle and what seems to be a town hall.

There, staring at me, is a giant statue of me. Shit, did not all my memories come back? I remember a few encounters with this cult, but never more than a few glances and scares when they tried to take me the first time.

"Who are you taking me to?" I demand.

No answer.

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"If I am truly your goddess, you will answer me."

"You are," the driver states, pulling into the circle drive.

Two women in white gowns are waiting at the curb to help me out. They don't give me a chance to run as they link their arms with mine.

"We are so grateful to have you here, Goddess. He said you would arrive soon. First you are to wash and change then it'll be time to dine."

"Who is he?" I ask, to no reply.

We climb the steps and upon entering, the inside has the appearance of a house, nothing like what you'd think from the outside.

I don't struggle as we go right into a giant suite right off the main doors, an odd place for one, but it's not my house. There is a center theme and it's sickening. I think gold has thrown up everywhere.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" the one on my left asks.

I have no words for her, I simply nod.

What I'm not expecting when we entered the bathroom was the walk-in tub and for them to start to disrobe me.

"What are you doing?"

"We are to wash you, Goddess. How are we to do our job with your clothes on?" The one on the right laughs.

"I'm more than able to wash myself. I'm in no need of help."

"It's his orders, they will be done."

They continue their task until I'm standing there naked. Normally, I would've given them a zap, but not until I know who is doing this.

Once they release me, I descend into the surprisingly hot water, when I'm up to my shoulders, my companions join me.

The whole time they scrub me, I chant to myself, 'Revenge will be mine, revenge will be sweet.'

Once I'm cleaned, they dry and dress me. A once-over and they are satisfied with their work, they link arms and escort me to a new room.

"Master, here is our Goddess," they say in unison.

A shadowed figure turns towards us, and when the light hits his face, I mutter "Douche."

Phoenix

I wake with a throbbing pain on the back of my head, my eyes flutter open to Stone and Nile hoisting me up.

"Time to save Harper, wakey, wakey, Phoenix," Nile coos.

"What the fuck hit me?" I ask.

"A car, those bastards rammed us and took our girl," he replies.

"Our girl? I like the sound of that," I state.

"You really did hit your head didn't you?" Stone laughs.

Exiting the hospital, Nile's truck is parked under the awning. "How'd you get your ride here?"

"Stone's boss, he brought us the card that the 'agents' left. There was an address on there, that is our first lead towards getting her back," Nile replies.

"Stop your jawing and let's get this done, but first I need to see my car," Stone says.

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"Why?" Nile asks. "We need to get Harper. What is so important in your car?"

Stone raises an eyebrow at him, as they help me into the back of the truck. "My hammer." He smirks.

Nile rolls his eyes as buckles me in, "Fine, but if it's not there, we are not going on a crazy search for it. Harper is our number one concern."

Stone grunts as he climbs into the passenger seat. "Then hurry your ass up, we have to get to Harper."

Nile revs up the engine and speeds out of the lot. "Your car will be in a wrecker's yard, anyone have a phone with google?"

"I think that's in the car still, too," Stone comments, "but I know where to find it."

"What is the plan? And who put the pants on me?" I ask.

Nile and Stone both laugh.

"Trust me, I won't be doing it again anytime soon." Nile laughs. "Phoenix, do you have a weapon of choice?"

"A sword, Father insisted all his sons were trained in hand-to-hand combat and swords. Got one handy?" I ask.

Nile pats his right forearm, where his trident tattoo is, "Never leave home without



mine. Well, it's a trident but that's better than a sword."

"Not all of us are lucky enough to get magic tattoos, or for that matter a gift of any kind from their godly parent," I gripe.

"A little bitter back there, Phoenix?" Stone asks.

With a huffing sigh, I answer, "Maybe a little, but I'll get over it. Those fuckers took our girl, let's get her back."

"Turn here," Stone tells Nile, "Just a few blocks and the impound yard will be on the left. You two stay here and I'll grab my hammer.

"How are you? Okay?" I ask Stone. "I am sore in places I didn't know I could be sore in and my head is killing me. Can you look for my sword in the car? I had it in there before the wreck."

"I'll look, and my father, he worked us to the bone, and then made us work harder. That was his way. He said he was giving us a thick skin." He winks as Nile pulls in to the lot and he hops out.

"Well, his father was nicer than mine," I whisper.

"I can't imagine having Ares as a father, I've heard the stories, he is almost as much of an asshole as his father." Nile smirks.

