

## PROLOGUE: BEGINNINGS

*In the beginning, there was Khaos. The primordial deity embodying the vast nothingness of the cosmos. Khaos then spawned Gaia, the earth, who in turn created Ouranos, the sky, to be her mate. Together they gave birth to the first of the divine beings. The most powerful of their children would be dubbed the Titans (strainers/betrayers) after they helped the youngest of them, Kronos, usurp their father as ruler of the cosmos. The sky itself shook as Ouranos was wounded.*

*After a time, Kronos created humanity. This was the Golden Age, the first of the Five Ages of Humanity. During this time, humans were immortal, ate only nuts and fruit, lived in bliss, and they obeyed the Titans without question. Then when Kronos was overthrown by his children (led by the youngest, Zeus) the cosmos shook, and the first race of humans came to an end.*

*Early into Zeus' rule, he tasked two of the remaining Titans, Epimetheus and his brother Prometheus, with populating the earth with new life that would serve him and the other gods. Epimetheus created the animals and Prometheus recreated humanity from clay. This was the Silver Age. For a time, life was as it was in the Golden Age. Until Prometheus angered Zeus and he had the gods craft the mortal Pandora to release death, plagues, and pain onto the world from a pithos jar. This Age lasted until humans refused to worship the gods and Zeus destroyed them.*

*Afterward, Zeus created a new race of humans from ash trees. This was the Bronze Age. The humans of this Age were violent and constantly warring with one another until Zeus and Poseidon destroyed them with a great flood. The two survivors of the flood, Deukalion (the son*

*of Prometheus and the Okeanid nympe Klymene) and Pyrrha (daughter of Pandora and Epimetheus) created the current race of humans from stones.*

*Then came the Heroic Age. During this Age, the gods freely mingled with humans and spawned demigods (half-gods), mortal beings with inhuman strength and sometimes supernatural powers. Demigods often fought terrible monsters that plagued the land and were revered as heroes. In time, however, Zeus became concerned with the growing numbers of their descendants and decreed that the gods shall no longer interact with humans. He then initiated the wars of Thebai (Thebes) and Troia (Troy) to wipe the demigods and their descendants out.*

*After that, the world entered the Iron Age...*

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“I can’t be late!” screams an eight-year-old boy as he runs across the street.

His name is Friday Walker. He has brown eyes and short wavy red hair. He is wearing a red shirt and a worn-out backpack that was given to him by his foster parents, the Robinsons. These are the same foster parents that had dropped him off about two blocks away from his school so that they would be able to get to their jobs on time.

It was an off morning. Usually before bed, Mr. Robinson sets the alarm which wakes up both him and Mrs. Robinson in the morning, and then one of them knocks on the door to Friday’s room while yelling “Wake up!” However, last night, Mr. Robinson forgot to set the

alarm so both he and Mrs. Robinson slept in by half an hour which meant neither of them woke Friday up so he slept in by half an hour. As soon as Mrs. Robinson woke up and realized what time it was, the whole house got frantic.

They were at the light on 8th Street, Clarksburg Elementary School was in eye-shot distance from where they were at the red light. Seeing how close they were, Mr. Robinson said “Screw it. Get out, kid.” To which Friday responded, “What?” To which Mr. Robinson replied, “You can run from here, my boss will be on my-” Mr. Robinson cursed, “-if I’m late again.” Then Friday said, “But I still don't have lunch.” since Mr. Robinson had said that he would get him lunch on their way. “Ask a friend for money or something! Just go!”. “I don't have friends.” Friday replied, only to promptly leave the car after being told, “GET OUT!”

Of course, Mr. Robinson isn't the only one who is running late. School starts at seven o'clock and, according to Friday's watch, it is six fifty-seven. Friday really hates being late and the last thing he wants is to make a bad impression. Of course, making a bad impression isn't really an issue for him. Friday always received comments from teachers that he was a bright student, though they did also comment about him never really being “there” in class or with the other kids. Also, he doesn't want to get detention for being late to class. He fears that if he gets too many detentions, he will get expelled.

Friday is just twenty feet away from the school entrance. He is sure that if he continues at his pace, he will make it but then he hears an old woman's voice call to him.

“Excuse me, young man.”

Friday looks to his right and he sees an elderly woman collapsed on the ground at the corner of the street. Her gray hair is tied in a bun, and she is wearing diamond earrings and a blue and green shawl.

“I've fallen and I can't get up,” the old woman cries. “I need to get to my car on the other side of the road. Can you help me?” The old woman looks at Friday with a pleading face.

“Uh, I've gotta-”

A part of Friday wants to say he can't because he must get to school. But this old woman needs someone to help her. Friday knows he will be late if he does, but there isn't anyone else around that can help her and if someone bad were to come along they might try to steal from her. Friday thinks back to all those superhero cartoons he loves to watch, where the heroes always help anyone in need, and he does what he thinks is right.

“Oh, all right ma'am,” Friday says, extending his hand and helping the old lady up.

As they walk slowly across the street Friday can't help but look at his watch every so often. Now it is seven-o-three. He is *definitely* late, but he doesn't regret what he did.

“Thank you, young man,” the old woman says. “I'm terribly sorry. I must have made you late for class.”

She reaches into her handbag and pulls out some money. Friday isn't sure if she is paying attention to the amount she pulled out because she is handing him a one-hundred-dollar bill.

“Here, for your troubles,” the old lady says. “I know it's not much, but a one-dollar bill should be good money for a kid, right?”

Now Friday is certain that this woman isn't paying attention. He hands her the money back.

“No thank you, ma'am, I didn't do this for money. Also, that's a hundred.”

“What?” The old woman looks at the money in her hand. “Ah, yes. It is. You are so honest and generous.”

Friday looks at his watch and notices that it is seven-o-five now.

“I have to go. Bye,” Friday says before running off as the old woman gives him a proud smile.

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Friday was late for class and his teacher said he had to stay an hour after school for detention. His foster parents were not exactly thrilled but it didn't really matter. They had told him a few days ago that he was going back into the foster system. It pained Friday to hear that

but he wasn't surprised given that this is the tenth foster family that he has been with since he was five.

Friday crawled into bed and his mind drifted off to sleep.

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Friday wakes up with a startle as he feels a cool breeze and something soft brush against his cheek. He is still in his pajamas, a large blue shirt with long gray pants. But there is no bed, no blanket, and no house. Friday rubs his arms to keep warm as he looks around feeling scared and confused. He calls out around him but there is no response.

Friday is standing up to his waist in tall grass. It is night but the area is lit up by the shining moonlight. He is on a large cliff overlooking a landscape with several hills and a stream that leads to the ocean. The ocean appears dark except for the moonlight glimmering on the water. When he looks at the stars, he notices that they are different. Specific stars are linked to each other by lines of light and surrounded by an outline making the constellations visible. He notices that the stars of the constellation Orion are linked with lines and surrounded by the outline of a man wielding a club. Not far from him is the constellation of a scorpion. Then he notices something unusual about the moon. It seems a bit smaller than it usually is. The color is lighter, brighter, and more like silver. But the strangest thing he notices is that when he looks right at it, the moon looks like there is something inside it. It looks like there is a person driving a chariot pulled by two large horses inside. The chariot, the horses, and the person are glowing silver. It is

all very beautiful, but Friday can't appreciate that right now. He is too worried about how he got here and where "here" actually is.

