

# **Giants Rising**

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**First published in French Polynesia  
January 2023**

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# Chapter one

## This is my life

I never wanted to be a demigod. But look at who I am now. A Half Blood. Before I tell you anything, let me introduce myself. My name is Ashley Irises. I'm 13. I lived with a billionaire family. My dad - Mr. Irises is the owner of a successful business, and my stepmother (who hates me) is a famous actress. I have a younger sister whose name was Dahlia, but she went missing. My younger twin stepbrothers are Jack and Tim and my older stepsister is Tasha. None of my stepfamily really cared for me. So, I took care of myself most of the time.

Today, my father had promised me that we would go to a waterpark. Unfortunately, he had to go to one of his "*super important*" meetings, so I was stuck with my stepfamily. I decided the farther away I was from them, the farther away I was from trouble.

As I walked up the stairs, from the corner of my eye, I saw a glimpse of a shadow by my dad's study. It must have been my imagination I thought. As I was about to enter my bedroom, I saw the shadow again. I must have been hallucinating.

I laid on my bed wondering what I should do. AHA! I was going to garden my dearest plants.

In case you didn't know, my room was covered with plants. I even grow fruits and vegetables in my room. It's the only place in the house that's allowed soil and mud.

Four years ago, my stepmom banned all dirty things from the house, but I complained to dad that I should be able to grow plants, veggies, and fruits. He smiled and told nine-year-old me ‘you are becoming just like your mother’ and agreed to my complaint.

I walked over to my oldest plant, the great olive tree in the middle of my room. ‘Oh, beautiful great olive tree.’ I held up my arms in a circular shape as I knelt. ‘I don’t know what I would do without you and the rest of your family. You’re just the best company.’

Just at that moment I heard giggles from the hallway.

I sigh-growled ‘what do you want Tasha?’

‘Oh, we want nothing. Just here to see your *incredible room.*’ a girl sarcastically snorted from the doorway.

‘Why thank you Stephanie, I think so too. It must be a few times bigger than yours.’ I grinned.

‘How dare you! Tasha, do something!’ Stephanie wailed as all the other girls gasped.

Suddenly somebody cleared their throat behind Tasha and her girl gang. All the girls spun around to see my stepmom standing in front of them.

‘M-Mrs Irises, I-I can explain...’ stammered a girl on the right of Tasha.

‘There will be no need for explaining honey.’ She turned to me and narrowed her eyes ‘I know who did this.’ She pointed her long spindly finger in my chest. ‘You shall not put even a toe out of this doorway for the rest of the day.’

‘Like I want to’ I shrugged and slammed the door in their faces.

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I woke up to the noise of giggles.

I groaned and sat up, at that second the giggling crazy girls silenced.

'I know you are hiding somewhere.' I called as I jumped out of bed in my nature pyjamas.

I heard a sound of laughter by my closet, and some shushes.

Ugh, why can't they respect my privacy? I walked over to my closet, as I opened my walk-in closet, I heard some scuffling and some whispers by the left side of me.

I ran after the noise.

Wait.

I listened to the sound of their feet. I couldn't hear the clink clanking of my stepsister's heels. She always wore heels. You would never see her wearing any different shoes. Same with her little squad. So, who could it be? I wondered.

My curiosity got the best of me. Instead of going back and change like a good girl, I followed the noise. It led me out of the closet. Sprinting, I tripped over a root on the ground and knocked over a flowerpot with a clump of dandelions inside.

Oh darn.

I looked back and forth between my doorway and the poor, poor dandelions on the ground. I chose dandelions. I ran towards the flowers laying on the ground and I cursed myself for being so clumsy. I looked at the root that had tripped me over, has it always been there? I didn't have time to think. I scooped up some soil and the Dandelions in-between my hands. I planted the roots of the flowers into their rightful spot in the flowerpot.

I grabbed a bag of soil near me and carefully covered some of the roots with the new soil. Then I dashed to my gardening shelf, and took a watering can from the third shelf, and sped back to the dandelions. Next, I watered the plant a little, and put it by my window shield. I let out a sigh of relief finally, I thought. Then I heard someone clear their throat behind me, I turned to see the beaming face of my father. 'Looks like you saved yet another plant from dying.' He said proudly, 'Your mom would be proud.'

The fact he mentioned about my mom surprised me, he never told me anything about my mom.

I stared at him blankly.

'Well, you'd better pack up quick,' he told me quickly. 'Your chauffeur will be here soon to take you to school. Love you, see you in five weeks.'

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Could you call me a troubled kid? Well, probably. It's a full time yes.

Just as I hopped out of the car, I heard Tasha and her gang gossiping and whispering about some new kid who just arrived.

I ran over to my best friend Willow waiting for me by the stairs of our school, Riderwood.

'What took you so long?' he asked me curiously as we walked through the front doors.

'Traffic was a murder, and another plant almost died.' I replied.

‘Ok, well at least you came before our first class.’ He said cheerfully.

I groaned. I hated school, but my best friend loved it. So, I followed him to the lockers.

‘What’s first? Science, Math, P.E?’ I asked as we put our bags into the lockers.

‘Nope. Geography’s first.’ he answered as he stuck his geography book in my face. I groaned again. Geography is my worst subject. Not because it’s boring. It’s in fact quite entertaining.

It’s because of the teacher.

Her name is Mrs. Hust.

You may think how a teacher can be rude. Well, if she catches a child talking, she’d say, “now dearest” and you’d go to detention.”

We turned a corner and faced the door that led to the geography class. I squeezed Willow’s hand until it was purple and gulped. We stepped into the classroom.



# Chapter two

## It's just a bad day

Before we even did anything, Mrs Hust already was glaring daggers at me. I shifted uncomfortably in my seat; I turned to Willow and asked him a silent question '*are you seeing this?*' He just frowned and sniffed the air, a nervous habit he tells me. I let out a sigh. Suddenly Mrs Hust clapped her hands two times, and everyone turned to face her. 'Good morning class,' she said in that shallow voice that made the whole class flinch. 'We shall be learning about the United Kingdom.' She turned to me 'Miss Irises, could you spell out the capital of England?'

'Um...' I sat there embarrassed. My dyslexia made it harder for me to learn in school.

No doubt, my mortal enemy Juliana cackled with delight 'She can't spell a such a simple word. What should we call her? Dumb ash?!'

Soon enough, the whole class was laughing at how stupid I was. Everyone but Willow and me.

Then our Greek teacher – Mr Fret – came in frowning.

'What's all the noise about?'

'We were just making sure that Miss Irises gets more studying than she is now. I shall not simply send her to detention this time. She will have a worse punishment,' Mrs Hust answered smiling coldly.

Mr Fret smiled, that warm tingly sensation ran throughout my body and all my worries fluttered away.

‘Well, I don’t think she should be punished so severely. It’s not her fault that she has dyslexia.’ He protested.

They had a quiet argument, apparently Mr Fret won.

‘Well then, we will not have her whipped.’ She shrugged, as I stared at her in horror. *She wouldn’t* I told myself *she just wouldn’t, no adult can do that to a child.*

‘But... she will still have a severe punishment. She shall be expelled!’ She leered meanly. I stared with my mouth gaping open and looked over to Willow, who looked like his grandma just died. His eyes teary and his teeth clattering.

*Oh, poor Willow* I thought as tears streamed down his eyes. This was the first school I was able to get as far as about one year without being expelled.

‘Don’t worry, I bet you’ll find someone else.’ I told him. It didn’t seem to help. He just kept on sobbing.

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I sadly walked into my dorm to pack up my belongings.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door, I opened it to see my principal looking down at me.

I gulped and greeted him.

‘Why hello Miss Irises. I heard of an incident in the geography classroom.’ He said distantly.

‘Sir, it was not my fault, I shouldn’t be expelled because of my dyslexia! It’s not fair!’

‘Self-pity,’ He mused ‘and complaining of unfairness. Well, that’s unfortunate, I was really hoping to save you from being expelled.’

