

My Allegory

Chapter 1

Dear Bailey,

Thank you, my daughter. You are the prize of my world. You don't know how much I appreciate every action you take. I wish I could be with you and the boys more, but you know how busy I am. I know you are like a mom to them. You do an excellent job, and they love and respect you for it. You are the one keeping that household together.

I know I don't usually talk about your mom, so this is my gift to you: Happy 16th birthday.

Your mother was the most beautiful woman. She would find me after I had gone on a date, and I'd end up liking our little conversations more than the hours I spent with my real date. Her laugh was pure and joyous. I enjoyed every moment I had with her. I hadn't seen her for months when I found a baby girl on my door with a note signed with a kiss. That was you, and ever since my only connection to her is what I see in you. That's all I need. I love you, Bailey.

Sincerely dad.

I hold the only picture of my mom I've ever received. I am staring into her gorgeous face

"Bailey Bailey!!" Conner pulls me downstairs.

"Look at the cat in our yard." I stare open-mouthed in horror. It looks like a half-lion, half-goat awful monster.

With a blink, it's gone.

I probably just didn't get enough sleep, I think to myself. I then turned around and saw Will's expression; he had seen it too. Random things like this happen often, but whenever I ask Will about it, he always refuses he saw anything.



"Hey, sweetheart," a smooth voice whispers with a grin.

I have just gone to pick up the mail before I head home. And, of course, Max has to be there. The first time I saw him, I was interested, but it just didn't feel right when we kissed. I tried to tell him as much, but he can't let go of me. He has been following me ever since. This time, he brought his friends. They all stared at me open-mouthed.

"You got to kiss her?" one of them whispered to Max, thinking I wouldn't hear.

"Yeah, it was the best moment of my life," I glared at him, and he winked at me. His eyes said, "What? I'm only speaking the truth." I rolled my eyes and got back into the car.

I noticed a beautiful young woman who looked like she was on her way to walk down the red carpet. I drove over to see if I could help her.

"BAILEY," the lady hissed. Transforming from a beautiful woman to a half-serpent monster. Reaching out with her tail, she snatched me, bringing me to her mouth.

"It's too bad that you will never know the truth about your brother, your whole family, really."

My brain was working over time.

Will came running down the street. He threw an umbrella at me. As I grabbed it, it transformed into a giant bronze spear. My instincts took over, and I spun it around, cutting off the woman's ear. She dropped me, and I landed on my feet. I charged, full of anger and confusion. In three hits, she evaporated into dust.

Chapter 2

"What secret was she talking about??"

"I'll explain everything on our way to camp."

He told me everything about the gods, camp half-blood, and finally, my real mother.



The Hermes cabin was huge, with so many people. My bunk is in the very back corner. It feels like they wanted to put me out of sight.

"Hey," a guy stands in front of me. He is Georg. He has dark blue eyes and towers over me. He is built like an agile football player. He has dirty blonde hair with soft curls. I realized I was staring, and my face went bright red.

"Hi,"

"Come with me. I'll show you around," he said with a grin. My adorable heart will never get over this.

He grabbed my hand, pulling me out the door.

I lay on my bed, a big cheesy smile lighting up my face. Owen had shown me everything about Camp Half-Blood. He flirted with me, and I was eating up every bit of it. I don't think my heart slowed once. He took me to the beach for sunset. It was so romantic. He was leaning in...., and then Will had to interrupt.



"Hey Trish, you looked at me weird when I was with Owen. I wanna know why."

probably not the best way to introduce myself but she looked tough enough.

"Nice to meet you too," she said, not looking up from her food.

"Sooo..." I say pushing

"It's just Owen. He isn't the most trustworthy person. He has broken many hearts.

Just be careful around him." she said, not looking at me once

"That's all?? " I say, not taking her words seriously. "Well, for your information, we almost kissed last night, so you can keep your weird looks to yourself." I stand, and Owen spots me, waving me over.

Chapter 3

BOLO, a conch horn, blows

"The Game started. You have no idea how to use a sword, so I'll be doing all the work," Trish said, acting like I was a child. I hate when people look at me like a child. Before I could do anything about it, three Aries kids stepped out of the woods, wanting the blue flag behind me.