"The moonlight is beautiful, isn't it?"

Friday turns around and sees a figure in a dark blue hood standing beside him. He is pretty sure she wasn't there before. Friday can't make out any of the person's features. It is only by the pitch of the figure's voice that Friday knows the person talking to him is a woman.

"W-who are you? Where am I?"

The figure takes a step forward and Friday immediately steps back.

"You are in New Hellas, young man," the figure says.

"What is a *Hellas*?" Friday asks.

"Hellas was the original name for Greece. This land you are in is New Hellas."

"Like New England?" Friday asks.

"Never mind that," the figure says. "You are here right now to judge what kind of person you truly are."

"What do you mean?" Friday asks, confused.

The figure grabs his shoulder and turns him around while pointing her long, polished, finger downward toward an open flat pasture.

“Look there,” she tells him.

Friday notices something in the pasture between the long grass. It looks like a cat, a really big cat. Friday first thinks it is a lion or a tiger, but he realizes it is much bigger. It also has a long tail that curves over its head like a scorpion. It doesn't have a mane and it is lean, so he assumes it is female. Around it are half a dozen smaller ones about the size of house cats.

“What the heck is that?” Friday asks.

“That is a Manticore,” the figure says. “Well technically, the Manticore was a monster that roamed Persia, but it also mated with regular lionesses during its long life. These are some of its descendants. Keep in mind that *Manticore* means *Man-Eater*.”

“They eat people!?” Friday asks, with horror.

“Well, the original one did have a taste for humans, yes,” the figure admits. “I suppose there have been instances where these kinds have killed humans, but usually, they feed on deer and unicorns in the wild. But there is no need to worry. My power is shielding us. As long as you are with me, they cannot sense you.”

She waves her hand and Friday realizes that he is surrounded by a golden hue.

The manticores run across the landscape. In front of the pack is the mother, followed by the first five cubs and then the sixth, being the smallest, is behind them trying to catch up. They approach a large stream, about ten feet in width. It runs across the landscape and leads to the



ocean. The mother leaps across to the other side easily. Then she nods her head for the cubs to cross. Cubs one-to-five tread the water. Most of them struggle, but they still make it to the other side. The final one, the smallest, hesitantly approaches the water. It looks up at its mother before she signals it to cross. The cub enters the water. About halfway through it starts to struggle. The cub splashes frantically, barely keeping its head above the water as it moves farther downstream.

“That one's drowning.”

“It's too weak,” the figure explains.

“Why isn't the mother helping?”

“I am afraid that's just nature, survival of the fittest I believe your people call it. If manicores cubs can't learn to swim they drown.”

Friday watches the young cat struggle as it moves toward the ocean. Friday thinks this is terrible. Drowning is such a horrible way to go, and its mother and siblings are just standing around. Friday's heart clenches hearing its cries.

“It's probably for the best,” the figure says. “If it were to grow up it would just be another man-eating monster.”

“But you said they don't usually eat humans, right?” Friday asks, watching the creature struggle.

“Well, manicores are very intelligent creatures,” the figure says. “If you were to save it from drowning then there's a chance that it might be grateful. You could tell it to not eat humans

and it might listen. Of course, that's assuming that the mother doesn't eat you. It's your choice, really.”

Friday thinks for a minute. Maybe she is right, I mean if they really do eat people maybe it's for the best that there's less of them. That's what his mind says but his heart still weeps. But if manticores are intelligent and the cub is grateful for him saving its life like the woman says, then maybe it will just stick to hunting deer.

“We have to save it,” Friday tells the figure.

“You save it,” she replies.

The figure waves her hand and Friday suddenly finds himself floating in cold water. After he screams from the initial shock, he realizes that he is in the same stream with the struggling manticore cub not too far from him. He notices the mother looking at him with her human-like eyes like he is food. Friday wants to swim away, but he must save the cub first. He reaches over and grabs the cub from behind. As soon as he does the cub immediately latches onto him. Friday yelps in pain from the cub's tiny claws burrowing into his skin as he swims to the shore.

When Friday sets the cub down, he shakes himself dry and stares at Friday strangely. The cub looks like a smaller version of his mother, but the spikes on his tail have not grown out yet and his stripes are dull. His face is like that of a young boy, albeit covered in a thin layer of yellow lion-like fur. He also has black lips and a human-like nose.

“Please don't eat humans now,” Friday says to the cub.

Friday looks over at the mother who simply walks away. Her cubs trail behind her and the cub Friday rescued gives him one last look before running off to join his mother. Friday wonders if he did the right thing. The figure appears behind him.

“You were really brave,” the figure says. “Many would have let the cub drown or fled from the sight of the mother.”

“Can I go home now?” Friday asks, not even looking at her.

“Oh, my child,” the figure says. “Are you sure you even left?”

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Friday wakes up as the light shines through his bedroom window. He sits straight up and looks at himself, noticing that his clothes are not wet and there are no signs of claw marks on him.

*“It was just a dream,”* Friday thinks, relieved.

Then he hears knocking on his door and his foster father's voice.

“Wake up! Social services are here. You're going to DC.”

Five Years Later

## CHAPTER ONE: THEOGONY

*Once there was a man named Theo, a descendant of the Ithacan hero Odysseus and the curator of a museum that held all the greatest artifacts of the Heroic Age of Hellas. It held the bow of Odysseus, a piece of the Argo, and most importantly, the remains of every monster that the heroes of old ever defeated.*

*Theo was proud of his collection, but even more proud to be engaged to the beautiful Toula. But tragedy struck. An accident occurred, the museum was destroyed and Toula was crushed under the debris. In his grief Theo begged his patron goddess, Pallas Athene the wise, to give him back his love. The goddess could not, as that would be stealing a soul from her uncle Haidēs, the lord of the underworld. But she did provide him with compensation.*

*Under the instructions of Athene, Theo dug up the clay from a nearby stream outside of Athenai and cut his palm to mix his blood with the clay. When it was hard enough, he used the clay to craft the figure of a baby girl. Athene then called for the Anemoi, the four spirits of the winds, to breathe life into the clay figure and turn it into a flesh-and-blood girl. She then blessed the clay-born (a term used for those crafted, then brought to life) with bravery, strength, talent with all forms of weaponry, and high intelligence.*

*Theo then named his new daughter Theodora, Theo's-gift...*

“Mr. Walker! Are you paying attention?” Mr. Siekert, the English teacher, asks Friday after noticing that instead of listening to his analysis of the Iliad he is drawing in his notebook.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Siekert. I just kind of zoned out,” Friday apologizes.