The school bell rung

‘Well, that’s my cue.’ He turned and left me awestricken.  
‘I should’ve known.’ I muttered as I packed a pair of pants.

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I was just walking to my locker when I heard Willow’s voice in Mr Fret’s office.

‘S-sir. I’m w-worried about A-a-ash-’ He broke into sobs. ‘Now now, don’t think that hope is lost for Miss Irises.’ Said the voice of the warm-hearted Mr Fret.

‘B-b-but what about Mrs Hust. I-i-if she gets her hands on Ashley—

‘She won’t.’ Mr Fret said simply.

All my thoughts fell into a black hole in my mind, and a bunch of new worries crowded in my mind.

I ran.

It was the only thing I could think of doing. I sprinted out of the doorway in the school. All the way to the bus stop.

My gods.

I had left all my things in my dorm. I ran back to Riderwood and climbed up the stairs to my room. There standing was Willow looking down at the ground.

‘Hello?’ I asked, and his head looked up immediately. Then he ran at me with open arms.

He hugged me tightly; I patted his back awkwardly.

‘I thought you were long gone Ashley!’ he was grinning from ear to ear.

‘Um... I was just coming back for my stuff...’ I told him

His smile wavered 'That's long enough either way. I just need to give you this.' He passed me a card with a number on it.

9096742

'What is this?' I asked him

'It's my... uh...er... phone number.' He replied nervously.

'Ok, thanks I guess.'

'You better get going, you don't want to keep your transport waiting!' he said cheerfully, but I could see the pain in his eyes

'But—'

'No need to worry about me. Go go!'

'Wait.' I turned to protest but he was already gone.

I sighed as I grabbed the rest of my stuff and left.

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It wasn't long until my father and my stepmom started arguing.

'If *she* doesn't start learning, I'm going to kick her out!' I heard my stepmom screaming.

'Well, it's not her fault that she has dyslexia! And this is my house! You have no right to kick out anyone but yourself!' my dad yelled.

'Fine! If you choose her over me, I want a divorce!' She snapped back.

I gasped from the doorway and quickly ran back to my room sobbing in despair.

I sat on the bed covering my face with my hands. Tears streamed down my eyes as I grabbed a tissue and blew my nose.

I unpacked my bags, doing so I heard more screaming and shouting.

I felt something in my bag that was never there before. I looked down and saw a small bag zipped up tight. I opened it and found two small wooden rings with a symbol on each one, and a tiny pendent on a string, like a necklace. I put them on and noticed on the bag was a note.

I peered down at the tiny note, I realized it was Willow's handwriting and read aloud.

*Dear Ashley*

*It is me Willow.*

*I knew this day would come,  
so I prepared a small gift for you.  
It's not much, but whenever you're in trouble,  
touch the small symbols on the rings.*

*Secondly, the necklace.*

*The small pendant, whenever you need,*

*Say a place, Anywhere you like!*

*Place small drop of the liquid into water.*

*Then walk into the mist that will form.*

*Remember my number, show your dad and call me.*

*First ask for his permission then call me.*

*Yours truly Willow Composter*

I stared at the note in bewilderment. His last name was *Composter*, HAHAHAHA.

I looked at the rings and touched the small symbols.  
It grew into two long swords.

I yelped in surprise as the swords clattered onto the ground and shrunk back into rings. I cautiously picked up the rings and put them back on carefully.

I admired them. *They look like the rings my sister Dahlia had, Wait what...*

Then I remembered the card from Willow. My hand found it in my pocket where the card was waiting to be found.

I ran over to my dad's study and I saw him studying a scroll from the ancient times. He looked up at me and smiled, and I saw a sad glint in his eye.

'Oh Ashley, what perfect timing. I was just about to read one of these ancient scrolls, I know how much you like history!'

'Dad, I need you to see this number Willow gave me.' I said.

His face darkened.

'Yes?'

I showed him the number.

'Are you ok?' I asked

'Of course!' But he looked troubled.

'Well, should I call it?'

He sighed 'This is a number for a training base.'

'What?'

'I-I-I cannot explain this. But the training base will.'

My mind was spinning.

'Ok, so you want me to sign up for a training base?' I asked and he nodded. 'And you can't explain why?'

'Correct.' he sighed 'Now dear. Go pack your stuff. It'll be fun. I promise.'

'Ok then,' I forced a smile and I raced back to my room.

# Chapter 3

## I learn how to drive

Packing was the best part.

I opened my closet and grabbed five pairs of everything. I took out a green backpack covered in nature stickers, stuffed my things inside and picked up my puppy who was a golden retriever and named Sunflower.

I kissed Sunflower on his forehead and grabbed a flower crown made from yellow flowers and leaves from my bag and put it on top of his head.

I smiled at my new-born puppy.

I felt something warm brushing against my leg, I looked down to see Sunflower's mom – Goldie – and dad – Miami – beaming at their baby in my arms.

I laughed and set him down next to his parents, where he barked and circled his mom and dad playfully.

At the corner of my eye, I saw my two stepbrothers poking their heads through my doorway. I growled quietly. The dogs tilted their heads at me curiously. I suppressed a smile and turned to the frowning faces of Jack and Tim.

'Hi, Timmy! Oh! Is that Jack with you?' I asked sweetly, but I hoped they didn't hear the bitterness in my voice.

'Where are you going?' Jack asked me.

'Tell your mom I am leaving to a summer camp thing. And I will come back in the fall.' My tone harsher than I expected. I bit my tongue.

If you even said hello in a non-sweet voice, they would scream, cry, yell or run away to their mom.



This time they surprised me.

‘Ok.’ They both said in unison, they sounded a little hurt though.

‘I’m so sorry. I wish I could stay with you guys.’ I added quickly.

My brain was telling me to get out of there as quickly as possible, but my heart wanted to stay with these naughtiest yet cute little boys.

Then they did something I never thought they’d do. They both hugged me tightly and looked up at me. I smiled.

‘Now you naughty little boys.’ I grinned ‘Which one of you wants to steal some yummy snacks from the kitchen for me, and which one wants to harass your mom and sister, hm?’

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When I got outside and said goodbye to my dad, Tim and Jack, I saw Willow waiting by my car.

‘Hi.’ He said nervously and I realized he was scared of my dogs that were walking behind.

‘Hi, um... so your number is for a training place?’ I asked.

‘Uh... yeah. Um your dad told you already?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Ok, that saves a lot of time.’ He paused. ‘Your driver can’t come with us.’

‘Then who’s going to drive?’ I frowned.

‘Um... I was hoping you knew how.’ He chewed his lips.

‘Uhhh... I’m only thirteen.’

‘Oh... ok then. I was banned so-’

'You were banned?' I interrupted.

Willow looked embarrassed. 'Yeah... That's irrelevant.'

'Sorry.' I mumbled.

'It's fine. So, I guess I must coach you then.'

I had a terrible thought of Willow teaching me how to drive a car. Then again that was our only choice.

'Ok. I'll do it.'

'Great! Come on now, we'd better get going!'

I looked back at my house, waved goodbye and hopped into the car, my dogs jumped into the back.

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I've never been in a car's front seat. It was surprisingly comfortable.

'Ok,' Willow's voice was calm and gentle despite the fact I was about to drive a car. 'You need to stay completely calm and relaxed. It may seem frightening but don't get off the road.'

'Can we start now?' I complained.

'Yes, we may. Start the engine.'

I turned the key and the sound of the engine starting flooded through the car.

'Now what?' I asked.

'Take the tiller thing- Not that, over there.'

My hands were flying over the controls as Willow instructed me how to start moving.

'Now you may push the accelerator forward.'

We lurched forward.

'NOT THAT FAST!' Willow yelled.

I quickly let go of the peddle.

‘Well, that was a good start. Now we should go a little slower.’

‘You think?’ I glared at him.

He shrugged an apology.

‘Now, you don’t have to push so hard.’ He lectured me throughout the process. Soon enough we were speeding along.

‘Left, No! Not that way! Right, Right, Right! No, no, no, no, no!’ he cried.