Trish charged, taking two of them on, leaving one to sneak by. I couldn't embarrass myself or let Owen down, so I let all of the emotions I had been stuffing down out into a commanding shout.

"Stop."

He froze, but not just him; Trish and the other Aries kids did. The power emanating from me was crazy. I had power building in my throat, so I tried something else.

"Return to your side," I demanded

They turned and obeyed. I didn't know what to do. I had these kids under some sort of spell. Then I tripped over a root, and the spell was broken.

Trish stared at me.

"Congrats, blue team, winners of..." Chiron was staring at me, no right above me.

I looked up, and a rose 5 feet tall was floating above me.

I felt a tingle spread through my whole body. All the mud, scratches, and blemishes disappeared from my skin. My hair curled into perfect waves, falling around my shoulders. My clothes were transformed into white robes that fit my body. I was beautiful. Owen's mouth was wide open, tracing my body with his eyes.

"Well, Bailey, your mother has claimed you. Welcome Bailey, the daughter of Aphrodite, the goddess of love."

Out of all the options, it has to be Aphrodite. All they do is wear makeup, gossip about the guys, and never work. That's not me, Right?

Cabin 11 was beautiful. The beds had pink covers made for a princess. Fairy lights were hanging from the ceiling, bathing everything in warm yellow light. Everyone

looked so good. Even the boys were expertly styled. They had big (very good-looking) muscles. The girl's hair and makeup was perfect.

"Hello.... Bailey," a girl said. She was tall and elegant, and her look was so regal that you could tell she was the one in charge here. She looked me up and down, jealous of the outfit. If this girl was jealous of me, then I could handle her.

Another girl broke the silent staring contest.

"Omg, hi!!! I'm Liv, and welcome to cabin 10. Here is your bed right across from mine!!" she said without breathing

Liv and I became good friends fast. I learned who she wanted to impress, and I think we spent over an hour planning how to get him to notice her. I felt so included. Someone got how my brain worked, at least a little. Maybe I really was a daughter of Aphrodite.

At the campfire that night, Liv sat a few people down from me, and I simply looked at her. We connected. She knew I was urging her to talk to her boy, and she was nervous. We had a whole conversation with our eyes like we had known each other forever.

Chapter 4

After the campfire, I met the director, Astraea, at the big house. Apparently, she is the goddess of justice; Zeus sent her to direct the camp.

"You have proven that you are a daughter of Aphrodite. What you did in Capture the Flag was not normal," she said sternly. "Because of your great power, you must be tested immediately." She paused, letting it sink in. "You are to go and retrieve the scarf of Aphrodite."

"Wait, like a quest??"

"Yep," Will says, stepping into the room "It is in the place of luck and fortune," Will says in a worried tone.

"La Vegas." I say, "So I just have to walk in and take it?"

"A goddess, Tyche, guards it. That doesn't even mention the other monsters you will encounter. Once you step out of these magical borders, every monster will be attracted to your powerful scent. I am the only one who kept them for the first 15 years of your life. Now, I will not be with you, but You can bring two companions of your choice."

Two companions!! Who should I pick? I barely know anyone. Owen? Liv? Who else is there? Do I really want to put the people I care about most in danger?

"Why would I do this?" I say really not wanting to go.

"I fear that if you don't, Zeus will mark you as dangerous. You will be cast into the underworld. Aphrodite wouldn't like that and would strain their relationship to a near-breaking point." Astraea said, "It is only fair. You have to repay your mother." Dang. I don't like justice anymore. Since when is this fair?

"It is now time for Bailey to pick her two companions, who will travel to Las Vegas and retrieve Aphrodite's scarf from Tyche's hands to claim glory and approval from Mount Olympus," Asraea announced

Will leaned over to whisper, "It is a great honor to be picked for a quest in your first summer. Act at least a little excited."

"How can I? I don't want a quest! I just got here and don't know any of these people!" I hissed back, but even as I said it, I knew there was one person I knew and wanted to choose. He made me feel safe and relaxed. A smile came to my

face, and I locked eyes with Owen. There was something in his expression. I didn't stop to read what it could be.

"I pick Owen," I say in a confident voice.

"Owen, you have been chosen. do you accept this quest?"