His class has been reading the Odyssey and the Iliad for the last few weeks. The teacher has gone into great depth about how the books show us how the ancient Greeks, or Hellenes as they are called in the books, saw the world. For Friday, it is an inspiration. As soon as he read the prologue of the Iliad, he was drawn to it. But reading the Odyssey inspired him to draw the tall, athletic-looking, fair-skinned, and dark-haired Theodora in his notebook.

“Uh-huh,” Mr. Siekert says. “Well don’t do it again or you’ll be staying after class.”

Friday does his best to continue listening throughout the rest of class as Mr. Siekert talks about how the Odyssey represents the struggles that a man faces in his life, especially when making poor decisions based on a lack of judgment and arrogance. However, every so often Friday’s mind flashes back to some of the other demigods he’d imagined since taking this course. There is Maximos, son of Zeus, who has a magic sword that allows him to summon lightning. He has a muscular build and blonde hair. There is Philippos, son of Poseidon, who has sandy blonde hair and the ability to change into any animal. He is a natural horse tamer, and he has a conch, gifted to him by his father, that can summon waves. Friday also thinks about a character that uses magic and is possibly a descendant of Helios, the Titan-god of the sun.

Finally, the bell rings. Friday makes his way to the school's parking lot. As he waits for his ride to pick him up, Friday decides to use the ten minutes he has left to look up something on his phone that caught his eye while reading the Iliad. In one chapter it mentions a place called "Arima" which is the land of the "Arimoi" where Zeus likes to throw lightning around when he is mad. This caught his eye because it is also referred to as the "Couch of Typhon", so Friday wonders what "Typhon" is.

Friday types "Typhon Greek Mythology" into the search engine on his phone. The image that pops up displays a very old vase that has a painting depicting a man with snakes in place of his legs and bird wings. Friday then clicks on a web page for a Greek myths site.

*"Typhon, also called Typhoeus."*

One of the first things that Mr. Siekert taught his class while reading the Iliad is that various characters in the mythos have different names and/or spellings. Also, that a lot of their modern translations of the Greek characters' names are Latinized versions. For example, Hephaestus was spelled Hephaistos, and Hades was spelled Haidēs. Also, Cerberus was spelled Kerberos since the ancient Greeks didn't have the letter "C". Friday continues reading.

*"Typhon/Typhoeus was a giant or dragon-like creature and one of the most dangerous monsters in Greek mythology. He was born from Gaia (the personification of the earth) and Tartaros (the personification of the dark abyss underneath the underworld). Either that or he*

*was born from Hera alone because she wanted a son more powerful than Zeus in retaliation for him birthing Pallas Athena/Athene alone.”*

Another thing Friday learned in his English class is that these myths have different versions of what happened.

*“Typhoeus attempted to overthrow Zeus for control of the cosmos.”*

Friday reads the description of Typhoeus. He is supposed to be so big that his head touches the sky. Friday imagines that Typhoeus must be several miles tall to reach cloud level. His upper body is supposed to resemble a human, aside from having a pair of wings and snakes for legs. It also says that Typhoeus has one-hundred snake heads on his shoulders. Also, according to one account, his torso is covered with various animal heads, one for every species.

*“He was so terrifying that the Olympians fled to Egypt (or Kemet in ancient times) and took the form of animals to hide (hence why the Egyptians pictured their gods as being part animal). All the gods fled except for Zeus, who stayed behind and fought, only to be defeated. Typhoeus ripped out Zeus’ tendons and threw him from Olympos. However, Zeus’ son Hermes managed to retrieve his father’s tendons. Then, after Typhoeus had been tricked into eating “ephemeral fruit” to weaken him, the healed Zeus fought the monster again with the help of his son Hermes and his daughter Athene. Typhoeus was defeated and imprisoned in either Tartaros, under Mount Eda, or according to later accounts, under the island of Ischia.”*

Friday recalls that Eda is supposed to be the workshop of Hephaistos, so Friday assumes that Typhoeus is either in Tartaros or under Ischia. Friday then scrolls down the page and finds a heading titled “Father of Monsters.” Friday reads that section. It says that Typhoeus mated with Echidna/Ekhidna, a drakaina (half-woman and half-snake) who is the daughter of the primordial sea gods Keto and Phorkys. Keto and Phorkys are the parents of sea monsters, the gorgons, and the Graiai sisters. It also says that Typhoeus and Ekhidna are known as the father and mother of monsters because they had many of the most famous monsters in Greek mythology as offspring: the Hydra, the Chimera/Khimaira, Cerberus/Kerberos, and the Nemean lion to name a few.

Friday feels a forceful shove on his back and hears a snicker. Friday groans and turns his head around to see his least favorite person, Mike Walsh, grinning at him.

“Hey, *Friday*,” Mike says with a snort.

Ever since Friday started at this school, they have been in many of the same classes together, including English. The pasty-skinned, brown-haired boy never misses an opportunity to tease Friday about his name.

“Hey, I was wondering if you want to hang out *Friday*.” He laughs again.

Friday rolls his eyes and goes back to looking at his phone trying to ignore him.

“I’m sorry. I meant to hang out on *Tuesday*, not this *Friday, Friday*.” He snorts again.



Friday groans. He thinks this guy is annoying but not enough to make a big fuss about. Friday continues looking at his phone and tries to ignore Mike. Mike leaves after making a few more stupid comments, and then Friday continues reading in peace.

Friday clicks on Ekhidna's page and reads a little bit about her. Apparently, Ekhidna had a very specific diet, people. "*Ekhidna dwelled in a cave where she would wait for travelers to pass by and snatch them for her meals.*" Friday thinks that is horrible and gross. He also wonders why she wouldn't just feed on cows or goats, which seem like easier prey than people to Friday. "*Until she was beheaded while she slept by the hundred-eyed giant Argos Panoptes, who was a servant of Hera.*" However, Friday reads another account that says Ekhidna is supposed to be completely immortal.

Soon, a blue electric car pulls up in front of him. The woman inside is Krystal Ocean. Friday has known Krystal for the last five years. She looks to be in her early twenties, has a slim build, long straight pale blonde hair, and eyes like sparkling blue water. Krystal also has a tiny little mole under her left eye on what is otherwise flawless fair skin. She is wearing a blue flowy hem tube top, light blue jeans, and her usual blue sandals that show off her blue-painted toenails.

Friday would have been lying if he said he didn't used to have a crush on Krystal when he was younger. During his first year living in DC, he gave Krystal a drawing of a heart on Valentine's Day. She kept it and said thank you, to be nice, but explained to him a concept called "age difference" and how ignoring it can be "very bad" for them both. Friday had since gotten over his crush on her.

“Hey, Friday. How was your day?” Krystal asks.

“Pretty good,” the boy replies.

“Cool. I hope you're hungry. Donna picked up Chinese tonight.”

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Krystal drives Friday to Donna’s apartment complex.