"Worse, we trained all day and at night. We would have little "battles" and whichever son or daughter lost would fight him. He never once showed mercy, either. And the swords were real," I tell him as I rub the scar on my wrist.

"What's the plan when we get to the address of the card? I don't think that they'll

welcome us with open arms. I think it's best we have a plan of attack ready," I tell Nile.

"What do you suggest? Of the three of us, you have the most military-type experience and your fireman training may be handy."

"First, we need to scope out the location and find where they are holding her. We can't go in guns blazing. Where the vantage points are and what type of weapons they have. Once we do that, we can set a small contained fire to distract them and we can sneak in," I tell him.

"Dude, you just thought of all of that just now? Your tactical planning could rival Athena herself." Nile laughs.

"Fuck, don't say that out loud, We have to save Harper, not incur Athena's wrath," I reply.

"What is taking Stone so long?" Nile complains, ignoring my comment about Athena.

"I mean he was literally just hit by a car, so it may take him longer to get around."

About that time, Stone lumbers toward the car and with a smile on his face and his hammer in hand.

Jerking the door open, he pops down in the seat, "Time to bring our girl home. Sorry Phoenix, no sword in sight."

Harper

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“Ifucking should’ve known it was you!” I spit at him. “I will never be yours, why all the theatrics?”

“What better way to get your attention?”

The smirk on his lips makes me want to hurl. A shiver of disgust rolls through me as I swallow the bile threatening to rise in my throat.

“What part of no don’t you understand? I have my soulmate, you can’t worm your way in, it doesn’t work that way. Beside you’re my half brother, what kind of sick fuck wants to mate with their sister?”

“I guess I get it from dear old dad. Maybe the apple doesn’t fall from the tree.” Hermes shrugs as he steps towards me.

I don’t back up. He doesn’t scare me, and I won’t back down. “Brother, if you love me as you claim, let me go. Stone and I belong together, the fates have intertwined our strings, they can’t be cut.”

I don’t say anything about Nile or Phoenix, not to give away something he may not know.

He throws his head back and barks out a laugh, “Those old biddies have no idea what they are doing. You really think that you and Stone are fated? Soulmates are not a real thing, not for us gods and goddesses. Why else is our father a playboy? Fucking anything and everything?”

A rumble of thunder warns us that our conversation is not our own. “That is his choice, if you want to follow in his footsteps, be my guest. I won’t be a pawn or conquest, I have my happily ever after. There have to be a few dozen women here in this little town of yours eager to bed you. Go play with them and let me go,” I tell him.

“I, for one, like the cat and mouse game. Why else do you think we are here?” He steps up to me, face to face.

“Because you’re a dumbass. You really think that I will bow to you? I have no intention of playing childish games. Stone will come for me, and once my powers are restored, I will burn your ass to a crisp.”

He taps on the pendant around my necklace. “This was made especially for you, you really think you can get it off. I’d like to see you try.” The smirk returns to his lips.

Not tipping my hand, I frown, playing along until I find the opening I need. Controlling my temper, so I don’t zap his ass here and now. The smile on his face widens.

My stomach betrays me and growls.

“Hungry?”

“I’d rather starve than break bread with you,” I reply, standing my ground.

“Come now, a little hunger strike isn’t going to do you any good. I promise to be on my best behavior.”

“I’ll eat, but only if you stop talking, you sound just like our father.” I gag.

Stone

“Are you sure that is the right address?” I ask, staring at the small blip on the screen. “It will be nightfall when we reach it. I don’t even want to think about what they are doing to her.”

“Harper can take care of herself. The cult wants her powers, but it’s not something they can just take. I’m more afraid that they will try and brainwash her into some kind of weapon. We have no idea what they really want her for,” Nile reminds me.

“Step on the gas and let’s get her our girl back,” Phoenix pipes up from where he is laying in the backseat. Out of the three of us, the impact of the wreck was centered on his seat. They had to cut me out, but my injuries were minor compared to his. Lacerations on his chest and arms, they hospital did a great job of fixing him up. “How is it that you two hate each other and yet, at the same time, you two are a team?”

“Easy. Harper. We don’t have to like each other, but all of our petty differences were put to the wayside for her. It’s the bond and she is our center,” Nile says.

I turn to face him, “When she said that wouldn’t force you, she won’t. She did the same for me, then Nile. It's not something that any of us have control over, but if you pick a different path, she will not stop you. The fates are cruel, this is just one more example of their power over not only our lives but goddesses as well.”