We skidded across the road at every turn.

‘Ok, just three more minutes until- WHOA!’

He fell backwards into the passenger’s seat.

‘Sorry!’ I called back to him as I tried and failed to control the wheel.

We drove to the highway and almost did a three sixty off the road.

‘There!’ Willow yelled from the backseat. I was confused before I realized he was pointing at a sign that said *Lavender Hills* on the other side of the highway.

I turned the wheels towards the sign. Suddenly a dark shape lurched in front of the car. I slammed the brake and Willow tumbled onto the other pair of seats behind. The dark shape hurtled towards the car window.

‘Ashley! The rings!’ Willow screamed.

I looked over at him in confusion and the weird shape crashed into the window.

‘THE RINGS!’ He wailed.

Then I finally remembered the wooden swords he gave me, and I pressed my thumb on the symbols as the thing banged madly on the car window. The rings grew into swords, and I sliced open the door of the car.

My dogs barked and growled at the strange thing on top of the car. I never knew how to use a sword, but I was able to block the attacker's swipe. I looked back and saw Willow's eyes growing wide.

'T-that's a G-giant, one of G-Gaia's children!' He stammered.

I was puzzled but I kept on fighting what Willow called a Giant. The Giant drew his sword on my neck, and I let out a brutal scream. Blood streamed down my neck and my face was covered with scars and bruises. Then as fast as a blink, an arrow sailed past my head and shot the Giant off the highway.

Everything turned black.

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My dreams were stranger than usual.

I was in a dark room with only a flickering lightbulb to give light, and there was a door centred on the facing wall. In the middle of the room, I saw a man tied up in a chair, his face strained with hunger and bruises covered his face.

Then the door busted open, and two bodyguards walked inside followed by a man who looked weirdly like a king.

'Hello Iricus' the king said, his voice sounded cold and bitter, as though he wanted something, but he couldn't reach for it.

'Minos.' Iricus rasped.

Minos smiled coldly.

'We'll make sure your little secret comes out, don't worry.'

'You'll never. Go ahead, kill me. I'll never ever betray my legion.'

'Even for your own daughter?' Minos asked taciturnly.

Two more bodyguards emerged with a young girl in their hands.

The girl screamed and flailed in the large arms of the guards.

'Daddy!' she screeched.

Iricus gasped at his daughter screaming.

'No. You cannot do this, I forbid you!' He croaked.

'Well then,' Minos sighed and waved his hand.

One of the guards pulled a knife out of his pocket and lined it on the poor girl's neck.

'NO!' Iricus yowled.

# Chapter four

## Welcome to a weird life

I awoke in a bed covered with sweat. My hand found its way to my neck where a cast was wrapped around it.

Was all that just a dream? Am I still in my room?

Dozens of questions crowded my mind. I sat up and looked around.

The room looked like a cabin. Next to me was a bedside table, on it was a bottle filled with a smoothie looking drink. I heard a voice speaking to my left. I turned and saw Willow and Mr Fret in a deep conversation.

What was Mr Fret doing here?

Willow saw me getting up and ran up to me with open arms. He squeezed me so tight he could've broken my ribs, but I didn't care. If I was with my best friend, I could feel good again.

He pulled away and grinned.

'Oh Ashley!' He hugged me again. Willow looked up and frowned.

'What?' I asked surprised my throat was so dry.

'Here, have some nectar.' Willow passed me the bottle of smoothie. I pressed my lips on the bottle and took a sip of the nectar.

It tasted like my favourite ice cream on a Tuesday. I could almost smell the wonderful scent of the ice cream shop that Willow and I went to. Before I realised, I had finished all of it. The colour returned to my face.

I licked my lips and smiled.

Then Sunflower bounded onto my bed and snuggled in my arms. The flower crown I gave him had tilted on his head and I straightened it.

I stood up and looked at Willow and saw something unexpected.

From waist up, he was a normal human. But below he was hairy and had hooves.

‘WHAT are you?!’ I jumped back in surprise.

Then I looked up at his face and on his head, he had two small horns.

‘Um, I’m a Satyr.’ He replied nervously.

‘WHAT?’ I asked.

‘Uhm, try guessing, it’s too confusing if I explain it.’

‘I’ll get it...A goat!’ I suggested. ‘Wait what?’

‘Heh, um, yeah!’

‘WHAT?’ I asked again.

‘Half-goat half-man.’ he nibbled on a soda can.

‘Heh, of course.’ I stuttered. ‘Where am I? Why is Mr Fret here? What time is it? What day is it? WHY are you a GOAT?’

‘Too many questions, not many answers.’ Mr Fret was in a wheelchair, and he wheeled towards us. ‘Hello Ashley.’

‘Um hi?’

‘How are feeling, dear?’ he asked.

‘Better, thank you sir.’ I replied.

‘Well perhaps I can send one of the children to explain to you what is going to happen.’

He turned to Willow. ‘Who shall we send, eh?’

‘Perhaps Lou Smiler from sixth cohort?’

‘No, she has sword practice in the arena today.’

‘Uh, what are you guys talking about?’ I asked.

‘London McLane from first Cohort?’ Willow suggested ignoring me.

‘Yes! I bet she would be delighted to show Miss Irises around!’

‘Seriously, what are you talking about?’ I cut in.

‘Ah, London would tell you everything!’ Mr Fret smiled.

‘Ok,’ I said slowly. ‘And who is London?’

‘Well, I’ll get Willow to take you to her.’

‘Yes sir. I shall take her over to London.’ Willow bowed and grabbed my arm. ‘Come on Ashley, time to see Lavender Hills!’

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Willow led me to a sort of cabin, only it was MUCH bigger.

‘This is first cohort where our best warriors are.’ Willow said excitedly, he swung open the door and I found myself in an enormously large house.

‘Woah.’ I looked up at the ceiling above me. There were three levels in the house.

‘London!’ Willow yelled up to the third floor.

‘Yes’, said a pretty voice and a girl glided down the staircase.

She was impossibly beautiful. Her eyes changed from blue to green then to brown. Her blue sleeveless dress swished as she walked towards us. Her blond hair was brushed and tied up in a French braid.

It was hard to believe that she was a warrior.



'Hello, I am London McLane from first cohort. My mom is Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty.' She curtsied and looked at me. She crinkled her nose.

'Willow, did you send her over for a makeover?' She turned to him 'Uhhhhh.' He stared at her with his mouth gaping. I elbowed him back to reality.

'No,' I frowned. 'We need someone to show me around this, uhm, Lavender Hills. And I'm Ashley.'

'Ooh! You're new!' London exclaimed. 'I love new kids, you know.'

'Uhm, yeah.' My mind felt weird. This girl said she was the daughter of who? Oh... yeah, Aphrodite. Wait what?

'Come on now, let's get going, and on the way, I can give you a makeover,' she interrupted my thoughts.

'Uhh, what about Willow?' I asked.

'He'll be fine' she said, her eyes were looking up and she waved her hand carelessly. She was starting to remind me of my stepsister.

'Now, come! We've a lot to see!' She dragged me out of the door and took a deep breath.

'So, um where are you taking me first and what were you talking about when you said your mom was Aphrodite?' I asked, filled with confusion.

She sighed and muttered something about "stop asking questions", then smiled brightly and said 'Well, the first place I'm taking you is to the tools shed, otherwise known as the weaponry. You'll find out the answer to your second question tonight.'

'Okay.' I said trying to process everything she had just said.

She snatched up my wrist and pulled me along the grass to a shed.

She was strong.

'Hello, London, ah, and who's your little friend here, eh?' Said a voice behind us asked. 'Better not hurt her, Aphrodite will be most disappointed.'

I turned and saw a boy in dark clothes lurking in the shadows of the shed.

His hair was black and slick, as were his eyes. He had a dark sword sheathed on his side, which seemed to make the shadows even gloomier.

He stepped out of the shadow smiling coldly. London looked like she was about to explode.