"No," he said in a flat voice

he said no. My heart broke. I thought trust had grown between us, maybe even love. I thought he would do this for me. No. I looked into his eyes, and they said *we had nothing. idk what you were thinking. I would never risk my life for you.* I wanted to scream, cry, and punch him where it hurt, but instead, I kept my brave face on, the one I used when dad told me money was low and I couldn't let my brothers know.

I picked a random, cute guy with some good strength. I think his name was Finn, and Trish.

"I told you so," Trish said; she found me furiously punching a dummy in the training room.

"How did you know?" I say, flopping on the ground, exhausted.

"I know Owen."

"Has he hurt you too?" I ask, seeing the glare she shot when he said his name

"Not me, my friend, but they went farther than you and him. She cried for weeks after he broke up with her. He didn't even feel sorry; he just moved on to the next girl. I can't imagine what Hermes is like."

"I can't believe I was such a fool. I was falling head over heels for him. As a daughter of Aphrodite, you'd think.. Idk I'd know better."

"Maybe because you are a daughter of Aphrodite, you have to have these experiences to learn the truth of love."

Wack wack. I've gone back to angrily punching the dummy.

"You really are bad at punching. You're going to hurt yourself."

"Idk how else to get it out."

"Getting distracted by a quest is a pretty good option." she says "How you feelin about that?"

"We'll find out tomorrow."

"Soo...." Finn said. He was sitting next to me, and I refused to feel better. I had learned my lesson from Owen.

"We should probably get to know each other," I say. Assuming Finn and Trish didn't know each other, "tell us the craziest story of your life."

Finn snuck on an airplane when he was 11.

Trish had lived in New Hampshire and had to ride in the back of a random pickup truck to escape the monsters.

I felt our connection grow, sharing these deep parts of themselves.

"Your turn." Finn is looking pointedly at me.

Suddenly I am self-conscious. They had gone through much worse.

After a moment of hesitation, I told them about the serpent lady, my brothers, and eventually even Max. It's crazy what a little story time can do to make a stranger into a friend.

Chapter 5

"Our flight for Denver leaves in 3 hours," Finn said

"Let's enjoy Charleston before we worry about our flight," I say

"Let's stop here," Trish pointed to a cute little cafe.

"Hello, I'm Phineas. I'll be your waiter today. What is your name?" Trish looked weary, but I chose not to notice.

"My name is Bailey. It's nice to meet you!" I said, trying to be nice.

Once the waiter was gone, Trish turned to me.

"What was that?! You do not just give your name out like that!! You aren't safe anymore. You need to be more careful."

"What is she going to do to us?? She's a waiter. It's not like the police want us!" I whisper-yelled back

"Not yet. That isn't uncommon for a demigod to get blamed by the police. Plus, she could be a monster."

"Monsters don't look like that," I say

I turned the argument to Finn, thinking he would be on my side

"Trish is right."

I rolled my eyes: and waited for the food

Massive plates of food came and were set in front of Finn and Trish. The waiters arec:

turned to me.

"The chef would like to talk to you inside."

Trish shot me a look and was about to tell the waiter to leave when I said

"Okay." I needed to

O c!)prove to Trish she was wrong and I could take care of myself

As I walked away, I heard Finn say

"Dang i'm gunna miss her" like there is no hope for me.

The chef was gorgeous, she had a cooks hat perfectly entwined in her light brown hair and lightly coated in flour. I suddenly wanted to cover myself in flour, hoping to look as beautiful as she was. I shook my head. "That was weird."

"What was that sweet?" her voice was as smooth as butter

"Ohh, nothing. What did you want to talk to me about?"

"I know about your quest. I have been waiting to talk to you."

Panic laced through me. My friends were right. This was a trap.

"I don't want to try and stop you just give you a little bit of information about your companiaions to.. Help you along"

"What could you possibly tell me?" I say my voice quivering

"Did you know that Finn and Trish used to be a thing?" she paused "They were pretty serious last year. I wonder what they are doing right now."

My heart broke again. Of course, they were. That's why Finn took Trish's side.

Jealousy took over. I don't blame Finn look at Trish. She is so confident and cool.

She knows exactly what to do in every situation. And they just see me as someone who doesn't know anything and is going to get them killed. I wish I was more experienced like Trish. Or knew how to sneak on an airplane like Finn. Or good with a sword like Owen or or or or my brain kept coming up with everything I wanted that others had. Everyone had life easier. Their problems were solvable and small, unlike mine.