“To be honest, I still don’t know what I want, I have a pull to be near her. But at the same time, I don’t want to get in the way of what you three have.” He shrugs.

“Don’t let us stop you, I tried to stop Nile and you see how well that worked for me.” I wink.

“So, you two don’t hate each other?” he asks.

“No, we do, but for her, we make it work. You don’t have to decide anything right now, just think about it, for her,” I tell him. “But for now, you are one of us, and you will fight to get her back for us. In that, you have no choice.”

He nods, “I’m up for kicking some cult ass.”

“Good, we’ll most likely be outnumbered, so there’ll be a lot of ass to kick. Why don’t you kick back and take a nap?”

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Phoenix closes his eyes, and when light snores come from the back seat I turn back to Nile. “Have you seen him fight?”

“Nope, we met up when I first started on the cruise ships. No real fights there. Just drunk people.” He laughs.

“With him being the son of Ares, he better damn well know how to fight. If not, I’m not babysitting him,” I tell Nile.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get us to our girl, you relax.”

“It’s hard to do that when I don’t know what they are doing to Harper. I try not to be controlling, but I like it when I can see her.”

“She’s a spitfire, I’m sure she’s giving them hell,” Nile says.

“We’ll know when we get there, if we see smoke, she is on a rampage,” I joke.

“I for one, am hoping for smoke, these bastards need to leave her the fuck alone. We lost time with her because of them.”

Harper

Hermes leers at me as I peck at my food. “It’s not going to get any deader, you should just eat it and not play with it.”

“Whatever you say, old man,” I mutter.

“You agreed to eat with me,” he shrugs.

“When I did, you didn’t say you were going to creepily stare at me the whole time.”

“I’m not used to being in the company of anyone so beautiful. It’s hard to keep my eyes off of you.”

I drop my fork and push back from the table. “If you’re going to talk like that, I’m done. There is no sense in eating when you’re going to make me puke.”

“Sister, don’t be like that. Eat, I’ll keep my comments to myself and play nice.”

“You are to treat me like your sister, nothing more. I’ll never be more to you than that. How can I get that through your thick skull?”

“I’ll get you to change your mind.” He winks.

“Stop talking, I have my soul mate. I will never be yours.”

“Well, if you’re not going to eat, how about a stroll along your new town?” Hermes smiles.

“Sure, but I won’t be here long enough to enjoy it.” I whisper under my breathe.

Hermes comes around and pulls my chair out, “My lady.”

Bile rises in my throat, but I stand and follow him out, refusing to take his arm.

He heads out the same doors I arrived at when I left the car. The sun has started to set, so the street lamps are lit.



I didn't pay much attention when we entered the gates, I should've, so I could have planned an escape route. I was too concerned with who was doing this to me to think anymore than that.

Hermes transformed what would've been town hall into his house. His house was at the end of a main street. We walked and he told me all about the little town. Who ran this store and that. Small talk and mostly himself listening to his own voice.

Gods, are they so self-absorbed? May Zeus strike me down if I'm an asshole like my brother.

On this mini tour, I spotted a few armed citizens, some dressed the same as the ones that had come to get me. I wonder what happens when lightning hits a gun?

All the smiling faces, this façade doesn't sway me. This place is not my home, I won't stay here; I don't belong.

Stone

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

The GPS chirps that we have five more miles till our destination, my nerves are on edge as a gated town comes into view.

"Fuck, they have their own town? I knew we'd be outnumbered, but this shit is getting crazy. Maybe we will finally get to the bottom of this cult. There's no smoke yet, so Harper hasn't made her move," I say.

"She may be biding her time, until we get there," Nile pipes up.

"How does she know we are going to show up? She doesn't know we know where she's at, or how to get to her. Blind faith?" Phoenix asks.

"Yes, Harper knows that Nile and I will stop at nothing to get her back. We lost her once, I'll be damned if that happens again," I vow.

Nile slows as we pull up a few yards from the main gates.

"So, son of Ares, got any tactile plans to enlighten us with?" I turn towards Phoenix to ask.

"Never bring a knife to a gunfight," he jokes.

"Okay, anything useful?"

"I'm a son of Ares, not Athena. She's the brains and my dad is the brawn," Phoenix replies.

"So, you're basically useless," I state. "You can fight but have no sword, no plans, or ideas to get her back?"

"I bring the good looks," he replies with a straight face.

"So, you can kill them with your smile, got it. Medusa your mom? That would be helpful if you could turn them to stone."