I didn't know what she could do to a boy that always looked prepared for battle, while she looked like a pretty princess. Then she did something unexpected. She stepped up towards him and punched his face.

'Better fight back Milo, Hades would be most disappointed if he found out an Aphrodite girl beat you!' She challenged fiercely.

A bunch of kids scuttled off before they got caught in battle.

Milo gave her an answer.

He unsheathed his sword, and quicker than a cheetah they were battling sword to sword. Somehow London had been able to sneak a sword inside her dress.

I felt helpless as I scooted further away from the war. What could I do? I was a tiny ant compared to Milo and London.

I thought back to what Willow told me. But I couldn't think of anything that would be helpful in this situation. My

instincts took over me and I pressed on the rings and joined the battle.

I know crazy right?

I barely knew how to fight; how could I beat two of the best swordfighters.

But I did it.

I slashed at Milo, and he backed away.

'Whoa, whoa, whoa, this isn't fair.' He said as he stepped back.

'Who ever said the battlefield was fair, eh?' London asked.

Milo attacked me with his sword raised. I crossed my swords to defend myself and everyone flew back.

I collapsed on the spot.

# Chapter 5

## Hi new people

Again, my dreams were weird.

I was in a town full of ...uh...*people that were 30 feet tall and ugly.*

That pretty summed it up.

To my right there was a market, and to my left there was a big, tall castle rising above the mountains. I inspected my body in the dream, I looked like the other giants inside the market.

I groaned.

Oh well, I turned and headed for the castle.

When I arrived no one stopped me, or even noticed me! Inside, I tried to find the throne room. I stopped in my tracks when I heard noises from a room. I peered in then remembered I was invisible to the giants.

I walked in.

It was a meeting.

‘Silica, what brings you here, hm?’ The man who was obviously the king hissed.

His eyes were blood red, his hair was tied in a braid covered with weapons. He dressed like a broken, angry king. He had a tilted jewelled crown on his head.

‘My lord, the child has arrived. We need to up our army, if we don’t- ‘

‘ENOUGH!’ The king boomed. ‘You disgusting *empusa!* I already know all of this! You have failed as my messenger for far too long.’ He pulled an axe out of his hair.

It apparently was holding up his whole braid, because his hair fell sending swords, knives, axes and arrows clattering on the cold stone floor.

It didn't seem to bother him.

'm-my l-l-lord' the *empusa* whimpered.

Without another word the King threw his axe straight at Silica.

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I awoke in the cabin once again.

This time more people were around me.

London was sitting next to me. Willow too.

'Ashley, are you alright?' London squeezed me in a hug.

I barely knew her and she was already hugging me?

'Phew.' Willow said. 'I'd better get used to you getting hurt.'

I swatted his arm. I held my hand to my forehead.

Willow scooped some fruit off a plate on the bedside table and stuffed it in my mouth.

'Ambrosia,' Willow explained. 'The food of gods.'

They explained a lot of very confusing stuff, that I should not tell you, or else I might break your noggin.

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So, the long story is short. Gods are real. So are monsters. So are Titans and so are Giants.

Confused enough?

Well so was I.

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As I stepped out of the cabin, I took a breath that smelled like summer breeze mixed with strawberry lemonade. London took my hand and pulled me across the grass.

‘You have such cool swords! Where’d you get them? How do you know how to use them? When did you get them?’ London asked even more questions as we walked past the houses.

‘Ok. Willow gave me the swords. I have no idea how I used them. He gave them to me just as I was about to come here.’ I tried to answer all her questions.

We sat on a bench at the top of one of the hills that overlooked Lavender Hills.

I felt unsettled, as if all the people were staring and whispering about me.

At that very moment someone tapped my shoulder.

I jumped forward and turned to see who touched my shoulder. ‘Hi, I’m Lia.’ A girl who looked about my age waved at me.

She had dark brown hair that matched her eyes and wore a jumpsuit and didn’t seem to be bothered by the sun.

She did not seem as graceful as London, but I’m not sure anyone ever could be.

‘Hi, where did you come from?’ I asked.

‘Oh...’ She smiled sheepishly. ‘I can’t say. It’s a secret.’

‘Ok then. I’m Ashley.’ I said.

‘Hey Lia...’ London’s sigh seemed so depressed that the world might as well melt into a puddle of sadness.

'Oh...hi London. I'm sorry.' She was looking at her feet trying not to smile.

'Is there something between you guys?' I asked.

'Yes. She refused to do a makeover!' London answered angrily.

Lia burst out laughing. I couldn't help joining in with her.

'WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT!' screamed London, and she stormed away sending a black aura to everybody in her way.

'Oops. I think we might have dragged this a little too far.' Lia said cautiously.

'A little?'

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I was going down to the first legion to apologise to London when someone emerged from the shadows.

It was Milo.

He looked me up and down as I glared at the boy who had made me pass out for the millionth time.

'What's your name?' Milo asked coldly.

'Ashley. Ashley Irises.' I answered trying to look brave as he narrowed his eyes.

'Who's your godly parent? Mine's Hades the God of Dead and the Underworld.'

'Um... I don't know yet...' I mumbled keeping my eyes at my feet.

He laughed 'You'll find out tonight.'

# Chapter 6

## Wow I'm a demigod!

The dining room was crowded with demigods chatting, laughing, and playing games with their powers.

I held Willow's hand tight as we walked in.

'I need to go. Your table's over there.' Willow said, pointing at a table with a few other people.

'Wait, you're leaving?' My braveness melted away as he nodded.

'Why?' I asked in a small voice.

'I'm a satyr. I don't belong in these tables...' He faltered as my frown deepened. 'If you need me, I'll be right over there.' He pointed at another table in the very front where his kind were eating... cans?

I sighed as he jogged over to his buddies, and I slumped down on the bench. The other kids were giggling and whispering which powers they wanted.

I sat there, trying to get Willow's attention, but he was too busy laughing with his other friends. I felt a twinge of jealousy run through my body. All his life I had been his only friend, and now knowing he had secret buddies and didn't actually need me. It made me feel sad.

An elbow nudged my arm. I turned to see a white, blond-haired girl. Her hair was wavy and cut to her neck barely touching her shoulders. Her eyes were electric blue. She wore a simple white shirt with navy blue jeans.

'Sorry,' She apologised. 'I'm quite the clumsy one.'



'Who are you.' I asked.

'Well, my name's Camilla. What's yours?'

I gulped. 'Uhm. Ashley Irises.'

'That's a very pretty name.' Camilla said smiling. 'Ooh! Look, someone is making a speech!'

I turned. A boy stood at the head table. He looked my age; a cape was draped along his back. A sword hung from his belt.

'Who's he?' Camilla whispered.

'Dunno.' I answered.

'Hello,' the boy's voice was deep and rich, 'A few of you don't know who I am. I'm Jacob. Son of Zeus, leader of Lavender Hills. Today we have a few new faces. So, table 13 please come up.'

'That's us!' Camilla squealed.

She dragged me to the front of the head table.

I hated the attention. Camilla didn't. She waved at the people below them.

'Harley Timmins, you may sit down just here.' Jacob said. 'Julia!' he called. A girl appeared from the crowd carrying a tray of goblets. 'Good Julia.' He passed Harley a goblet filled with some clear still water.

Julia gave Jason a needle, I stepped back.

This seemed weird. I'm scared of doctors, needles, and anything that involved hospitals.

Jacob beckoned Harley to open his palm, as Jacob sucked the blood out of his palm.

Harley didn't seem to feel it. So perhaps it didn't hurt? It still seemed scary.

Jacob carefully dripped Harley's blood into the goblet Harley was holding.

For a moment nothing happened. Then the water began bubbling forming itself into a symbol with a hammer on a fiery background.

Suddenly a massive flame erupted from goblet and the same symbol in the goblet fired above Harley's head.

Jacob approached the petrified Harley and knelt on the ground. The rest of the people did the same.

'Oh! What if they do an offering! I read *all* about those! Should we kneel too?' Camilla whispered behind me.