Donna Marx had taken Friday in when he was eight after his previous foster parents, the Robinsons, sent him back into the foster system. According to the social worker, she was supposed to be his aunt, though they both knew this was some kind of mistake. Donna was a foster child herself, and her own foster parents never had any other children; therefore, among other reasons that she did not disclose to him, she couldn’t possibly be his aunt. When Friday was first dropped off at her doorstep, Donna made one thing clear. She was going to get this mistake sorted out so he shouldn't get too comfortable at her apartment. But after about a month of no success and the boy growing on her a bit, Donna decided to just let him stay. For the last five years she’s raised him and taught him how to fight, all while going to work as a bail-bonds woman. During this time, Friday has gotten taller with age, his once short and wavy hair has grown down to his neck, and he has braces.

Krystal is a good friend of Donna who frequently visits. She often helps Donna take care of Friday by picking him up from school and watching him when Donna isn't home. Sometimes, she even spends the night when it gets too late.

Friday and Krystal open the door to the two-bedroom apartment. The apartment is small but cozy. The couch is against the wall, and the wooden dinner table near the kitchen has a few containers of Chinese food on it. Donna is currently beating the stuffing out of a Body-Opponent-Bag. She is wearing a pair of black sweatpants with a white stripe going down the side of the leg and a green tank top large enough to fit over her muscular six-foot and four-inch frame. She has blood-red irises (she claims she has a condition), and her dark hair is in dreadlocks tied in a ponytail. There are also scars across her muscular left arm, right shoulder, and across her left cheek, all of which she claims she has had since she was sixteen. Her eyes are fixated on her "opponent", and her hair flies across her face as she continuously pummels the bag.

"Donna!" Krystal yells.

Donna looks over and sees the blonde and the boy standing in the doorway. She smiles and takes out one of her earbuds.

"Oh hey, kid. How was school today?" Donna asks Friday.

"Oh, same old. We're almost done reading the Iliad."

Donna scoffs as she marches to the table and opens the food containers.

“I really wish that the school wouldn't make you read that garbage,” Donna says. “It's completely pointless.”

“It's not pointless, Donna. It has some good information that Friday might need to know someday,” Krystal says, putting specific emphasis on the last five words.

“Krystal, we talked about this,” Donna says, giving her a narrow look.

Friday doesn't understand what they are talking about, so he tries to change the subject.

“Anyways, how was your day, Donna?” Friday asks.

“Oh, had to pay some jerks bail, another jerk tried to pull a knife on me, so I broke his wrist. The usual,” Donna says, shrugging.

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Fifteen minutes later. Donna, Friday, and Krystal are sitting next to each other at the table, eating vegetarian chow-mein, vegetarian pot stickers, and egg rolls. Donna always makes sure to get vegetarian whenever she knows Krystal is going to eat with them, which is pretty much all the time. Donna also ensures that Friday isn't looking at his phone while eating. She slaps his hand whenever he starts to pull it out and tells him he should listen and participate in conversations at the dinner table instead.

“Oh Donna, I have another offer for you,” Krystal says as she hands Donna a piece of paper rolled up and tied with a neat bow.

Donna groans in frustration.

“How many times do I have to say “no” to those jerks?”

Friday recognizes the rolled-up paper. He has seen one just like it every other week since he started living with Donna. Krystal knows these guys who keep offering Donna a position as some kind of fighting instructor. Donna has repeated multiple times that she’s not interested. She’s thrown the papers away and has sent hundreds back with the word “NO” and several indecent curses written on them. But they just keep coming.

“You might want to consider taking the position, Donna. I mean it's not like it will impact your life here much. You can teach those kids how to hold a sword for a few hours then come back here in a snap.”

Donna doesn’t listen. She just walks over to the sink and starts shoving the paper down the garbage disposal. Then she turns the disposal on, shredding it.

“You know, they are just going to keep sending you letters. They really want you to teach there and if you keep rejecting them, they might lose their patience.”

“They have no power here anymore,” Donna replies, flatly.

“But-”

“So, Friday, are you all caught up on your homework?” Donna asks, trying to change the subject.

“I finished my report for English yesterday,” Friday says, taking a printed version out from his backpack which hung on the back of his chair. “I reviewed it. Can one of you look it over before I officially submit it tomorrow?”

“I’ll do it,” Krystal volunteers.

“Boy, not at the table,” Donna says.

“No, it's fine,” Krystal says. “I don't mind. I'm done eating anyways.”

Krystal takes the paper and starts to read it, but she stops after the very first sentence. She looks at Friday upset and confused while pointing to it.

“Um, Friday, this isn't right.”

Friday looks at the sentence: “*The Trojan War started with three goddesses, Aphrodite daughter of Zeus and Dione, Hera queen of the gods and wife of Zeus, and Pallas Athene who was born from Zeus’ head alone.*”

“Yes, it is,” Friday replies.

“No, you wrote that Athene didn't have a mother,” Krystal says with a slightly angered tone in her voice, confusing Friday.

“Uh, no she didn't. Here, look.” Friday reaches back into his backpack and pulls out the copy of the Iliad which was given to him in school. He opens the book to the page about Athene and shows it to Krystal. “See, it says right here, Zeus gave birth to Athene alone, came right out of his head fully grown. Hey, that rhymes.”

Krystal swiftly takes the book and quickly skims over the pages. Friday looks at Donna who is staring at them blank-faced, as if she knows something that Friday doesn't.

“Well, this book is wrong,” Krystal says as she hands the book back to Friday. “Athene's mother was Metis. Metis was the Titaness of wisdom, and she was a daughter of Okeanos and Tethys.”

Donna spoke up. “Krystal, you don't have to-”

“No, I want him to know,” Krystal says.

Krystal then turns to a still confused Friday. She is nothing like the calm joyful woman who was sitting at the table a few minutes ago.

“Metis was Zeus' first wife. It was her advice that helped him free his siblings from their father Kronos' stomach and helped them win the Titan War. He wouldn't have his throne if it wasn't for her.” Krystal takes a deep breath in. “But Zeus discovered a prophecy that Metis would have two children. One would be a daughter who would be smarter than him and the second would be a son who would overthrow him. Not wanting that, Zeus tricked Metis into taking the form of a fly...” Krystal now looks like she is on the verge of tears. She pauses for a

minute, swallows the lump forming in her throat, and continues. "...then he ate her. He absorbed her into his body so now she doesn't even exist anymore."

Krystal just sits there for the next few moments in silence. Then she wipes a tear from her eye and stands up.

"I'm sorry. I have to go. Goodnight, Donna. Goodnight, Friday."

Krystal promptly makes her way to the door and slams it shut. Friday turns to Donna who is looking at him with surprised eyes.

"Did I do something wrong?" Friday asks.

"No, no you didn't do anything wrong kid," Donna says reassuringly. "It's just, Krystal had a sister of her own once that she lost, and that...story reminded her of it. Just don't bring it up again."

Donna then returns to eating her chow-mein while Friday ponders about Krystal and her sister.



## CHAPTER TWO: SNAKE-EYES

The next couple of weeks are pretty much the same. Friday wakes up about two hours before school starts so that he and Donna can do some early morning exercises. Then he goes to school, Krystal picks him up afterward, Friday does his homework, and then goes to bed.