"Ha ha, what is your plan?" he asks me.

"Let's park and walk up. Scope out the town and see if there are any entrances. I don't think the locals will welcome us with open arms. First, let's get in and then we fight our way to our girl," I tell them.

"So, death in battle. My father will be pleased with that death."

Nile chirps in, "I for one have no plans of dying. It's been too long since I've been with Harper, I will cut down any man in my path to get back to her."

"Who knew you were so passionate, Nile?" I laugh.

"Shut the fuck up and get out," he barks as he throws the car into park.

We pile out and Nile locks the doors as we head to the cozy but oddly placed town. What kind of sick fuck runs this place? The gates are the only thing that looks out of place. It's like a fortress. I swear I'll go nuts if they are holding hands and singing. I'm going to lose my shit.

"This place has to be a couple of miles around, anyone here a runner?" I ask.

"Fuck, I'm going," Phoenix replies as he takes off in a jog.

"So, are we just supposed to stay here and chat until he comes back?"

Awkward silence passes Nile and I as we wait for Phoenix. Pacing a little, I am ready for this fight. I don't want to imagine what they are doing to her. I've only just got her back, I am not waiting too much longer to have her in my arms.

It's about twenty minutes before Phoenix is huffing and puffing back into sight.

"Well, anything?" I ask in anticipation.

"There is a back way in, it is halfway around almost in the back. You two think you can keep up?" Phoenix smirks.

"You're the one out of breath, you think you can make it?" Nile jokes.

"Keep up if you can," he replies and takes off jogging again.

Nile lags behind the both of us, I hear some choice words leave his lips, and he nearly falls over when we stop.

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*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

"Too much time on the sea? You need to up your cardio game, brother," I jab.

"Shut... your...mouth..." he rasps.

Phoenix speaks up, his voice a little more than a whisper, "Shit, you trying to get us caught? We could've just walked up to the front door and rang the bell."

"Weapons at the ready?" I ask, holding up my hammer.

Nile taps his trident tattoo and as if it was magic, a metal one materializes.

"Well, that's handy, how'd you get that? I'll never lose my hammer that way," I remark.

"You two can compare notes later. Harper is waiting for us to rescue her," Phoenix reminds us.

"After you," I tell him.

Harper

Hermes paraded me around the town as if I was a prize. All the people in the community had to put a hand on me. I don't think there is a bath long or hot enough to sanitize my skin.

"I told you that everyone would love you. Won't you be happy here? Adored by everyone here?" Hermes smirks.

"You're not going to talk me into staying. I don't belong here, Stone is searching for me even now. You really have some balls. You don't think kidnapping me will piss Father off? I'm surprised my mother hasn't zapped your ass yet. You know that Stone is the son of Hephaestus right? You don't think that his father will side with him and pound you into dog food for Cerberus?"

He throws his back in laughter, "You really think I'm an idiot don't you? I have this place warded from all of our family. No one will find us here."

Fuck my life, he really doesn't want to let this go.

"Once I get this off," I tell him as I point at the necklace. "I'm zapping your ass and getting out of this sickly sweet town."

The words just roll off my tongue as a siren sounds. Instead of panic, elation fills me, that can only mean my guys are here. I can't wait to see the look on Hermes's face when he sees that Stone is not alone. A smirk tips up my lips.

"Why are you smiling? Come with me now," Hermes demands. "Someone's broken in and I have to get you to safety."

"You know it's Stone, right? You're crazy if you think that I'm going anywhere with you. I'm content to stay here until I see his face. And trust me he will kick your ass, God or not."

"You really think that I'm scared of a lone demi-god and a bound goddess?" Hermes laughs.

I keep my smirk hidden, I'm not going to give away that I'm no longer bound or that I have a weapon around my neck. At least not until he least expects it. I wish I had my phone to capture the look on his face when it's not just Stone. I know that Nile will

come for me, but not Phoenix.

My gut tells me that Phoenix will come for me, but my heart isn't sure. He just took a step towards me, but then this asshat had me kidnapped.

Hermes steps towards me and grips the underside of my arm, "Come on, you think that I'm going to make this easy for your lover boy? I'm not a trickster for nothing, if he wants you, he will have to find you."

I struggle against his grip but he only tightens it more. If only I could zap him, but it's not time to surprise him yet. I don't go willingly but he drags me towards his mansion, anyway. On the way there, I sent a silent prayer to my father.

