

~ Few ~

CHAPTER 11



The sky is black, and the stench of death lingers. Few know days like this. The air is thick with tension, a suffocating weight pressing down on Phineas as he stands before Cadmus. It's not working.

Even with the Relic, even with Phineas using his full powers, he couldn't command Cadmus to stand down. *Was it because he had his father's blood? Was that why he'd been told that his blood was so important?* He had never felt this powerless. Promises and lineage felt like dust in his hands, scattering uselessly in the storm of her suffering. The burden of his failures wrapped around his heart,

suffocating every flicker of hope, whispering that he was too late, too weak, too lost.

Sun's eyes were closed, her face a mask of pain. It tore at Phineas' soul. Her determination was apparent, but the terror carved into her expression was impossible to miss. Every desperate move to save her only provoked a brutal response, her strangled cries cutting through the chaos of the ruined forest.

"You want the Relic, too," Phineas stated, trying to keep his voice steady despite the storm of emotions raging within him. "You won't kill her."

Cadmus's laughter was a symphony of cruelty, its twisted notes curling around Phineas like icy tendrils of dread. "Ah, that's where you're wrong, little Phineas," he taunted. The clash had ground to a halt, the opposing forces staring each other down, both sides locked in a silent, electrified standoff. "I want it, but you need it more than I do. I'd rather get rid of her than let you have it."

The crushing grip wrung a raw, anguished scream from Sun. The sound reverberated in Phineas' soul, despair consuming him like a predator circling its prey. What could he do? Surrendering meant condemning his people to hell, letting Cadmus use Sun as a pawn in his twisted game. But fighting back seemed futile, a hopeless struggle against overwhelming odds.

His mind raced, searching desperately for a way out, a plan to free Sun from Cadmus' grasp. With every second that slipped away, the surrounding space seemed to shrink, choking out any flicker of hope. If Sun died...

Phineas shook his head. No. He had vowed never to sacrifice her, and he would honor that vow, no matter the cost. The thought of a world without Sun was unbearable, and he refused to let her slip away without making things right.

"If you let her go..." Phineas started. He looked around at his friends, the faces of the people fighting next to him. "If you spare everyone here and let Sun go, then I'll go with you willingly."

"Phineas, no!" Chee yelled, followed by Lukas' roar.

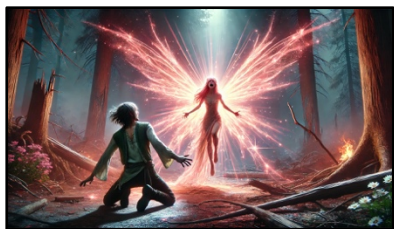
Cadmus' smile stretched, twisting his face in a sinister way. "Oh, little Prince. You actually think you can make demands of me?" Cadmus laughed, his voice carrying over the battlefield like a chilling breeze. "Come to me first, and then I'll consider letting her go."

Sun trembled as Cadmus' grip slackened, and Phineas surged forward, every instinct screaming to reach her. But just as his muscles coiled to leap, a firm hand clamped onto his arm, halting him mid-step. He turned to see Xhe, shaking his head in silent warning.

Phineas mustered a lopsided grin, aiming for confidence even as doubt gnawed at him. “Don’t worry. I’ve got this,” he said, though a small voice in his head muttered, *I think*.

With a deep breath, Phineas crossed the stretch of space between the two armies, Cadmus’ figure looming in front of him. Behind him, the rustle of shifting feet betrayed the uncertainty of his allies. He could almost feel Chee’s gaze drilling into his back, filled with a mix of anger and worry. A distant cry from the injured reminded him of what was at stake. But as he drew closer, a sudden screech tore through the night, followed by the thunderous beat of dragon wings. The dragons came out of nowhere, their dive bomb striking Cadmus’ forces like an avalanche, leaving the enemy lines in complete disarray.

Blindsided by the sudden attack, Cadmus’ forces crumbled, their formation shattering as he barked frantic orders. Amid the chaos, a dragon slammed into him, forcing Cadmus to pivot and fight. In that brief distraction, Sun slipped free, her



body tumbling toward the ground. Without hesitation, Phineas lunged forward, his heart pounding as he caught her mid-air.