Friday got his grade on his book report. He received an "A-". He lost points because he took Krystal's advice and mentioned Metis. Mr. Siekert told him that while Metis is Athene's mother in some myths he wanted Friday to focus on the version depicted in the Iliad which depicts Zeus as a literal single parent to Athene.

The class finishes the last chapter of the Odyssey. Odysseus and his son Telemachus/Telemakhos killed all of his wife Penelope's/Penelopeia's suitors, and Athene prevented the suitors' fathers from killing him. Out of curiosity, Friday looks up what happened with Odysseus after reuniting with his wife. It wasn't pretty. Odysseus ended up being killed accidentally by the son he had with Circe/Kirke, who then ended up marrying Penelopeia while Telemakhos married Kirke. Friday thinks that is weird and gross, but he also gets more ideas for demigod characters.

He imagines a pair of cousins, whose fathers are Boreas and Zephyros, who can fly. The son of Boreas, Argos, has purple eyes like the color of his father's wings and his hair is white as snow. His cousin Aria, the daughter of Zephyros, has pink eyes and brown hair. Both are ten years old. He also imagines a son of Hermes named Georgios who can run as fast as the wind. He is fourteen years old and has dark hair. He imagines a red-headed girl named Phoibe who is

the daughter of Aphrodite. She is fourteen years old and is capable of stunning anyone by blowing them a kiss. He imagines Lyristes, son of Apollon, fifteen years old, and can mesmerize people by playing any instrument. He is tall and skinny with light brown skin and short brown hair. He imagines Daphne, a daughter of Demeter, who is ten years old and can control plants by moving her hand. She is a bit pudgy and has long mud-brown hair and leaf-green eyes. But his thoughts keep going back to Theodora, the clay-born daughter of Theo.

Friday imagines that Theodora is fifteen, a couple of years older than him, with dark blue eyes and dark hair like her father but with very fair skin. He is drawing her in his notebook when he is supposed to be listening in class. Friday draws Theodora holding a bow and arrow while riding a griffin. Suddenly, Mr. Siekert rips the page out of his notebook before telling Friday that if he catches him drawing in class again, he will be going to detention.

After school, Friday goes to his usual spot and waits for Krystal to pick him up. As usual, he endures listening to Mike Walsh's usual weekend taunts: "Happy *Friday, Friday*" and "Have a good Saturday and Sunday, *Friday*" followed by a snort and a snicker before he runs off.

Friday was too busy reading about Medusa, or rather Medousa, on his phone to notice that a car pulled up in front of him.

"Hey, Friday," a woman's voice calls.

Friday looks up and is surprised to see that the person who is addressing him is not Krystal. This woman is dark-skinned with long dark hair and prominent cheekbones. On her ears are a pair of gold teardrop earrings and she is wearing dark sunglasses and a large black fedora on her head which complimented her long black coat. Her car looks nothing like Krystal's. Rather than a small blue electric vehicle, this is a large white van with dark tinted windows and a license plate that reads: "QN0LB1A".

"My name is Lonnie," the woman says with a big toothy smile. "I'm a friend of Krystal. She was busy so she sent me to come pick you up."

Friday knows that something is wrong since he never heard Krystal mention someone named "*Lonnie*" before. Granted, Friday wasn't the best at remembering these kinds of things, but he knew that Krystal or Donna would have called him and told him if someone else was coming to get him. He also remembers Donna, as well as the safety lessons presented in school, warning him about getting into vehicles with adults he doesn't know. Plus, the dark tinted windows and big toothy smile are giving him red flags.

"Uh, ok. Let me just...go to the bathroom," Friday says, scooting away.

That isn't a total lie. He is going to go to the boys' bathroom, then call Krystal or Donna to confirm Lonnie's claims and if they say she is a stranger he will call the police. Lonnie then shakes her head.

“What's the matter, little boy? You don't trust me?” she asks.

Lonnie removes her sunglasses. Friday looks into her eyes and his mind becomes lost in her dark pupils and the sound of her voice becomes hypnotic to him.

“Get in the vehicle. I have ice cream,” Lonnie says in a honey-sweet voice.

“Ok,” Friday replies in a daze.

Friday enters the vehicle without even thinking. He sits down in the back seat and Lonnie reaches behind her to strap him in. Then she puts her sunglasses back on and Friday suddenly regains his thoughts.

“Huh? What?” Friday doesn't even remember getting into the van. He tries to struggle free, but his torso and arms are strapped so tight to the seat that he can barely move. He looks at the buckle and notices that the release button has been removed.

“Hey! Help!” Friday yells, hoping that someone will hear him.

Lonnie just chuckles.

“Don't bother yelling. This vehicle is completely soundproof, and no one can see you through the windows.”

Lonnie turns back toward the steering wheel and drives off.

“I love this world,” Lonnie says. “The children here are so sheltered. So naive they don't even know me. And there are so many methods for picking-up lunch.”

Friday listens to her words in confusion.

*“World?”*

“Hey listen, lady. My guardian is a cop, sorta. I've also seen her punch a hole in a wall once. If you hurt me, you're screwed,” Friday warns.

“Ah yes, Belladonna. I'm not worried about her. We're going to someplace that she hasn't set foot in years.”

Lonnie opens her glove compartment. She pulls out a small sack and turns to Friday again.

“This is dust from the soil of my world mixed with the ashes of a guardian nympe's tree.”

Before Friday can ask what that means, Lonnie throws the contents of the pouch, dark sand, out of her window and onto her windshield. Once she does, a strange yellow-glowing mist engulfs them. Suddenly Friday finds himself shaking as the vehicle begins to rock. He looks through the tinted windows and it seems as if the streets and the cars outside are fading. When the mist fades Friday sees that they are now in a forest. He is freaked out and confused.

*“Did this woman slip me something!?”* Friday thinks to himself.

“Good, we're here,” Lonnie says as she exits the vehicle.

“Where are we?” Friday asks, confused as he looks around.

He looks through his window and sees his kidnapper smiling sinisterly at him.

“Where are we, Lonnie?” Friday asks again.

“Lamia, dear,” she replies.

“Huh?” Friday asks.

“When I am in the Iron-World, I go by Lonnie. But up here...”

Lonnie/Lamia opens Friday’s passenger door. Once he has a full view of her, Friday’s face turns to one of shock and horror. As he looks below the bottom of her coat, he sees a ten-foot-long serpent-like tail covered in green scales instead of a pair of human legs.

“What the heck!?” screams Friday.

The she-serpent’s tail extends toward him and wraps around his body. Friday gasps as he struggles to breathe while the “woman” rips his seat belt off and pulls him out of the van. As she does, her wicked smile grows larger. The slits on her cheeks that had previously been unnoticeable open, showing a long row of sharp teeth and a long reptilian tongue. Friday closes

his eyes and winces as her tongue quickly brushes up against his cheek. It feels as if his arms and ribs are about to be crushed as the she-serpent's mouth opens over his head, ready to bite down.

“H...help...” Friday manages to choke out.

Lamia is suddenly halted by a massive roar coming from the forest around them. The she-serpent's eyes widen with horrific realization, recognizing what creature it came from. This causes her to loosen the grip of her tail and Friday is able to catch his breath.