Zeus, if you can hear me, please help protect my men as they make their way to me. Keep the innocent safe from my brother Hermes. He is mine, don't be upset when I zap his manhood and he can't give you any godchildren. I warned him, but he didn't listen. It is almost time to unleash the bolt.

Hermes pulls me into the house, the locks click behind us.

"I never took you for a coward. I mean having the cult do your bidding I should've known, but ball up, man. No woman wants a man that acts like a pussy and hides from a fight," I taunt him.

"Good try, sis, but your words are not going to get me to run out into a fight. I am smarter than you give me credit for. I'll wait for them to come to me." He smiles.

That worries me, what does he have planned for them? He let go of me, I wonder if I can get by him or not. I sure as hell am going to try, he thinks I'm going to go out the front door, but I duck back to my room. He gives chase. As soon as he appears in the doorway, I smash the glass and hop out. The glass slides along my thigh but it's just a

flesh wound, so I jump and run into the grass.

He doesn't follow my escape, instead he runs back to the door and I hear the locks unclicking as I run back to the main road. I'm tired of playing the helpless goddess, but once I lay my eyes on my mates, I hope that will be the charge I need to bring Hermes and his lackeys to their knees.

I run towards the gunshots and pray I'm not too late. I can't bear the thought of finding their bodies lifeless in the street. As my legs carry me, I rip the stupid pendant that once contained my powers from my chest. I'm surprised at the energy that returns as I throw it towards a trash can on the side of the road.



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*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

My fingers wrap around the bolt from my father and I wait until I hear that whisper from him, telling me it is time to unleash not only it but my power.

As I round a corner and shooters come into view it comes, "Daughter, now. Be careful."

I gently pull the bolt from my neck and it transforms into a lightning-bolt-shaped sword. My own lightning arcs on the edges of the blade. It is beautiful, but I have to get back to the task at hand.

My legs keep pumping as I cut down each of Hermes's men that are firing on my guys. One quick slash of my blade and they fall to the ground, cradling their arms, the burns visible where my sword glanced at them.

With each howl of pain, I am a step closer to them. As they come into view, I notice that Stone and Nile are in the lead with Phoenix weaponless behind them. They still advance. Stone is swinging his hammer, blocking all the bullets as Nile uses his trident to maim the shooter but not kill them.

Phoenix's eyes are the first to meet me and he breaks their little march and comes running to me. I get the shooter aiming at him just as the bullet leaves the chamber. I strike the gunman and run to Phoenix as he falls.

"You idiot," I scolded him. "You're lucky this is a flesh wound, or I'd go to the underworld and drag your ass back to the land of the living to kill you myself."

I forgot about the madness just for a moment and it was just the two of us.

Strong hands clasp my shoulders, pull me from Phoenix, and into a chest.

"Stone, my love, I knew you'd come for me." I smile into his chest.

"Did they hurt you? I saw blood on your leg. What did these sick fucks do to you?"  
Worry is written on his face.

"Nothing, really. It's my brother, Hermes. He is the fucker behind all this. I know my family is full of sick fucks, but my own brother? Maybe I was better off not knowing who I was."

Stone pulls me back just enough to see my face. "No, that was torture for me. You are more powerful than he ever has been. It's time you show him that and fight for what's yours. Us," he tells me. Pointing at himself, then Nile and Phoenix.

"Even Nile?" I laugh. "You hate him."

"If you love him, we will figure it out. I'm not losing you again," he vows.

"Deal," I agree. "Let's go kick my brother's ass and get out of this town. It's a little too much for me and creepy."

"You got it," Phoenix agrees as he picks up a gun from one of the shooters.

"Phoenix, use this. I want it back, but I think you can wield it better than I can," I say, tossing him the bolt blade. "I mean you don't get the light show with it, but it will be handy in a fight."

He catches it with ease and I notice that he is testing the balance of the blade, then his blue eyes meet mine. "If you give me your weapon, what will you use?"

"I am the weapon, don't you worry about me." I wink. "Now let's see if Hermes is hiding in his mansion. He was never much for fighting. Why else do you think my dad made him a messenger."

Leading my men, we head back to where I just came from and as we come back to the main road, there stands Hermes with a row of men.

"Oh, so you do take after our father, huh? Seems you have a double standard. I see you standing with not only Stone but two more demi-gods. My little sister is a slut," he states with disappointment in his tone.

"First of all, you are a sick fuck, wanting to mate with your sister. The fates are the ones that gave me three mates. So, call me a slut if you want, but I choose love and my destiny to be with these men. Maybe you're just bitter that fate didn't give you a mate, so you try to take what's not yours. Tell your men to drop their weapons. Have you ever seen what happens to a gun once lightning hits it?" I taunt.