"SUN!" he cried out, relief flooding through him as he now held her tightly, their bodies tumbling to the ground together to get as far from Cadmus as possible. The world seemed to slow around them, the sounds of battle fading into the background as Phineas focused on Sun's face.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?" he asked frantically, his hands searching her body for any sign of lethal injury. Sun nodded weakly, her eyes searching his. In that moment, she saw past his fear to the raw determination that fueled him. It wasn't just duty driving Phineas—it was love, and it terrified her as much as it reassured her.

"I'm fine," she managed, her hand reaching up to touch his cheek gently. "What... what happened?"

Phineas exhaled sharply, a bit of the tension leaving him. "I'm not sure..."

All around, the fight raged unchecked, but Phineas clung to the only thing that mattered—the warmth of Sun in his arms and the reassuring thrum of her heart beneath his palm.

"Let's get you to safety." Phineas surged to his feet, cradling Sun tightly as he bolted back to his friends, every step fueled by desperation.

When he reached Chee's side, he saw an older man, his body half-transformed with green scales. Phineas recognized him from the hidden village. He was the one scout that had been in Claudia's house.

"What..." Phineas started, his voice barely above a whisper as he placed Sun back on her feet, his hand lingering around her waist protectively.

The change was striking—where once stood a wary scout, now loomed a leader exuding strength and purpose, prepared for the fight ahead.

"What you said back at the village... It took us a moment, but you were right. We can't sit comfortably to the side until this war is over. We decided to stop hiding and follow you." As Phineas' mind raced to process the sudden turn of events, the man rose to his full height. "I'm Cyllian, leader of the green dragons. Let's see if you can live up to your big words, Prince."

A cocky smile played on Cyllian's lips as he swiftly deflected a fireball that came hurtling towards them, his movements fluid and practiced. Phineas stood transfixed as the battlefield transformed before his eyes, the reinforcements' arrival igniting a surge of hope and rallying the weary to fight with newfound courage.

Phineas' gaze swept the battlefield, catching a crucial detail—every dragon fighting with them bore the colors of the red clan. None had sided with Cadmus. As the memory of their shared mental bond surfaced, realization struck like a lightning bolt. He whipped to face Cyllian amidst the chaos of battle.

"I need you to take the Oath."

"Now?" Cyllian gaped. "Can't you see we're in the middle of a fight, boy?"

"Lukas!" Phineas screamed, summoning his friend with a desperate urgency. "Protect us!"

Without hesitation, Lukas swooped down to their side, his massive form casting a protective shadow over them.

"Trust me," Phineas pleaded, his gaze unwavering as he locked eyes with Cyllian.

The burly man stared at him for a long moment before finally nodding. Without a word, he took Phineas' arm.

Sun stayed close to keep watch, and Lukas flew next to them, casting away anyone who tried to attack them. Other red dragons joined them, and there was no doubt in Phineas' mind that they were following his friend's orders.

Though less formal than Lukas' ceremony, this one carried equal weight. As their bond solidified, Phineas and Cyllian wasted no time celebrating—they turned, resolute, to face the escalating chaos of the battlefield.

"No way..." Cyllian whispered next to them, a look of wonder in his unfocused eyes, as if he was seeing something that Phineas couldn't.

Phineas followed Cyllian's gaze, his breath catching at the sight. The green dragons, once under Cadmus's thrall, were stirring to life. Their

fury erupted as they turned on their former master, unleashing a vengeance that tore through his ranks.

Cyllian let out an elated scream. "Oh, my friends, how I missed you! Let's show them who they've been messing with!" Cyllian's voice rang out like a clarion call, rallying the green dragons. "We fight for our freedom! For the skies!" His voice sliced through the bedlam, a rallying cry that forged his kin into a united, unstoppable force.

From that moment on, the battle took a decisive turn. Phineas didn't have time to locate all the clan's leaders, but he led the charge with the help of students and teachers. The combined forces of Lukas and Cyllian were relentless. Flashes of red and green cut through enemy forces everywhere.

Their foes were quickly overwhelmed, their numbers dwindling until only a handful remained.