'Thank you, Gods of Olympus, we appreciate your offering. All hail, Harley Timmins, the son of Hephaestus, the Hardworking God of fire!' Jacob shouted, the rest of the crowd stood and cheered as Harley walked over to the Hephaestus table to join his brothers and sisters who slapped him on the back and told him it was great to have him.

I secretly hoped my siblings were like that.

Soon after, a few other kids completed their ceremonies. A girl named Rose joined the Athena club, another girl called Lilliana went to Poseidon. Camilla was freaking out when she found out she was the daughter of Zeus.

Then it was my turn.

Slowly, I tried not to think about the needle sucking blood out of my palm.

As Jacob dripped the blood into the goblet, I felt strange. Did I belong here? Was I really one of them? Was I going to make any friends?

Then the water began to bubble slowly.

This was the moment of truth. Whether I belonged here or not.

The bubbles very carefully formed a flower. A single rose. Then the bubbles turned into vines growing out of the goblet and burst into a green fog uncovering the red rose.

I sat there looking at the symbol with wonder. Everybody else stared at the symbol.

Then Jacob knelt. 'All hail Ashley Irises! Daughter of Demeter, Goddess of plants and earth!'

# Chapter 7

## A betrayal and a curse

‘Just as I thought the day couldn’t get worse.’ Milo emerged from the shadows of the healing centre. His scowl was deeper than usual.

‘A Demeter girl.’ He growled. ‘I was waiting for the daughter of Zeus, but you butted in.’ He smiled bitterly.

‘Is it me you’re talking to?’ I stepped back.

‘Is anyone else here?!’ He yelled. ‘If my lord finds out I’ll be dead! So, I just need to finish you off...’ He grabbed his nightmare black sword and charged.

I stumbled back and ran.

Unfortunately, I was terrible at running.

He caught up to me and slashed straight at my face. I ducked down before he could hit. I dodged the next attack, and quickly pressed on my rings.

At that moment the rings turned into swords. I deflected the next slash and the next.

For a second everything was great. I fought back with all my strength. A few beads of sweat dripped down from Milo’s face. I was shocked.

I had just made one of the best warriors in Lavender Hills sweat.

But that wasn’t going to be enough.

I defended myself with my left sword and my right I attacked.

I couldn’t beat a fighter of Milo’s strength.

He'd had years of practice, and I'd just arrived! I was terrified. We dodged and slashed but neither of us were getting anywhere.

Then I remembered.

I was the daughter of Demeter.

What cool powers did she have? Plants.

Right.

Not what I needed in this situation.

But it made sense, so, I coiled up all my energy into my hands and tossed my swords -which was very dumb- and thrust the energy straight at him.

He looked confused, but then gloriously, vines shot up into the sky and pinned Milo down onto grass where we were fighting.

'Help!' I turned to see a blond girl wearing a blue dress. The poor girl had just witnessed a terrible scene. But, well, I did just have to go through it, so maybe I was the poor girl?

'You w-w-won't get away f-from t-t-t-this.' Milo wheezed and, in a blink, he faded into the shadow.

Now I was confused.

What had just happened?

I turned and saw the whole legion staring at me. Jacob was at the front of everybody.

He sighed and turned over to the worried faces.

'We unfortunately have yet another betrayal. The giants are getting stronger armies by the day. Tomorrow we'll assign a quest. Now, Ashley, you have had a far too tiring day. Your legion is the first.'

I blinked.

I was in the best legion on the first day.

I walked over to the first legion and entered the hall. To my surprise Camilla was there too.

But instead of her usual smiling joking face, she had her head buried in her hands sobbing.

‘What’s wrong?’ I asked.

‘I-I heard what Milo said. He really scares me. What does he want from me?’ She wept.

I really didn’t know what to say. I was just as confused, what did Milo want from her?

‘Have some sleep. It’ll make you feel better. Hopefully.’ I passed her my backpack as a pillow.

‘Thanks.’ She took my backpack and laid down on the hard stone floor. ‘Night.’

‘Good night.’

As I slumped on my bed my dreams drifted away into a river.

- - - - -

Milo was there. In front of the weird 30 feet king.

‘My lord,’ Milo fell onto his knees. ‘The daughter of Demeter is stronger than everyone else thinks.’

The king’s laugh was even worse than his appearance.

‘You think I don’t know this already?’

‘N-n-no sir...’ Milo stuttered.

‘Good. Has she started to learn how to use her powers?’

‘Tomorrow my lord. Along with a new quest.’

How did he know?

‘Good, good. Sirocco, please tell the armies to bring a few more attackers, not defenders,’ the king ordered.

A scorpion lady clambered into sight, bowed and spoke. 'Yesss, my lord.' Bowed again and hurried off.

'Now that's dealt with. You boy. Go to the north side of the Mount Olympus, DON'T draw attention to yourself. We'll tell you what to do once you get there.'

Then a man came sprinting in. 'King Porphyron!' he wailed.

'The empusas wanted to make their travelling easier! They went into the Labyrinth!'

'Now that's smart!' The King laughed. 'Send our armies down with them!'

'S-sir, a-a-are you sure that's w-wise?' The man stammered.

'ARE YOU ASKING *ME* IF I'M WISE?' The King demanded.

'No...'

'Good.' The king said. 'Now, be gone.'

- - - - -

I awoke in my new bed in the first legion.

I changed into my clothes and hurried down the stairs to the main floor.

I saw Camilla lying on the ground.

I let out the breath I had held since I woke up.

Slowly, I tapped Camilla's shoulder.

'Pssst, wake up. It's the morning.' I said, then I realized she was covered in sweat.

Camilla jumped awake. She was breathing very fast.

'A-a dream.' Camilla gasped.

'What was it about?' I asked. 'Was Milo in your dream?'

I looked around furiously.

At this stage, she wouldn't be able to remember her dream.

I picked up a bucket and ran around frantically looking for the kitchen. I found a room that was probably the kitchen and filled the bucket with water and ice and ran quickly to the dazed Camilla.

'Here!' I dumped the bucket onto her head.

'EEEEEEKK!' Camilla screeched. 'Gods! Was that necessary?'

'Yes, very.'

Camilla huffed.

'Now what was your dream.'

'My dream? Oh...yeah.' Camilla dropped her voice. 'Milo. He was there, in a very dark place. A maze. He touched a symbol and frowned. Then a monster charged at him. All he did was hold out his hand and the monster stopped.' Camilla shivered.

'What did the monster look like?'

'Uhm. Big horns... A bull! Uh. Half man and half bull?'

'Okay. Go on.'

'Milo then collapsed and opened his eyes. They were pure white. Then he surged towards the exit. But the guards grabbed him and said that this was getting annoying and perhaps they should break the curse and let him go. I didn't get that part.'

'They're in the Labyrinth.' I said.

'What?'

I explained my dream to Camilla.

'Oh, my GODS. Our dreams match each other!' Camilla squealed.



‘What does it mean though?’ I asked.

Camilla took a deep breath.

‘This means that a curse has put on Milo to work with King Porphyron.’

# Chapter 8

## Quest time.

As Camilla and I told Jacob about our dreams, his eyes grew wider with every word.

He then started to stare at the bracelet wrapped around his hand.

‘This is dangerous. Possibly fatal. We need to organize a quest immediately. Soon our enemies will overpower us. Evil will always have greater armies and weapons than us. We must think clearly,’ Jacob slumped into his chair.

He turned and looked straight at me.

‘You!’ He laughed in delight as I jumped back in surprise. ‘You must be part of the quest. You had the dream after all.’

Then he spun around to face Camilla.

‘My dear sister, do you mind accompanying Miss Irises during her quest?’ He looked over at me. ‘Assuming Miss Irises accepts the offer?’

‘I don’t know what to say.’ I felt as if *he* had just dumped a bucket of cold water on *me*.

‘Oh my, of course, I will go with her. I just need to pack!’ Camilla turned to me with pleading eyes. ‘Please accept this! It’s a once in a lifetime offer!’ She darted away to prepare.

