

~ Old Town in Europe ~

CHAPTER 5



Sun was sprinting through halls stretched out like ancient canyons, their towering ceilings reaching for the heavens, adorned with intricate arches that seemed to suspend time itself within their vast expanse. Her heart lodged in her throat.

There was fire everywhere. Crumbling fragments of the walls cascaded like a symphony of destruction, each shard a potential peril raining from above. To reunite with Phineas unscathed, she treaded through the cascading debris cautiously, every step a ballet with the looming danger above.

“Please be safe, please be safe,” she repeated under her breath over and over. Why had she slept in today? She was a fairy godmother. Even if her mother was still helping her with training, she was meant to always be by Phineas’ side. Like a star tethered to its orbit, she would dance in celestial

harmony by his side, an irreplaceable muse to his every stride.

The attack on the palace had started just as she was debating whether she could sneak in another hour of sleep or if she would get scolded for it. First, it'd been just a tremor, something she could have easily imagined. But then she'd heard a loud roar and the sound of countless feet marching quickly as a voice pierced through the chaos, shouting orders.

Ever since, Sun had been on the run, a fleeting shadow, a whispering echo roaming room after room in a tangled pursuit. Her heart raced because each door held the tantalizing promise of reuniting with her mother, Phineas, Miranda, anyone. She'd come across many faces, mostly soldiers, but everyone answered differently when she asked for clues about their location.

Thus she found herself a nomad of the skies and earth, propelled forward by the relentless pulse of her own heartbeat, as her world crumbled into a whirlwind of shattered dreams and scattered hopes. Finally, she was standing amidst the debris. Desperation clawed at her chest. It felt so tight she could barely breathe. She started running again. Why did the sky look the way it did?

A quick glance out the window revealed the burning city below. Dark figures were flying across the sky and covering the sun, and many figures were

fighting in a dance of conflict. Sun gulped as the chaotic tapestry unfolded, worry slithering down her back. Was everyone ok? Were they winning the fight?

Then, her eyes traveled north, landing on the forest, somehow untouched by the combat. She understood.

How did she not think of this before? She wanted to smack herself for the folly of carelessness. Changing directions at once, she skidded around a corner and transformed mid-step, her wings spreading across her back as her body became smaller. She was more vulnerable that way, but she'd also be harder to spot, and she didn't want to bring any unwanted attention to where she was going.

She soared with the velocity of a shooting star, slicing through the air like a blade of determination, each wingbeat a testament to her unwavering resolve to outpace the shadows nipping at her heels. She felt the shift in magic as soon as she flew past the border of the forest. Sun felt the satisfaction wash over her, knowing her deduction had been spot on. Miranda's magic was stronger there, so it only made sense that she would stay in the deepest parts of it to cast a protective barrier.

She continued following the flow of magic until she heard whispers in the shadows, stirring the

stillness of the surrounding air. She transformed back just as someone screamed her name.

"Sun!" Strong arms enveloped her in a reassuring embrace, their sturdy warmth melting the iciness of her nerves as she inhaled her mother's perfume. The woman pulled back to look at her properly, tears gathering in her green eyes. "My girl, where were you? I was worried sick! I thought you were with the Queen, but when I got here, and no one knew anything, I grew terrified..."

Looking down, Sun hid a warm flush. "I... I kinda slept in today."

Her mother frowned but, instead of the usual scolding, she hugged her tightly again. "I'm just glad you're ok."

"What is going on?"

Around her, fairies of all classes, nymphs and even some trolls formed a circle. In the middle stood Miranda with a frail Phineas in her arms. "Why are the dragons here?"

"Cadmus has declared war against the entire kingdom." Her mother's face was somber, her fury simmering beneath a mask of solemnity, betrayed only by the clenched fists that spoke volumes of the anger boiling within.



"But..." Sun stammered. "Uncle George is stronger. Nothing can beat his magic, right?"

"The King is fighting at the front line, and I'm sure he will put that silly lizard in his place in no time. I think that lizard has a thirst

for war and craves adventure."

There was a shadow of doubt in her voice, a thread of uncertainty that she was clearly trying to hide from her daughter. She always tried to use humor to hide her fears.

"Why is he doing this? What does he want?"

Her mother threw a quick glance at Miranda and Phineas, then shook her head. "We don't know. Miranda is holding two barriers now, one to protect civilians at the City Hall and another to protect us here. We're lending her our strength as best as we can."

"Then I should—"

"No," her mother interrupted. "You need to keep your strength intact for Phineas. He's all that matters."

"But—"

"Sun." Her mother grabbed her by the shoulders. "You are a fairy godmother. That means your duty is to serve the prince and protect him at any cost. And for that, you need your full power. You know what would happen if you tried to use your skills without being fully charged, right?"