My eyes locked with the chef, and she smiled. She knew exactly what I was thinking.

She wanted it, expected it, created it. What was the waitress's name?? Phineas??

Like Phthonos, the goddess of.... Envy. she was making me feel this. My stepmother's words came back to me.

"Focus not on what others possess, but on the gifts you hold within, for envy fades when gratitude begins."

I thought about my respect from my brothers at home, the safety and love I felt from them, and even how Max liked me. I thought about the glowing birthday cards I would receive from my dad describing what he loved about me. I felt gratitude for Liv, who made me feel welcome, and Trish for telling me the hard stuff. and surprisingly, I felt gratitude for Will, who had saved my life who knows how many times.

"I am **Enough**." I speak the words with the power of Aphrodite. These words are filled with love.

I began to glow. The chef. No Phthoso took a step back. Shocked.

I stood, turned, and walked back to my friends. I was powerful. I was strong. I was what I needed to be, nothing else.

Chapter 6

"Now that we are in the air, can you tell us what happened at the restaurant?!?"

I told them the whole story not mentioning the stuff she said about them or what I was jealous of. We weren't close enough for that quite yet.

"I'm sorry I didn't trust you guys. You were right; I shouldn't be overly nice to random monsters. Lesson learned. I'm still figuring this out, but I will learn, and I would love it if you guys could help teach me on this quest."

They seemed to smile at this, and my heart swelled.

I found myself glancing at Finn a few times throughout the flight. He looked really good. His muscle shirt displayed his hard-earned strength, and his hair was perfectly... wait a sec. When did that happen?



"Let's lock in, guys. We need to get to the train station in 45 minutes to catch our ride," Trish says as we step off the plane into the Denver airport.

"Chill. We will make it, I promise. It is a 30 min walk. This way"

We step into a creepy back alley, immediately I know something is wrong I tense.

"Die!!" a horrible monster screamed, launching at my head.

I froze. I was going to die. I couldn't protect myself.

Finn steps in front of me, his sword already drawn. One hand reaches behind him, holding me, and the other slices at the monster

Trish sneaks behind the gorgon while Finn is distracting it.

Thoc

It disintegrates

Finn turns to me, looking right into my eyes

"You okay?" he says in a breathy tone. I didn't know if that was because he had just killed a monster or because of how close we were standing, him still holding me.

"Ya, I whisper. Thanks." My cheeks are were so red.

"Okay, you love birds, we've got to keep going," Trish interrupts us

I step back quickly. Love birds? Really?? My hope rises.

I sneak a glance at Finn as we walk and find him already looking at me. His cheeks flush and turn away.

"How far are we from the station?" Trish asks in a hard voice.

"It should be right ahead," I say, stopping. There is no train station.

"Where?" Trish says in exasperation. "Show me the map. Where did you think you were going?"

I show her, and she points to the top corner.

"This is the compass we were walking west. This shows we should have been going east." her tone is sharp. "We missed the train."

"We should go back to the airport we can spend the night there," Finn says, trying to help

Dread fills me. Trish was right. I made a huge mistake. Of course, I did.

On the whole walk back, I could feel Trish's glare and Finn's sad disappointment. I walked behind them. They were talking with each other, laughing at something, probably laughing at me. All the respect I had gained was now gone.

"It sure is." a voice said.

"Hello?" I said

"They think you're useless," she said, "They regret saying yes to go on this quest,"

She appeared next to me

"They can't see me. Only you can," she said

"Who are you?"

"I am Oizys. I try to help heroes find the truth about themselves. I helped Hercules. After he talked with me, he went and killed the minotaur. I have been watching you. Ever since you were 6 years old."

"So what truth do I need to find?"

She looked even sadder than before

"I have watched you often over these years, hoping to find something good." she says slowly trying to soften the blow "I have had no luck. I have only found a

useless girl who longs for a boy and doesn't know what she is getting into. She is a fake leader and a toxic friend."

My heart stops. It isn't functioning anymore. I am filled with a heavy weight. My steps become heavier and slower. The ground feels good only because I don't have to hold the weight anymore.

"Haven't you seen it? All you did was strain the relationship between Finn and Trish. You are going to lead them to their death. You don't know how to fight. You don't know anything about this world. They know the truth about you. They know you aren't worth all this trouble. They haven't even looked back to see if you were still following them."