“Oh, no.”

“W-what?” Friday asks.

“Manticore,” she replies simply and quietly.

Another roar is heard as a massive yellow flash flies right past Friday and knocks Lamia down on her right side, freeing the boy from the she-serpent's grasp.

He looks over at whatever saved him, and he can't believe his eyes. The she-serpent that kidnapped him is struggling to keep herself from being eaten by a massive lion-like creature by holding its mouth open. This lion creature is as long as a car and as tall as an adult human. It has tiger-like stripes and a lion-like mane. Its tail is long, black, and curled like a scorpion's. The end of it has various long spikes the size of kitchen knives.

“*Manticore?*” Friday thinks.

He remembers a dream he had before moving in with Donna where he saved a cub that looked just like this creature from drowning. He remembers a woman in that dream calling the creature a Manticore as well.

*“Could this be it?” He wonders. “No, that can't be. It was just a dream. I'm probably just hallucinating or something.”*

The manticore growls again and leans in closer to Lamia's head. Unable to keep it away any longer, the she-serpent uses her tail to slide right under the giant cat. The manticore turns his head around to find its intended prey and points the end of his tail toward the she-serpent. Each of its spikes comes shooting at the she-serpent like harpoons. Lamia moves left and right, then slithers away with her arm just barely missing one of them. One nearly hits Friday's foot, but he moves it away in time.

After the manticore shoots its five spikes, tiny new ones start to grow in their places. It lunges at the she-serpent but Lamia dodges. It flies into the side of the van. The force of the manticore slamming into the van is so strong that it nearly causes it to tip over and leaves a massive dent in the side.

Lamia lunges as the manticore starts to turn around. Quickly she wraps her serpent-like tail around its neck and grabs his scorpion-like tail with her hand to keep it in place. Friday looks around wondering what he can do to help. He sees one of the manticore spikes next to him and



he gets an idea. Acting quickly, he grabs the spike in his hands and charges at the fighting creatures.

“Hey, lady!” shouts Friday.

When Lamia turns her head around, Friday stabs the manticore's spike into her left side. The same spot where, during one of their many training sessions, Donna told him the kidneys are located.

The she-serpent screeches in pain before smacking Friday away. The boy is sent several feet before landing on the hard forest floor with a painful thud. Friday sees that the manticore has gotten Lamia off it as she clutches her side. Her wound is oozing a black tar-like substance. The manticore swats one of its paws and hits the she-serpent on the side of her face, sending Lamia crashing to the ground.

Lamia removes her sunglasses. She then turns to the manticore with a furious expression and the manticore does...nothing. Friday is initially confused why the manticore is just standing there now, but he remembers how when Lamia took off her glasses and he looked into her eyes he was completely mesmerized. Friday notices two things. Firstly, one side of Lamia's face is missing an eyeball. There is just an empty black socket surrounded by black bags where the eye should be. Friday looks at the ground and sees a small, slimy, yellow object off to the side. It's her eyeball. Secondly, he notices that Lamia seems less energetic than when she had both eyes.

She chuckles wickedly as her opponent is mesmerized. But she isn't moving quickly or going in for the kill like she was before, and she seems somewhat dazed as if she is tired. She yawns and Friday figures out that the bags under her eyes are a sign of sleep deprivation.

*“Was she going to sleep now that one of her eyes is out?”* Friday thinks.

In any case, he must move fast before she kills the creature that saved him. He picks up a fallen branch and runs at the she-serpent as she starts choking the manticore with her tail. Once Friday is close enough, he hits the she-serpent in the back of the head hoping that the force will be strong enough to knock the other eye out. Instead, Lamia turns around to face him angrily. Friday raises one of his hands in front of his face, so he doesn't have to look into her single eye.

“You brat!” screams Lamia, as she tries to slash Friday with her claws.

Friday avoids this by crouching down and rolling away before she can strike again. Noticing that Lamia's other eye is right next to him, Friday grabs it and raises the eye to Lamia's face right as she lunges at him. Lamia stops, mesmerized by her own eye. Friday stands up and lets out a sigh of relief before turning to the manticore that is looking right at him.

“Honestly, I did not expect that to work at all,” he nonchalantly says to the manticore before he turns back to Lamia. “Ok, Lamia. Give me your other eye.”

Without hesitating, the she-serpent puts her hand over her remaining eyeball and removes it. She doesn't even have time to hand it to Friday before she collapses in utter exhaustion. She falls to the ground asleep and starts snoring.

“Now, what to do with you?” Friday asks himself as he bends down and takes the other eyeball from her grip.

On one hand, she had attempted to kill him, admitted to having killed other children before, and would likely do so again. On the other hand, it just didn't seem right to kill someone while they were sleeping and helpless, even this creature. He then considers if he should tell someone about this. Maybe they will lock her up and make sure she never hurts anyone ever again.

Before Friday can decide, the manticore pounces on her body and crushes her under his weight. Lamia lets out a small cry before disintegrating, leaving nothing but bones and a wisp of green smoke behind that fades when the manticore blows it away.

“Ok, that works,” says Friday, a little disturbed.

The manticore suddenly starts walking toward Friday. The boy takes a step back and raises the eyeballs in one hand while holding his stick up with the other.

“Stay back!” Friday warns.

The manticore stops about three feet away from Friday and sits down like a dog. Friday wonders if the eyes in his hands are mesmerizing the beast again. Friday then takes a few steps left. The beast turns his head to face him. Then Friday takes a few more steps left and again the cat turns to face him. He decides to try something.

“Roll over.”

The beast just scowls at Friday, looking unamused.

“Ok, so you're not a dog. Well, put your tail down, at least.”

The manticore lowers his tail and digs the tips into the ground. Friday walks closer to the beast, feeling more comfortable.

“Stand up.”

The manticore gets back on all fours. Now Friday is feeling risky. He drops his stick and reaches over with his free hand to pet the beast, but he flinches away as an arrow comes skimming across the top of his hand. Friday turns to see the wooden arrow embedded in the ground near him. Then he turns in the opposite direction, and he sees the shooter. What he sees surprises him more than the snake lady or the manticore. It is a young girl, a couple years older than him, holding up a wooden bow and ready to draw another arrow from the quiver on her back. She has dark blue eyes and neck-length straight dark hair. She is wearing a knee-length

white chiton without sleeves with a rope tied around her waist as well as sandals that are laced halfway up her shin. She is tall and Friday can see a definite tone of muscle in her arms. And that face, it is just like he had always imagined.

“Theodora?” Friday whispers.

The girl then speaks, though not in English. It is probably Greek judging by her clothing and the fact that she resembles his imaginary Greek demigod character. The strange thing is that, although Friday has never heard that language before, he seems to understand what she is saying:

*“Step away from the beast, Iron-Worlder.”*

The manticore growls and leaps toward her. Friday yells for it to stop but just as the manticore lands on top of her, she raises her arms and swiftly flings the beast off her and sends it slamming into a nearby tree.