‘So, what are you going to choose?’ Jacob asked raising an eyebrow.

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I sighed as I packed the same pair of pants I had packed when my principal *wanted* to help me after my expulsion. Camilla rushed in.

‘YOU SAID YESSSSSS!’

She danced around the room tripping over a few things. I couldn’t help but smile.

I packed a pair of shoes and some food for my dogs. Just when I realised that my dogs might not be able to come with me, Miami, Goldie, and Sunflower raced towards me barking happily.

I cuddled them closely. I turned to see Camilla’s jaw dropping so far that it probably touched the ground.

‘YOU HAVE DOGS?! They are coming with us, *right?*’ Camilla asked as she picked Miami up and snuggled into his warm fur.

‘If we’re allowed to, yes.’ I answered.

‘That’s great.’ She pumped a fist into the air.

‘Hello?’ A little girl poked her head through the doorway, I recognized her as the girl who screamed for help against Milo. Sha was the girl who had been assigned to Poseidon.

Her light wavy brown hair flowed down to her chest, her eyes were hazel brown, and she wore a light blue shirt that said

“Seas the day”.

‘My name’s Lilliana. I was the girl who was at the beach. I just need to know what you were talking about. No one is allowed to leave.’

I didn’t know if I was allowed to tell her about our quest.

So, I made up an answer.

‘We were just, imagining what it would be like when we leave here.’ I said.

‘Okay.’ Lilliana narrowed her eyes suspiciously and left without another word.

Camilla and I let out a breath.

‘Phew.’ Camilla said.

I stuffed the rest of my things into my bag.

‘We need to get out of here, fast.’ I jumped onto my feet and scooped the bag and rushed out.

Jacob stood in front of me.

‘Two is not enough for a quest like this.’ He told us.

‘What?’ Camilla and I asked in union.

‘I have assigned a few more people you will meet to join you.’

‘Who?’ I asked.

‘London, Lia, Lilliana and three you don’t know, Andrea, Dahlia, Liam. Of course, I shall go with you as well.’

That was a surprise. I had a full sister called Dahlia, who went missing four years ago. I wondered if this is where she’d gone.

‘Ok, when are we starting the quest?’

‘Now.’ Jacob answered.

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I looked back at the first place I felt wanted. I took a deep breath, this was it. I might not come back or see Willow again. Sighing, I jumped into the van that Jacob rigged for us.

‘Bye...’ Willow sniffled. ‘I hope I see you again...’

‘You will.’ I assured him, though I wasn’t that sure myself.

I saw the King, and he’s not someone you want to mess with.

I gave my last goodbye and closed the door, fighting back tears.

Camilla sat next to me and patted me on my back.

'It's ok.' She muttered every time I started crying.

'I'm fine, I'm fine.' I rubbed the tears away and straightened my back.

Jacob sat behind us frowning, as if he shouldn't have brought me with them. I needed to prove that I was worthy of being part of the quest.

I cleared my face and turned to face Jacob.

'Where exactly are we going?' I asked him.

Jacob sighed.

'We're going to the only entrance that we know of the Labyrinth.' Jacob answered sadly.

I gulped and picked up Sunflower who was jumping around the floor of the van and snuggled into her fur.

'We are going in there, right?' I asked in a small voice. Jacob didn't say anything and I took that as a yes.

I looked around the van and spotted Lilliana next to Camilla's other side. London was sitting next to Jacob, and Lia was sitting shotgun and I didn't know the girl who was driving.

'Hey, I'm Andrea.' She turned to me as if she was reading my mind.

'KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD!' Lia screeched and spun the wheel the other way.

Everyone screamed as the van tilted the one way.

I let out a breath.

'My godly parent is Hecate!' Andrea yelled over Lia, who was shouting at her. 'WHO IS YOUR PARENT?'

'Demeter!' I answered, not quite as loud as Andrea's shout.

I looked further behind Jacob and London to see a girl and a boy laughing hysterically.

I looked closer at the girl and saw we looked similar.

She had the same brown hair, just a little shorter. Her dark-ish skin matched mine. Her eyes were brown and green as were mine.

I realized I was looking at Dahlia.

My long-lost sister.

# Chapter 9

## The curse is broken, but we're taken

'DAHLIA!' I exclaimed, so happy to see my sister.

Dahlia turned over to look at me.

Her eyes widened with happiness.

'ASHLEY! Is it really you?' Dahlia's voice was as warm as I remembered.

Dahlia clambered over Jacob and London who both looked pretty upset about it, and plopped down, squeezing in-between Camilla and me.

I clasped my hands over my little sister's face.

'Dahlia, you've grown so much!' I smiled.

Dahlia blushed.

'Not that much.' She said.

Suddenly, I felt a red-hot ball that I had been carrying the whole four years that my sister had been missing. It expanded in my chest.

'DO YOU KNOW HOW WORRIED AND SCARED WE WERE WHEN YOU DISAPPEARED?! YOU COULD HAVE CALLED US TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE OK! WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!' I said.

Everyone in the van flinched.

'Consider this sorry.' Dahlia said calmly.

She opened her palm, inside was a necklace.

The necklace had a heart lock on it.

'Here's the key,' She gave me a very small key. 'Don't lose it.'

‘What is this?’ I asked.

‘It’s called a lock pendent. Swipe it at anything and it will get locked onto your necklace.’ She explained as she clipped it on for me.

Andrea turned to look: ‘OH, MY GODS! I’ve always wanted one of those!’ she squealed.

‘ANDREA!!!’ Lia yelled as the car spun onto the sidewalk and crashed into the fence.

Lia hopped into the driver’s seat and started reversing.

I was looking at the police car that started chasing us.

‘Should the police be chasing us?’ I asked.

‘No.’ Jacob sighed. ‘Looks like the mist is not doing its job that well.’

‘What mist?’ I asked.

‘The mist hides everything that happens in our world from the human world.’ Jacob explained.

‘Okay. So, why is it not working?’

‘It seems that the humans can still hear us.’ Jacob glared at Lia. ‘They sense destruction. Also we’re in a human vehicle.’

‘Well, that’s bad.’ I shuddered, thinking of all the police movies with their scary guns and machines.

‘We might end up in jail.’ London nodded agreeing.

‘Lia, can you install that turbo speed thing that I said we didn’t need, now?’ Jacob asked.

‘NOW?’ Lia asked angrily. ‘OF COURSE NOT!’

I heard the sirens getting louder and louder every second.

‘Is that a, no?’ Jacob asked.

‘OBVIOUSLY! HOW CAN I INSTALL SOMETHING WHILE DRIVING? AND I LEFT IT BACK AT LAVENDER HILLS!’ Lia wailed.

The police were right on our car.



'Guys?' I tried to get their attention, but they kept on arguing.

'Guys!' The police were next to us now.

'JACOB!' I yelled, but it was too late.

Our van had stopped.

'Well, well, well.' A blond policewoman approached our van.

Lia tried to start the car.

'Hahaha.' The lady's voice sounded more slithery. 'Don't try.'

She handcuffed us all and pushed us into the police car. The lady grabbed my dogs and stuffed them in the trunk. I heard their whimpering from where I was sitting. I fought back my tears and told myself to be strong. We drove away, far from where we were going.

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We stopped.

But to my surprise, we were not at a police station. We were in a parking lot. The policewoman pushed us out of the car. We rolled down onto the ground. Slowly, the policewoman turned into a boy.

I squinted at the boy.

He was...

Milo.

Milo growled and drew his sword.

'MILO!' A voice yelled.

I turned.

It was the boy, Liam.

Milo looked confused for a moment.  
'It's me, Liam, and I know this isn't you.'  
Liam struggled against his handcuffs.  
Liam was glinting. Literally. His body was shining.  
'Please, where's Milo?' Liam pleaded. 'Where's my best friend?'