Her words wove a dark web around my heart, blocking any hope from shining in. I was useless, hopeless, unable to change.

I don't know how long I sat there sinking into the hole of misery, but eventually, angry voices came to me.

"What are you doing!?!? We have been looking for you for 30 minutes!!" Trish continued on, but I could only hear the voice.

she's right, you know it. She hates you and thinks you are useless.

"Hey, stop," Finn says to Trish. "Can't you see that's not working??"

They need to try something more severe. Maybe they will come in with a beating next words weren't adequate punishment for your uselessness.

"We need to get to the airport. It's almost dark." Trish says

Finn turned a worried glance at me

He is worried that you are going to slow them down too much that he is going to have to sleep on the streets.

Everything is dark, and every action anyone takes is against me. I can't cry, can't feel anything but darkness. It was hopeless no one could escape this.

Chapter 7

"We're stopping to get a sandwich".

I sat in my puddle of misery. Finn and Trish sat and talked to each other, leaving me out.

I walked away, pulling out my knife. I flick it in between my fingers. I can't feel anything, not the cold grass beneath my bare feet. Would I feel the knife if it dug into my heart? It couldn't hurt more than this hopelessness. No one would miss me. Trish and Finn would be free to go back home. It's not like my mom has cared for me.

The darkness only thought about the people who wouldn't miss me not the people who would.

"Maybe I should do it," I say to myself.

"Bailey??" Finn steps in front of me, halting my thought process. He looks at the knife, panic filling his face.

"You have no idea what's going on. Don't pretend as you do," I say in a sharp voice. I'm hurting so much.

"No, I don't know what is going on. Can you help me understand?" I stay quiet.

"Can I try and guess?" I look up into his soft eyes, looking at me with nothing but empathy and wanting to understand. I nod

"Is it something that Trish said? I talked with her, and she said she didn't mean to hurt you."

"Of course, you talked with her; you two haven't stopped talking," I mumbled loud enough for him to hear.

"She is the only other one out here. What I have been wanting is to talk with you. I have caught myself glancing at you, thinking about you. But whenever I come over, you yell at me. And so I thought you wanted to be alone."

A little ray of sunshine glows in my vision. He wanted to talk to me, not Trish.

"I heard you and Trish were a thing," I whisper in question

Shock, embarrassment, and pain flicker through his expression.

"that has definitely past. You don't have to worry about me and her together."

Relief comes flooding in. He isn't with Trish.

"Can I make another guess at what you are feeling? Are you feeling overwhelmed? Like you don't know how to do anything? Like everyone else knows how to do everything, and you are ... useless?"

He looked into my eyes. He nailed it. That was precisely what I was feeling. He looked all the way down into my heart. His empathy and friendship started to melt the web of misery. A shell around my heart begins to crack.

"I felt the same way when I joined the camp. I couldn't do anything. Every night, I would lay in my tiny bed in cabin 11 and replay all my failures of that day. There was a web of failure, and I was tangled in it with no way out,"

"Yes," I whisper. He came forward, wrapping me in a hug. I laid my head on his chest.

"What I learned is we create our own universe. We are useless if we say we are. Or we could choose to be strong, powerful, important, and loved."

He leaned down, whispering in my ear, "You are loved. Bailey"

I am strong, capable, and able to do anything. I thought of my brothers and my father, Hannah, my mother, Max, Trish, Liv and Finn. With all of their love in my mind, I spoke.

"I am loved."

"Awwwnooooooooo," a miserable wail came out of me. But it wasn't my voice.

The lady was next to me again. She had melted out of my chest. This time, Finn could see her, too.

"How dare you!! How could you? You were so deep. No one can do that. No one controls me. You will pay for that." Then she disappeared in a puff of dust.

All strength left me. I fell. Finn caught me in his arms, scooping me up. He looked at me in complete awe. I looked up at him and was finally able to cry. My tears washed all the remaining darkness away.

"That was Oizys. The goddess of misery. She lives in Tartarus. She is one of the oldest, most powerful goddesses. She only visits the most powerful heroes. In legend, they say she tells them they are useless, and once they believe the words, it casts a layer of misery around their heart."