"You are bound, that..." he stammers when he notices that I no longer have the pendant on.

"Your cheap jewelry didn't do its job. I was able to zap it. So, men, I repeat, drop your weapons. With lightning hitting them, the plastic will melt but the powder will still explode, raining molten metal all over you. I mean if you don't value your life by all means keep them."

More than half of the men throw their guns away, but they are quickly replaced with swords that they had hidden behind their backs.

I glance at my men, they all silently nod that they are ready for this fight. Hermes and I take a step towards each other as his men run towards us. My men give me a wide berth as I call upon my powers. Lightning arcs around me and the wind starts to pick

up. I surround myself with a tornado that blows all his attackers from my path as I keep my eyes focused on Hermes.

The clang of swords and hammer have me a little on edge but I know that Stone and Nile are skilled fighters, Phoenix is a son of Ares, he'd better be able to handle himself.

As my wind tunnel gets near to my brother he is having more and more trouble standing his ground.

"It didn't have to come to this, brother. I will make you pay for the years I have lost with Stone and Nile. I will not let up until our father, himself, makes me. I will no longer live in fear. I have my men and no one will take them from me. Do you understand that?"

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*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 9:06 pm*

"Oh, sweet sister, I will get what I want. Once I have knocked you out, next I will do the same to your men, but theirs will be permanent." He smirks.

"You can't even keep your footing with my mini cyclone. How can you match my powers?" I ask.

"There is more to fighting than weapons, Harper," he remarks.

Then there is a scream of pain, and my guard and wind falls as I see the large gash on Nile's leg. He grips the wound now dripping blood but continues to fight on.

Hermes is now in my face as I turn back towards him. He took a hilt of his sword and hit me in the temple with it. Stars blur my vision, but I zap him with a blast of lightning and he flies back from me.

"You little bitch, you really zapped me."

"I'm not a tease, when I promise I deliver. Besides, you think you can hit me in the head with your sword and I'm just going to take it? I told you, you'll never have me."

I glance at a solider creeping up on my left and I zap him, blasting him back into a dumpster. "You're next," I motion to Hermes. "We can stop this now or I'm going to have to ruin your face, too. I know how much you love it."

His hands raise to his face, "You wouldn't dare."

"I told you that the only thing that will stop me is our father. You need to be taught a

lesson. If marring up your face is what gets it through your skull then so be it."

In the palm of my hand, I hold on to the bolt, it is small but it grows with each step I take towards him.

"Sister, we can talk about this," he whines.

"You better pray to our father, he will be the only one that can take this blast and live on."

"Father, I'm sorry. Please don't let Harper destroy me. I just wanted someone to love me. Is that a bad thing? Please save me, father."

Harper

Raising my hand towards my brother, I know that my bolt hits my mark as he howls out in agony. I don't let his pain deter me, I promised to punish him if he wouldn't let me go. He didn't, so I don't have any guilt about this.

He begs me to stop.

"That's funny coming from you. You begging me, I asked you to let me go and you refused. This is justice for the years of hiding and not being with my family or my men. I told you that I wouldn't stop until our father ordered me to. I don't see Zeus here to save you, brother. Maybe your guilt is finally getting to you."

He howls again and then there is a hand on my shoulder, then another and Stone in my view. "Harper, it's time to stop." His voice is calm, and unnervingly so.

Phoenix and Nile agree from behind me.

"You need to stop, I think he got your point," Nile whispers behind me.

"I can't, I won't back down. He needs to pay for what he did to me, to us," I plead with them.

Phoenix runs a finger on my cheek. "He has, he lost. He doesn't have you, we do. The lesson you taught him will be etched on his face for the rest of his life. There'll not be a day he doesn't remember that you took action and your life back from his control."

I have the bolt shimmer and it fades.

"That's our girl," Nile says, squeezing my shoulder.

The three of them envelope me in a hug and I cry. They are tears for taking what was mine back and that I didn't lose it all in the process.

Peeking over Stone's shoulder, I watch as Hermes holds his face and scurries away from the four of us. I don't say a word, but the look on his face tells me it's over.

Stone sweeps me off of my feet, "First stop, a pharmacy to patch you three up and then a month-long vacation?"

"Sounds good to me," I reply, leaning into his chest. "Somewhere with water."

"Well, good thing we know a captain," Phoenix remarks.