“Whoa,” Friday says, amazed.

The manticore whimpers as he tries to get back up and she prepares to fire an arrow at him.

*“Wait, don't!”* Friday says, running up to her.

He is momentarily stunned hearing himself speak the same language she spoke. Friday then realizes that his head is now full of letters and dialects from a language that he was sure he didn't know before.

“This doesn't concern you, barbarian,” the girl says harshly. “Now back away. I will deal with you later.”

“Wait. I get it, now,” Friday says, coming to a rationalized conclusion about all of this. “I’m just hallucinating.” He turns to the girl with a cocky smile. “You're not real.”

Before Friday can react, she slams her fist into his face.

Then everything goes black.

### CHAPTER THREE: NEW HELLAS

*A little girl, no older than seven, skips along the shoreline of a long rocky beach. She is happily collecting seashells with her brass hands. Among her other inhuman features is that her skin is covered in green scales and sprouting from her back is a pair of small gold wings. Her round face looks like that of a typical girl her age, cute, with a cute nose and baby-fat cheeks along with big eyes that are stone gray in color, but she also has tiny tusks sprouting upward from her lips. But the most eye-catching feature about her is her hair, which is composed of various species of venomous snakes.*

*A seagull flies down and squawks. This catches the girl's attention, and she turns to face it. She sees the bird ruffling the feathers on its wing and she smiles.*

*“Hi there, little bird?” the young gorgon says, holding out one of her collected shells that still has some oyster meat in it. “Are you hungry?”*

*The bird turns around, but it makes the mistake of looking into her eyes. The bird squawks in fear before freezing into solid gray stone. The girl sighs.*

*“Sorry,” she mutters sadly.*

*The girl suddenly notices a shadow looming over her. She turns around and she sees a man in armor looking at her through a reflection in his shield while raising a sword in his other hand,*

*ready to strike her. The young gorgon shrieks and runs away but the warrior chases after her, swinging his sword around and shouting: "Face me, vile monster!"*

*"Sthenno! Euryale!" the young gorgon screams as she runs.*

*Moments later she hears the man scream followed by the sound of metal hitting rocks. She stops and turns around. She sees the warrior's shield and sword have fallen to the rocky ground. She looks up and sees a woman resembling an adult version of herself, except that her snakes are all red, gazing down at her. She is holding the man who had attacked her limp by the neck.*

*"Sthenno!" the little girl cries in joy.*

*"Dusa, I told you not to stray too far from the hut," Sthenno says, as she callously drops the man's body, letting it get washed over by the waves. "What if I hadn't heard your cries in time? You would be skewered."*

*Dusa looks down and twirls her thumbs. "I'm sorry."*

*Sthenno scoffs and motions for the girl to come close. Dusa steps closer to the older gorgon who kneels to her level and embraces her.*

*"Sthenno, why do so many people keep coming for me?" Dusa asks.*

*"It's your condition and human arrogance," Sthenno explains. "Either they are afraid of what you could do, or they want to brag about being great enough to slay you."*



*“I hate this condition!” Dusa shouts angrily, still holding onto her sister. “I hate it! I hate it! I hate it!”*

*“Well, at least you won't have to worry about men with swords anymore,” Sthenno says, breaking the hug. “Euryale and I have found a set of islands far from Hellas protected by magic. No one will ever be able to find it.” She lifts the girl's head by the chin with her finger and looks her in the eyes. “No one will ever hurt you. That's a promise.”*

### *FRIDAY!*

Friday's head is still fuzzy, and his eyes are still shut but he sits up as he starts to come back to consciousness.

“Great, he's waking up,” Krystal says.

“Boy, what were you thinking? You could have died, you idiot!” Donna shouts in anger and worry.

“Come on, wakey-wakey,” Krystal says.

Friday's eyes begin to open, though everything is still blurry. He grabs his bruised left cheek in pain. Krystal hands him an ice pack.

“Here, for your face,” Krystal says. “You got hit pretty hard.”

“I said I was sorry,” a somewhat familiar voice says in that unfamiliar-familiar language.

“Sorry, Iron-Worlder.”

Friday doesn't pay much attention to that right now. He is too busy holding the ice pack to his face. It feels much better with the cold bag against his bruised flesh.

"Donna? Krystal? Is this the hospital? I had this really weird dream that-"

Friday stops when his vision comes back in full, and he sees the girl that knocked him out staring at him perplexed. Holding her shoulders is a tall man with the same dark hair and a mustache-beard combo. He is wearing a himation and looking at him with the same expression. Friday realizes that he is lying on a long sofa-like chair in some kind of study. The walls have rows and rows of shelves stacked with books and scrolls from end to end. There is a large painting of the man and a beautiful blonde-haired woman with green eyes hanging on a wall and a large desk below it made from ox hide. Friday turns to his side, and he sees that Donna and Krystal are wearing chitons like the girl. Donna is also wearing an armored breastplate. Krystal's chiton is light blue colored and has wave and seashell patterns on the edges that cover her ankles, unlike the girl and Donna's chitons that stop at their knees.

"Oh Friday, I'm so glad you're ok!" Krystal says, hugging him tightly. "No child has ever come face-to-face with Lamia and lived!"

"Or a manicore," Donna adds, sounding dumbfounded. "But, what the heck!? Why would you follow that thing *here* of all places!?"

"Donna, stop," Krystal says, still hugging the boy who just stares at them confused. "You know that Lamia has hypnotic powers. The important thing is that he's alive and in one piece."

“And here now!” says Donna. “Do you have any idea how much trouble he could be in?”

The two women continue to argue back and forth in that unfamiliar-familiar language until Friday is fed up and starts yelling back in that language.

“Ok everyone, stop!” Friday says, pushing Krystal off him. “Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop!” He pauses and takes a few deep breaths before speaking again. “Can someone please explain what’s going on? Where am I? What was that thing? Why am I speaking like this? Who are they? And why does she look a lot like a character I made up called Theodora?” Friday asks, pointing to the girl and the man.

“I’m sorry, what did you say?” the girl asks him. “Made up?”

She and the man both look stunned.

“Yeah, since I started reading the Odyssey in class, I’ve been making up a whole bunch of Greek mythology characters,” says Friday. “One of them was a girl named Theodora who was sculpted from clay by her dad Theo and given life by Athena. I also made up some kids that can fly-”

Donna interrupts him.

“Friday, meet Theodora and her father Theo.”

Donna gestures to the man and the girl.

“After Dora knocked you out, they sent us another one of their letters. But instead of asking me to teach at their little camp, it said that a kid from the Iron-World was abducted by Lamia. You were missing so we put two and two together.”

Friday feels confused by this explanation.

“What?”

“You didn't make me up,” Dora says. “You were informed about me by Gaia. Also, you can just call me *Dora*.”

Friday blinks in surprise and Dora turns to Donna and Krystal.

“Have neither of you told him anything?” Dora asks them.

Krystal sighs, preparing for a long talk with Friday.