I nod, tears streaming down my face.

"Hercules is the only one who survived the experience, and that was only because another god came to rescue him."

"He's not the only one who survived," I say with a small smile.

Chapter 8

"Trish, Bailey has a story for you," Finn said, walking in. I lay in his arms, barely awake. I watched the emotions flit across Trish's face: jealousy that I'm with Finn, worry that I'm injured, and then settling into the cool mask she always puts on. Finn sets me down, and I tell Trish the whole story, trying not to get too emotional. Sniff, sniff, Trish is crying. "And I thought you were just being awful on purpose. Bailey, I'm so sorry. The words I said to you. I must have made it so much worse." I hug her.

"To Las Vegas, we go!" Trish says in mock excitement.

"I need a nap. Wake me if there are any monsters?" I say to Trish.

I really trusted them. Trish. And Finn. They had become really good friends, Finn maybe more than a friend. I couldn't imagine trying to do this quest without them.

The dream came fast and strong. A teen guy holding a bow stood in front of me. He was looking at me like I had done something wrong.

"Bailey, I am Apollo, the god of prophecy. I have seen something devastating in your future, and I can not let it happen besides a hero's fate is never happy." He then grabbed his bow, sending an arrow straight through my chest and into my heart. "Every time you trust one of your friends, this arrow will sink deeper into you."

I woke with a start. Looking down to see an arrow struck through my heart. I screamed.

"Bailey, what's wrong??" Finn looked me up and down, trying to spot the injury.

"It's an arrow. It's in my heart." the arrow dug deeper into me. I squeezed the armchair, trying not to scream, but the pain was too much.

"It was just a dream. Take a deep breath." he couldn't see the arrow. He didn't know what was going on.

He took my hand. The arrow pushed into me, the pain unimaginable. I pulled away, looking into his eyes. He was hurt, he wanted to be by my side.

I can't stay here. Everything I did around Trish and Finn is trusting them. I can't break that. I hate Apollo. I don't want to be a hero, I just want my friends back.

Then the tears came. My body shook with sobs; that pain was so bad I would do anything to avoid it.

I was now driven by fear of the pain.

I grabbed my bag running to the front of the bus, not looking back at my friends. I was on my own.

Chapter 9

My backpack is digging into my head its the best pillow I have.

"Apollo, I'm coming for you."

"Eek!" I scream.

A squirrel was nibbling on my ear!! I whacked it so hard that it scrambled up a tree.

My friends would have given up on me by now, forgetting that I had existed.

Maybe Finn and Trish were back together now that the distraction of me was gone. A familiar feeling of hopelessness washed over me.

"Nope, not happening. I am strong and capable." i spoke the words out loud. the feeling disappeared.

I didn't find Apollo. Even with all of the fancy wording I tried in my dream, he wouldn't come. I'm stuck here alone with this curse in me.

"Why did you have to curse me like this?!!" I scream at the sky. "I'm not a hero I can't have a hero's fate!!"

"You very much are a hero. The fates have declared it upon you. So you are destined to be unhappy," Apollo explained.

"It doesn't mean *you* have to make it unhappy," I say, turning, ready to punch him in the face.

"Feeling sorry for yourself or fighting me won't help you."

A book I read in 8th grade, *Daring Greatly*, by Brene Brown, popped into my head. It said *trust is only mended with proper vulnerability, and shields like fighting or victimhood worsen it.*

I take a deep breath releasing the tension in me.

"You're right," I say, looking right into his eyes. "I don't know why you did this to me. I don't know what I am doing. I am new here. I am struggling with so much. I was sent into a world I don't know; a boy completely fooled me, I thought I was in love with him, and he broke my heart." A silent tear streaked down my face. "I was sent on a quest for a mother I haven't even met. That doesn't mention all the awful monsters. I am failing a lot. I have no idea what I am getting into, but I am willing to try it." there I was. Right at his feet, I had given him all of me, all of what I was concealing, not wanting anyone to know. It was now proclaimed to someone I should be impressing with my strength. A god who could do anything with me.

"You impressed me, girl. You will be a mighty hero. I hope you can find a happy ending." He then disappeared, bringing his cursed arrow with him. I was free.



"FIN!!!! Trish!!! Where are you??" I had reached the next bus stop, where they must have left.