Milo's eyes glazed over and he collapsed.  
Liam's bonds melted.  
I turned to everybody confusingly.  
Then I spotted Lia, her handcuffs had melted away also.  
Liam ran so fast to Milo that I could barely see him. He put his hand on Milo's forehead. Immediately Milo's eyes opened wide.  
He coughed and wheezed.  
Milo looked around frantically.  
He ran to the nearest trash bin and vomited.  
He spun around.  
'Liam?' Milo's voice was barely audible.  
'Milo! You're ok?' Liam rushed over to his best friend smiling so brightly, I could feel it.  
Milo collapsed again.  
This time Liam caught him.  
'He should wake up in a few hours.' Liam said breathing hard.  
'That's it?' I asked as Lia ran over to help him.  
Dahlia who also got rid of her cuffs, frowned.  
'That is strange. I don't think the king would just leave one of his best soldiers without guards.' Dahlia nodded.  
'You're most certainly correct.' A deep voice said behind us.

- - - - -  
It was hard to focus on the giant's face because it was covered with dozens of scars, cuts, and bruises.

It was not the giant King I had seen in my dreams. This one was blue.

His hair sandy blond, tied into a ponytail. Eyes green, like an electric eel hunting his prey.

In his hand he held an emerald trident.

He laughed.

His laugh was so horrible it made me shudder.

'Dear brother said you'd be good. He didn't tell me you were *stupid*.' The giant cackled.

Lia stepped back. Liam following closely.

The giant slammed his trident into the cold stone ground, and then slowly the ground erupted with dozens of monsters in... police costumes.

I would have laughed if I wasn't in grave danger.

The monster circled us, baring their sharp teeth and raising their claws.

I spotted an empusa, quite like the one I saw in my dreams, except this one had black-ish drips coming from her eyes.

They were tears.

I made a mental note, if I could have a chance to take advantage of that, use it.

All the monsters unclipped their cuffs clipped on their belts.

Then all at once they charged.

I saw four monsters pin me down. One gagged my mouth.

I screamed, hearing a few other screams and yells. I guessed that the rest of the quest had met the same fate as I did.

I heard the blue giant laughing like a crazy man.

A monster blindfolded my eyes and another two tied ropes and... cuffs.

I was dazed, falling to sleep...

# Chapter 10

## Labyrinth

I awoke in a cage with a hard cold stone floor.

My blindfold was off and so were my handcuffs. I searched the cell. I found Camilla lying unconscious on the ground.

She had cuts and bruises all over her body.

I gulped back tearful breaths. I needed to be strong. I looked around again and saw Dahlia also unconscious on the floor.

I searched for any injuries, but I couldn't find any except for a big slice on her forehead.

I felt a tear running down my cheek. The boys were not here.

I peeked through the cell bars and saw the boys' cage.

Liam's face was flooded with blood. Jacob was placed in a dark corner.

Milo was next to Liam.

But he was awake.

Crying.

'Psst!' I whispered.

Milo looked up.

'Ashley. Where's everyone else?' Milo asked.

'Unconscious.' I didn't know if I could trust Milo.

'Ok.' He said in a small voice.

Suddenly, I heard a loud stomp, followed by another and another. They were footsteps. I cowered back into a dark, dark corner and hid my face.

I heard Milo scramble back and do the same.

'Helloo.' I heard a monster speak and came nearer to us.

Quicker than a flash, he dragged us away.

Everyone was awake now, screaming, flailing, and pulling away from the monster.

I tried to focus on the monster's face, until I recognized it as the face of a giant.

The giant hauled us all into a throne room, where a Giant waited for us.

'I've been expecting you.' The King of the Giants boomed.

- - - - -

Porphyrion was the same as in my dreams, unfortunately, his real self was even uglier.

I immediately felt my hand go to my rings.

Porphyrion spotted my movements and laughed.

I stiffened.

'Do you know why I gathered you all here?' The King asked.

I turned to the rest of the crew and saw Camilla boiling red hot.

Camilla unsheathed a blue sword and charged straight at the giant king screaming.

The king backhanded Camilla away as if she was a small fly annoying him.

'Where'd she get the sword?' I whispered to Jacob.

'A gift from me.' Jacob answered.

'Now, as I was saying. Do any of you know why I brought you here?' The king bellowed.

‘No!’ Lilliana piped up. ‘We demand you to let us go and stand down!’ Lilliana yelled.

‘Hahahahaha!’ Porphyrion slammed his fist down on his throne. ‘Are all half-bloods this funny?!’ He cackled like a mad man.

I appreciated the fact that Lilliana even tried.

Then, under us, the sound of water gurgled, as if it wanted to get out.

All of a sudden, the pipes exploded, sending a gallon of water flying straight at the king.

Porphyrion spluttered out water that had got in his mouth.

‘Nice try.’ Porphyrion grinned. ‘Now, if no one else has the guts to attack, may I *please* tell you why I brought you here?’

‘Fine.’ I said.

‘Okay!’ Porphyrion clasped his hands together. ‘Now, I want you all to guide me through the Labyrinth!’

‘What?’ Jacob asked.

‘I *SAID* that you must guide me through the Labyrinth!’

‘And if we don’t...’ London asked.

‘Well, I could just kill you.’

‘NO!’ Dahlia yelled.

‘Okay! So, it’s a deal?’

‘I-I-I don’t know...’ I stuttered looking over at everyone else.

Jacob, Liam, Lia, and Lilliana shook their heads.

Dahlia, Milo, Camilla, and London nodded.

Andrea shrugged.

I was on the spot.

One word could change everything.

‘Why do you need us?’ I asked.

‘Well, if I go there by myself Daedalus would never give the string to me. And I just need a guide. Demi-gods can go through the Labyrinth easier.’

‘What string?’

Porphyrion shrugged.

I gulped.

‘I-I-I-I choose to-’ I sighed. ‘To go.’

I looked up and saw all the people who disagree, nod their heads, as if I made the right decision.

‘Ok then.’ Porphyrion rubbed his hands in anticipation.

‘Pack your bags! We’re going on a long journey!’

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Porphyrion explained to us about the Labyrinth and who built it.

The Labyrinth was an underground maze that stretched all the way across the world, the maze was basically alive. If you turned one way, you might get blasted with flames, or a new passage appears out of the blue. As for the mastermind who made the maze was named Daedalus, and the maze was connected to his lifeline. If he died, the whole maze would collapse and become just a ruin.

The Ariadne’s string was the only way to navigate the Labyrinth. It was made of real spider silk, from the spider Ariadne. Porphyrion’s plan was for us to convince Daedalus to give us the Ariadne’s string.



# Chapter 11

## Two roads, two faces

As we hopped into the Giant King's golden chariot, I was having doubts about helping the giant. Porphyrion whipped his horses, and the chariot flew into the air.

We were going so fast, even Camilla and Jason looked like they were about to throw up. Lilliana looked the worst.

'I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE UP HERE!' She yelled over the roaring wind.

I felt sick and vomited over the side.

'HOLD ON! ACTUALLY DON'T!' Porphyrion yelled.

The chariot dove down into the clouds.

Everyone except for Porphyrion, yelled and screeched.

The chariot held a stop.

'Ugh. I'm never flying again.' Lilliana groaned.

'We're here.' Porphyrion grumbled.

I turned; it was a passage.

I stepped down into the dark entry, there were two roads.

The rest of the crew looked at the passages uncertainly. So did I.

'SO. Which way are we going in?' Porphyrion asked.

'I think left.' Jacob said. 'In mazes everyone thinks that right is the answer, but really, it is left!'

'No,' Lia said. 'It's going to be right.'

Soon no one was able to agree on which road to go through.

In a flash, a man in a hooded cloak appeared before us.

‘It seems like you need my help on choosing which passage to go through?’ The man said.

‘Oh! Yeah.’ London said. ‘Who are you?’

‘That is classified information.’ The man answered. ‘I agree with the young man.’ He pointed at Jacob. ‘The left will be your best choice.’

‘Ok.’ we let out a sigh of relief as we walked down the left hallway.

The more we walked down the narrower the road became, until we couldn’t get past.

I tried to turn the other way, but the path behind us had closed up like magic.