Sun nodded grimly. Her prowess in battle demanded a lot from her. If she tried to force it when her magic wasn't at its peak, it could very well mean death. So, she stayed silent where she was and watched as the sounds of battle engulfed them. They were mere spectators to the tumultuous ballet of conflict all around them.

Sun told herself it would be fine. But as the battle drew closer, Miranda grew weaker from the nonstop effort to keep the barriers up. As if adding salt to an open wound, the dragons intensified their assault on the barrier, their dark sorcery chipping away at its defenses, casting ominous shadows over an already dire situation. The earth trembled with each explosive impact.

"They are going to break through," her mother whispered. Her voice was trembling. She exchanged a look with Miranda. They both nodded. Then she turned to Sun and pulled her into her arms. "I love you, my girl. Please never forget that."

“Mom?” Fear climbed up her back, digging its talons in. Why was her mother acting this way suddenly?

“Go with Miranda, love. She’ll tell you what to do.”

Sun wanted to protest, but something in her mother’s urgent tone made her obey without hesitation. She ran to Miranda’s side, ignoring how everyone around them seemed to get ready to fight.

“Here, child,” Miranda called.

“What’s going on?”

The woman sighed. “The barrier is about to break. I need you to take Phineas somewhere safe and look after him while we stay here and fight. Can you do that?”

Sun nodded eagerly. This was her job, after all, what she’d been born to do.

“Good.” Miranda had an old book in her free hand, the one that wasn’t holding Phineas. There were weird inscriptions on it, with letters that Sun had never seen before. She turned it around for Sun to see. “I’ll hide this somewhere Cadmus won’t be able to get to. In moments of dire need, consider this your compass, a beacon that shall illuminate the path for you and Phineas. Come back here and find this waiting for you.”

“I... I don’t understand.” Why was she telling her all this? They were going to fight them. They

were going to kick those dragon's tails, right? But there was a little frown between Miranda's eyebrows that tied a knot in Sun's throat.

"Listen to me, Sun. This book is only to be used as a last resort. Acquiring this sort of power will put a target on his back and..." She glanced down at the baby in her arms. "I just want him to have a normal life. You both have a destiny to fulfill. We will always watch from the clouds. Have faith Sun, I promise you will both find the path when you need it."

A single tear slid down her cheek and landed on Phineas' tiny hand. Sun covered it with her own—which was easy given their difference in size, even though she was only a couple years older than him—and squeezed it.

"I won't let anything happen to him. I promise." Even if she didn't understand the full picture, she

could promise her that much.

A wistful smile ran across Miranda's lips. She put a hand on her baby's head and another on Sun's cheek just as a deafening reverberation thundered through the forest, a resounding



boom that rippled through the very fabric of the woods. The barrier, as if stirred by the primal roar of nature itself, quivered once again, its ethereal walls anxious under the weight of the explosive resonance, teasing at the boundaries between the known and the unknown.

“Take him! I’ll hold them back, just go! Go, now. He’s our only hope.” She turned her back on them, ready to face the oncoming danger. “Please, keep him safe.”

Holding Phineas close to her chest, Sun turned and ran as fast as she could. Explosions raked the air behind her, but she didn’t turn back. She ran, ran, and ran, and she’d been running ever since.

Sun’s eyes flew open. She sat up quickly, her head spinning. Her gaze ricocheted like a startled sparrow, desperately seeking refuge amidst the anarchy unfolding around her, each glance a plea for a lifeline in their sea of uncertainty. As the haze in her mind cleared up, she took in the bunk beds, the cramped space, and then took in a calming breath as she realized where she was.

She was back at the inn. She found a glass of water next to her bed and drank it all in one go, her throat parched.

What happened? Trapped in a labyrinth of reality and illusion and entangled within the remnants of a fading nightmare were her thoughts. Then it hit her. The bandits, they'd come for them and she'd fought them and she... she... She couldn't remember what had happened after that. Was Phineas ok??

A scream outside disrupted the calm in the room. Jumping to her feet, Sun dashed to the window and threw it open. Down there, in the garden behind the inn, Phineas and Lukas were training while Chee watched from the sidelines.

The muscles in her back unclenched when she realized he was there, that he was safe. The urge to unravel mysteries of her dream surged within her, a tidal wave of inquisitiveness ready, eager to flood the air with a deluge of a million unspoken questions, but she still felt weak. All she could do was stand there and watch as the fight continued.

Phineas had gotten much better since he'd started training with Lukas, even if he didn't notice it himself. He was surer on his feet, could predict movements faster and didn't get knocked on the ground as much. But he looked angry, his brow etched in a storm of fury, his once-fluid movements now erratic and jagged, and he was lunging at Lukas carelessly.