"Bailey?" an all too familiar voice spoke.

"Fin," I said, jumping into his big hug.

"Why did you leave? What is going on? I was so worried." I looked up into his eyes, seeing the truth there. He was hurt that I left him, and knowing that I made him feel that pain hurt so bad.

"I know. I didn't want to, I promise. It was my only option. It hurt so much."

"Are you okay?" he said, suddenly worried, scanning my body for injuries.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know what I am doing, and it's gonna suck to learn it all, but we're going to do it. I can't survive without you guys."

"Oh, come here, you little punk," Trish said, pulling me from Finn's arms into her own.

"Tell us what happened on the bus we have a Scarf to fetch."

Chapter 10

"Welcome in!!" a white woman with blond hair and bright green eyes greets us as we walk into the casino. She is wearing a strapless pink dress, and a gorgeous scarf is wrapped around her shoulders.

"What game would you like to play? My favorite is the dice, not the roller board. I can never decide," she rambled on. But I was distracted by her scarf it said "Hello, my daughter,"

My attention was drawn back to the lady. She looked like she was full of so much pent-up energy, and her hands were always moving. "You should g..."

She disappeared, not waiting to finish her word

"Where did she go?!"

"That was her," I say. "The scarf was talking to me."

"Did you see her eyes? They were very exotic green." Finn said

I wonder if that dress had any impact on him. No, that's silly. She was about 25, way too old for him, but it was very beautiful. Maybe I should wear a dress like that.

"There," Trish says. She points to a Mexican woman about the same age. She has the same scarf and green eyes.

I stood right in front of her. "Look at me." with all of the power of my voice.

"I need your scarf. It doesn't belong to you."

"No, I need this scarf. It makes me look gorgeous. Good customer service." Then she disappeared again.

We spend one and a half hours searching the casino, we spot her then she disappears, changing form.

"This isn't working. We have to try something else." Trish says she looks like she is about to scream, faint, and punch someone in the face all at once. I don't blame her. I'm feeling the same way.

"She is the goddess of chance. What if we make a deal?" I wonder aloud.



"Tyche, come here," I say with all of my voice power. She appears as an African American in another flattering blue dress.

"We want to make a bet with you. If you win, we will stay in your casino, and you can tell us to do anything. If we win, you hand over the scarf and let us leave." I say all this before she can disappear.

"I'm the goddess of chance. I will always win." She says it with such confidence that I get nervous. "Deal."

"Swear on the river sticks," I demand

We both swear.

No going back now

The magic trick is simple. Every elementary kid knows it, but apparently not Tyche. She falls for it easily.

"Is this your card?" I ask, knowing that it is.

Confusion, fear, and finally anger. Flood her face

"How!! That's impossible."

"A deal is a deal." I step over and grab the scarf off of her neck.

"Nooooooo," she wails and turns into an only mildly appealing 45-year-old.

"Bailey," Finn's voice is breathy, barely audible.

I look down. I'm in my childhood dream dress, but I'm more developed. It hugs my curves and matches my personality. I'm enveloped in a slight glow. I love it. I do a little spin trying it out.

I glance at Finn. He is staring at me, his mouth wide open. I smile, proud of myself. He reached for my hand. Placing a light kiss on the top of my knuckles

"May I have this dance?" he says like he can't help himself.

"Yes"

Mom, please make this real. Take any love magic out of this scarf. Have him see the real me. Keep the dress. I love it, but I want him to like me for me, not the love magic.

The glow disappears, but Finn's expression doesn't degrade only focuses on my face. He spins me. I don't know how to dance, but I just follow him, and somehow, I don't mess up. It is almost like it is in my genes.

He spins me into him, my back against his chest, his arms around my waist.

He leans down, whispering in my ear, "You look beautiful." the emotion in his voice sends a shiver down my spine.

We dance. I'm flying over the dance floor, effortlessly dropping into a dip. The feeling of safety floods me. He makes me feel safe; I can be a little girl for him, and he will be my knight in shining armor.

Everything around me disappears. I replayed my trip and all the internal and external struggles. They don't seem as powerful anymore; I have overcome them, and I will overcome much more. But I am myself, and I know who I am. With that, everything feels hopeful. I can face any monster or challenge. I have power and ability. No one can stop me when I have myself.

THE END