“Let me explain. Gaia, the spirit of the earth and grandmother of the Olympians, occasionally whispers events from the past into mortal ears to keep the history of the Olympians and Hellas from being forgotten. Sometimes they record them, and they write stories based on them that keep the history alive, sometimes they don't. Although even then they like to put their own spin on it. Like Ovid saying Medousa was originally human before being cursed by Athene.

But the fact that Gaia told you about her and the other demigods now is very odd. She hasn't told any new stories in eons.”

“Of course, there haven't been many new demigods or events worth telling in eons,” Donna tells her.

Krystal shrugs.

“Yeah, that's true.”

But Friday is only getting more confused and freaked out.

“Hold up!” Friday says. “Ok, so Theodora is real but that doesn't answer my other questions. Where am I? Demigods? What?”

Now Friday's head is spinning. He is so confused. One minute he is at school and everything is normal, then he gets abducted by a predator. The predator turns out to be a kid-eating monster. He gets saved by a giant lion-scorpion thing and now Donna and Krystal are talking about demigods.

“Ok son,” Theo says. “This might be a lot for you to take in. I'm well aware that people of the Iron-World have a contorted view of history. Perhaps we should discuss this tomorrow?”

“No, I want answers now, please. And what do you mean by Iron-World?” Friday asks.

Donna kneels next to Friday.

“Ok, Friday. Here's the thing,” Donna says. “You know all those stories that I said were garbage? The ones about Herakles, Zeus, The Odyssey, all that?”

Friday nods and Donna continues.

“Well, here's the thing...” Donna now rolls her eyes away and her mouth is twitched in a corner. “They’re real. The gods, all those stories actually happened. I'm an Amazon and Krýstallos is an Okeanid nymphe.”

Friday says nothing. He just stares at Donna for several moments before he suddenly bursts out laughing.

“You're joking with me, right? This whole thing is one big joke.” He stands up and starts pulling out books from the shelf. “Ok, where's the camera?”

“This isn't a joke,” Dora says, annoyed. “And don't touch my father’s books.”

“Dora, it’s ok,” Theo tells her. “This is a lot for him to process.”

“Ok, so I'm not seeing a camera, even so...”

A large gush of water comes between Friday and the bookshelf. Friday jumps back in surprise as the blob of water shapes itself back into a humanoid shape and then solidifies into Krystal. Friday is speechless.

“I can also turn back into my regular clothes if that makes you more comfortable,” Krystal says, briefly turning back into water from the neck down.

When she reforms, she is wearing her familiar flowy hem tube top and jeans. Friday takes a few steps back before falling back onto the sofa chair. His eyes are still wide open as he turns back to Donna.

“Go on,” he says simply.

“Ok, so you learned in class that Zeus basically started the Trojan War to get rid of the demigods and ordered no more interacting with humans in fear of being overthrown?” Donna asks him.

“Y-yeah?” Friday nods.

“Well, sometime after that, Apollon had a vision,” Donna says. “He foretold that with the gods withdrawn from humanity, Hellas would eventually be conquered by another country that would fall as well. Zeus knew that sooner or later people would stop believing in them and worshiping them, so he and the other gods created this place.”

Donna grabs Friday by the arm and leads him to the window. Friday looks outside and what he sees amazes him.

“Welcome to New Hellas.”

The landscape is caught in a twilight that emphasizes all of the land's features. The first thing he notices is the half-lit sky transitioning from day to night. The stars that are coming out seem to be connected by lines which make the constellations more visible. Around the constellations, there are the outlines of bears, a group of women, and much more. In the west where the sun is setting it looks like a gold chariot of sorts being pulled by horses. While in the east where the moon is starting to rise, it looks like there is a silver chariot.

The city below looks like something from the ancient Greece section of a history book. There are hundreds of white buildings with red tile roofs and some of them have columns, particularly the ones that look like the Lincoln Memorial or the White House. There are fields of crops and groves of olive trees. Horses walk down the dirt roads and aqueducts run throughout the city.

“Hellas is what the ancient Greeks called Greece,” explains Donna. “It’s a near-exact replica of the Hellenes world thousands of years ago. It hovers over your world, the Iron-World, like a cloud. The gods use powerful magic to conceal it, making it not only invisible but untouchable by anyone on the outside unless you travel through a portal. The gods called all the nature spirits, the remaining descendants of the demigods, and their most loyal human followers. They moved all the magical lands and islands here and this is where we've all been ever since.”

Friday just stares at her not knowing what to say.



“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you,” Donna says. “But the people up here want this place to stay a secret.”

“Hey, wait. So does this mean that I went to all those bible studies at my school for nothing?” Friday asks.

Krystal and Donna look at each other with unsure expressions.

“Well, the Olympians did end up running into beings calling themselves Angels during their time in Rome,” Krystal says. “One claimed to be the guardian of the city. It caused an outrage in the Pantheon as the Olympians did not believe the Angels’ claims that it was their lord that created all. Maybe their lord is another alias of Khaos, or maybe their lord created Khaos, or maybe their lord was created by Khaos. We really aren’t sure what to think of each other, but the deal was we would leave them alone and they would leave us alone.”

Friday nods in understanding. Then he remembers something important.

“The manticore, what happened to it?”

“It is locked up in a secure cage in the training grounds,” says Dora.

“What? Why?”

“Its name literally means *man-eater*,” Dora says like it is obvious.

“But he saved me,” says Friday. “If it wasn’t for him, I would have been snake-woman food.”

“It probably just wanted to eat you itself,” says Dora.

“I don't know,” says Friday. “Actually, I think he might have been paying me back for a favor.”

“What do you mean Friday?” Krystal asks.

“When I was young, I had a dream where I was in a field. And the sky was...like that.”

Friday points outside. “And the woman I was with called this place New Hellas.”

This caught everyone by surprise, except Dora who just stared at him with a look that says:

*“I don't believe this”.*

“Anyways, I saw a mother manticore and her cubs crossing a stream and one cub was drowning so I rescued it. So now I'm thinking it wasn't a dream and that this manticore was that cub.”

“You were dreaming,” Dora says, flatly.

“Uh...actually can you describe this woman?” Krystal asks.

Friday shakes his head.

“It was a long time ago. Why?”

“Oh, nothing,” says Krystal, looking away.

But Donna stares at her suspiciously.

“Can I please see him?” Friday asks.

“No, we're going home before anyone else notices you're here,” says Donna.

“Actually...” Theo says, rubbing his neck guiltily. “I already sent a carrier pigeon to the king with a letter informing him of Friday's arrival.”

Donna stares at him with furious, unblinking eyes.

“What?” she asks simply but forcefully.

“Well...he's an Iron-Worlder,” Theo explains. “You know the rules, no mingling between the realms. You living there is breaking the rules enough and then your ward comes here-”

“He was abducted!”

“In any case, none of you can leave until we get word back,” Theo tells her. “Sorry.”

Donna continues to glare at him, looking like she is about ready to beat him into the ground. Krystal slowly creeps next to her and massages her shoulders, a typical act she does to calm Donna down. Donna doesn't even acknowledge her, but she manages to calm down enough to speak.

“Let's go see the cat.”