‘What?’ I banged on the wall and tried to open up the passage, but nothing happened, it had just sealed shut.

‘Is there any other road?’ I asked everyone.

‘Yeah, over here.’ Lilliana called.

Jacob stopped.

‘I know him.’ Jacob eyes widened.

‘Who?’ I asked.

‘The guy who we met at the front. He’s Janus.’ Jacob shook his head. ‘We made a big mistake. He is the trickster god. He’s supposed to mess around with your thoughts. He probably did that with us. That’s why he was wearing a cloak! To hide his second face.’

‘Whoa, whoa, whoa. Back up.’ I said. ‘He has *two faces*?’

‘Yeah, that’s how we got the expression Two faced man.’

I stumbled into the other corridor.

‘So, this is a bad idea?’ I asked.

‘Perhaps. But I shall not let our lives be taken.’ He answered, giving me a weak smile.

I nodded and carried on in the tunnel.

Milo pressed his ear against a wall.

Porphyrion pushed Milo aside and murmured something under his breath.

I caught London wincing, along with everyone else.

The pain caught my ear.

Pain stung and ran through my body.

Everyone started to scream, the mazes walls cracked, opening wider and wider every second.

Soon enough a corridor big enough to fit Porphyrion.

Porphyrion grinned.

‘What was THAT?’ I asked.

‘My special little secret.’ Porphyrion answered and trudged into the passageway.

We all followed Porphyrion into the tunnel, petrified.

Inside was a cold room with tools everywhere.

A bony man was humming along as he banged a hammer against a piece of metal, causing sparks to appear.

‘Hello.’ I said.

‘Hello,’ The man turned and grinned, his teeth was all yellow. ‘I’m Daedalus.’

# Chapter 12

## The Ariadne's string.

'Hi Daedalus,' London stepped up waving her hand. 'We were wondering if you could please hand over the Ariadne's string?'

Her voice washed over me; I would have done anything to help her get the string.

Daedalus clutched his head as if he was having a massive headache.

'NO!' Daedalus screamed.

'Daedalus! Please, you're our last hope.' London quietly pleaded.

Daedalus seemed to loosen a little, but he didn't let go of his head.

'What is she doing?' I asked Dahlia.

'Charmspeak, only a few Aphrodite kids can do it.' Dahlia answered looking mesmerised.

I decided to use this time to think of a master escape plan. Or a plan to stop Porphyron from getting the Ariadne's string.

I thought of an idea.

I quickly ran to Andrea and Camilla. I explained my master plan to them, and they nodded in agreement. Camilla dashed to London when Porphyron was not looking and whispered the plan into her ear. London nodded and sprinted over to Daedalus and told him our plan.

He sighed and pulled a glowing pink string out of his pouch.

Porphyrion jumped up, his eyes shining with greed. London carefully took the string and gave it to Andrea. I tried to cover up the magic Andrea was doing. After that, I picked up the string and gave it to Porphyrion.

He snatched it out of my hands and shrieked madly.

‘IT’S MINE! ALL MINE! YOUR LITTLE CAMPSITE SHALL BE DESTROYED AND I WILL BE KING OF THE UNIVERSE!’

Porphyrion roared and ran off to where he thought was Lavender hills.

I looked over at Andrea, who was giving the real Ariadne’s string back to Daedalus.

Everyone looked confused.

‘Why are there two strings?’ Dahlia asked.

‘Are we stuck here?’ Liam asked.

‘Did Porphyrion get the string?’ Lilliana asked.

A lot more questions swarmed around.

‘ENOUGH!’ Jacob shouted and everyone shut their mouths immediately. ‘Can you please explain what just happened?’

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My plan was that Daedalus would give London the string temporarily.

Then, London would give the string to Andrea- As a child of Hecate, the goddess of magic and the mist, she could use her power to create a trick of the mist.

We would give the fake Ariadne’s string to Porphyrion, so that for the rest of his life, which was eternal, all he would do

is to search in the Labyrinth where he thought Lavender Hills was.

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The moment Porphyron left, Daedalus went back to being super protective over his string.

‘Daedalus. You have to give us your string.’ Lia said calmly. ‘If not, we’ll rot here.’

‘No,’ I said, everyone turned to me.

‘What?’ Jacob asked and Daedalus nodded protectively.

‘But.’ I said and Daedalus clutched the string. ‘Could you please guide us out? You can keep the string, but we must leave. It would be a win, win for both of us! Please.’

Daedalus looked at me, and I saw the loneliness and sadness in his eyes.

‘Fine.’

# Chapter 13

## The quest is over

When we entered Lavender Hills, I felt like I was home. From the scent of the lavender blooming across the ground, to the children laughing and playing everywhere.

‘Ashley!’ Willow cried behind me. I turned, his eyes were bright with happy tears. ‘You did it!’ He hugged me so tight I couldn’t breathe.

‘Willow, you’re safe!’ I laughed with the most joy I had ever felt.

After the excitement, I strolled through the paths of the spruce forest, pine needles growing everywhere I went.

I still don’t understand how my powers work, but after the commotion Dahlia had promised to teach me how they work.

I stopped at an old temple; vines were growing up into the roof. I stepped forward and got on my very tippy toes to brush off the vine that was blocking some words.

I walked back and tried to make out what the words said: *Temple of Demeter in bold*.

I stepped into the old temple slowly. I looked around, the walls were painted with Demeter’s life.

It showed her sadness when her daughter Persephone, left her and went to Hades. Her search to find her daughter. Her anger when a prince cut down the trees of her sacred forest.

I knelt down at my mother’s pedestal and prayed for guidance in the next few years of my life.

I wanted to see her in person, but I knew that she had more important things to do, than to answer my wish.

Just as I stood up to leave, a bright green flash blinded my eyes.

‘Hello Ashley.’ A soft voice said behind me.

I turned around to see a beautiful woman standing before me. Her eyes greener than mine, dark brown hair flowed down her shoulders.

‘I-I...’ I didn’t know what to say.

‘Mom?’ I asked realizing who the woman was.

‘Ashley!’ She opened her arms wide and ran to hug me.

‘Mom!’ I wrapped my hands around her.

‘We have a limited time.’ Demeter pulled away and looked around cautiously.

‘What?’ I asked.

Demeter smiled.

‘My dear, there are so many things I want to say to you!’ She looked around. ‘But we don’t have time.’

I frowned.

‘You did such a great job preventing Porphyron from getting the string!’

‘Why are you here?’ I asked.

‘To answer your prayer!’ Demeter said. ‘Now. Porphyron was only the first level of the danger you will have to face in your years here.’

‘So, I’m not safe here?’

‘No!’ Demeter cried. ‘This will be the safest place you will ever be in.’

‘So, what are you trying to tell me?’

‘Just...’ Demeter hesitated. ‘Stay safe.’

Just at that moment thunder crackled outside.



‘That’s my cue.’ Demeter turned to me. ‘It was nice meeting you Ashley.’

‘Why?’ I asked

‘Why what?’ Demeter asked.

‘Why do you come see me now? You could have guided me during the worst four years of my life, or you could have given me a sign that Dahlia was ok.’

Demeter sighed deeply. ‘Dahlia asked me not to tell you, because she knew you’d try to find her and...’ Demeter looked at her feet. ‘And die on the way.’

Just at that moment my mom dissolved into spruce leaves getting carried away with the wind.

I knelt on the temple’s cold stone floor and buried my head into my hands sobbing in despair. I felt so bad.

I had been thinking about myself I didn’t realise the pain my sister must have felt.

I wiped all the tears streaming on my face away and stood up to walk out of the temple.

The quest was over, and all danger was gone for now. At least I thought so.

## About the author



Alexandra Lynn Horsfield was born on February 4, 2013, in Shanghai, China. She has always been a bookworm and particularly loved Percy Jackson by Rick Riordan and Keeper of the Lost Cities by Shannon Messenger. Since 2021 she has been sailing around the world with her family and she wrote her first book during the Pacific crossing.