He was putting up quite a fight, but he was also being reckless and sloppy. Perhaps that was why Lukas found it easy to kick Phineas' legs from under him, sending him tumbling down. He stayed there, staring up at the sky and then, to Sun's surprise, Lukas offered him a hand.

Phineas stared at it at first, but then took it graciously, letting Lukas help him up. The shift was a seismic departure for both, akin to a kaleidoscope abruptly spinning into a new pattern. It was such a profound change that it left her speechless. Usually, they would bicker day in and day out, taunting each other every time they were fighting.

Sun remembered how Lukas had protected Phi from those assailants, and she was grateful for it. Perhaps it wasn't much, but it might be enough to let go of their past grudges. Chee certainly seemed to get along better with Lukas. Perhaps it was time for them to all do the same. It was better if they all got along. The air hummed with the promise of camaraderie.

Sun teetered on the brink of calling out to them, yet before a sound could escape, Phineas looked up. The anger on his face melted away, transforming into something akin to awe. Next thing she knew, he was rushing over to the nearest tree.

The other two boys looked confused, but then they saw her too and Chee's face broke into a huge

smile. Even Lukas seemed to relax a bit. Phineas, for his part, never took his eyes off her. The moment he was next to the tree, a branch wrapped around his waist and lifted him to her window.



Impressed by how easily it came to him now, Sun raised an eyebrow and poked her tongue out. “Showoff.”

Phineas said nothing, simply climbed through the window like a spirit slipping through an unguarded passage. As

soon as his feet were on the floor, he hugged her tightly. She was like a ray of sunshine, infusing the world around her with luminous energy.

Sun blinked once. Twice. Then, slowly, she raised her arms to wrap them around his back too.

“Phi, I’m fine,” she whispered. He squeezed her tighter, holding her up. “Why are you acting like I might pass out?”

“Because you passed out, Sun.” His voice was full of a weight, a depth of emotion that eluded definition. He pulled back to look into her eyes. “You were out for a full day.”

“A whole day?!” She tried to step away, but Phineas was still holding her by the shoulders, his hands so big that they could encompass most of her back.

Memories from her dream drifted back, the feeling of holding Phineas’ small hand in hers. Fairies matured fast, but they grew only a little more in size. It amazed her how many things had changed.

“What happened there?” Phineas asked. “It was like you were glowing, and then you just fainted. I was so worried...”

“I used my powers a bit too much, all at once. It can take quite a toll on my body.” She didn’t need to explain the risks to him. That was for her to worry about. She wouldn’t make the mistake of exposing herself like that again. “My body hurts, but I’m fine. I just need to rest some more, and if I get some sunlight, I’ll be up again in no time.”

As Chee and Lukas burst through the door, Phineas quickly let go of her.

“You’re gonna become one hell of a lazy prick if you keep getting the trees to do everything for you, you know?” Chee scolded him, making Phineas’ ears turn pink.

“I was just excited, ok?”

Smiling, Sun went to sit on the bed. “Anyone care to tell me what happened to those bandits?”

“You mean after you knocked them out?” Chee wagged his eyebrows. Sun rolled her eyes. “Phineas tied them up with vines and the villagers took care of the rest. They put them in a caravan and sent them to a bigger city where they will deal with them.”

Sun nodded in approval. “You guys did a good job.”

“You did most of it, to be honest,” Phineas chuckled. “We just cleaned up after you.”

“You all put up a good fight.” She waved a dismissive hand and nodded at Lukas. “If he had transformed fully, I bet those guys would have run for the hills way sooner.”

They chuckled, but Chee tilted his head as he watched Lukas, considering. “Why didn’t you transform?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I couldn’t do it,” Lukas shrugged, though he didn’t quite meet Chee’s eyes. “If I did, the villagers would’ve freaked out.”

That was true, but Sun couldn’t shake the feeling there was more to it. She thought about their training back at school. Lukas could easily get his claws out, sometimes even sprout wings from his back, but she never once saw him change completely.

“Well, even if he didn’t change, he still saved me,” Phineas said, looking at a bewildered Lukas. “Thanks for having my back.”

There was a beat of silence, and then Lukas cleared his throat. “Well, someone had to show you how it’s done. You were embarrassing me as your master, getting beaten like that.”

“Hey!”

That sprouted a lively discussion between the boys, though it was more playful banter than the heated arguments they used to have. Sun watched them from her perch on the bed, too exhausted to interrupt. She’d forgotten all about that book from her dream until now.

The dream was weirdly cathartic. Sun wanted to tell them all about it, but... could she really trust Lukas with this sort of sensitive information? Even



after everything that happened, this was a delicate matter. She didn’t want to risk it. Sun tucked away the words for a later moment, reserving them for a private exchange with Phineas alone. Like a precious

treasure awaiting discovery, the opportune moment
would unveil itself...