"Just surrender," Phineas called out to Cadmus, his voice ringing clear over the chaos of battle. "You're surrounded."

Cadmus's face twisted with fury, his eyes blazing with hatred as he glared at Phineas. His wounds were severe, and his once-formidable army had been reduced to a handful of desperate survivors.

"You," he snarled, his voice filled with venom. "This is all because of you. I had everything I wanted and now, look!"

"You brought this upon yourself," Phineas declared. "There was a time when your cause could have inspired, but greed and corruption turned it to ash."

Cadmus laughed, a deranged, cold sound. "We'll see about that," he spat. "Even if it's not me, there will be others to take my place." The venom in Cadmus' voice sent a chill down Phineas' spine. He wanted to dismiss the words as the rantings of a defeated man, but the shadow they cast over the future was impossible to ignore.

His face contorted and his skin started glowing bright red, like a fire was lighting him up from the inside.



"He wants to immolate himself," Cyllian gasped, his eyes widening in alarm. "We need to get everyone out of here now!"

The battlefield descended into mayhem as Cadmus' sinister plan became clear. A tremor rolled

through the earth, matching the frantic pace of fleeing soldiers. The air grew hotter with each passing moment, the glow of Cadmus' power illuminating the night sky with an ominous red hue. The heat became unbearable, a suffocating wave that clawed at their skin and blurred their vision. Screams of panic mixed with the roar of Cadmus' power, and for a heart-stopping moment, it felt as if the earth itself might split open. Phineas' knees buckled, but he forced himself to stand, shielding Sun as the fiery inferno reached its peak.

They won't make it in time, Phineas realized.

Phineas shielded Sun with his body, his hands rising as he called forth the fury of nature. Leaves whipped into a violent vortex, forming a relentless column of air around Cadmus.

For a fleeting moment, Phineas caught a glimpse of Cadmus' burning hatred—then the fire swallowed him whole. Encased in the swirling vortex, the fire rose to the skies, a mix of black wind and bright red that burnt away the darkness that had plagued their world.

When the last ember turned to ash, Phineas let the wind die down, the leaves falling gently to the ground around him. All that remained was a black circle where Cadmus once stood, and silence fell over the battlefield. Phineas stood motionless, staring at the scorched ground. Relief threatened to

take hold, but it couldn't snuff out the unease crawling beneath his skin. Cadmus was gone, but the scars he had left on the world felt like kindling, waiting for the right spark to burn again.

The silence broke with a surge of cheers. Cadmus' remaining forces were rounded up, their defeat absolute. The liberated, no longer under his control, returned to their families, the weight of years apart lifted at last.

A sudden weight crashed against Phineas, nearly knocking him off balance. He looked down to see Sun, her arms wrapped tightly around him in a fierce hug. Her bright green eyes sparkled when she looked up.

"You did it," she whispered, her voice filled with wonder. Phineas cupped her face gently, his thumb brushing away a streak of soot. "I thought I'd lost you," he admitted, his voice raw. Sun smiled through her tears, her hand resting on his. "You're stubborn enough to keep me safe." The words were light, but her grip was fierce, as if anchoring herself to him.

"No," Phineas corrected. "We did it." Looking into her face, he could barely believe what had just happened. "You came back. Sun, I'm so sorry about everything, I—"

But the words never left his throat; Sun kissed him, swallowing his apology. Every unspoken word passed between them in that kiss, leaving them

breathless and overwhelmed when they finally parted, Sun leaning back with a soft smile.

"We'll sort this out later," she said, her gaze steady on his. "Right now, I need to return to the farm and bring everyone back."

Phineas nodded, though his heart wouldn't calm down. He hugged her one last time. "Come back to me later. Please."



Sun smiled sweetly, her fingers tangling in his hair. "Always," she promised before reluctantly

pulling away and disappearing into the crowd of celebrating allies.

In the battle's wake, the air buzzed with urgency and lingering sorrow. Captured allies of Cadmus were led away in chains, healers moved among the wounded like whispers of mercy, and the battlefield began its transformation from chaos to a weary semblance of order at the Academy.

As Phineas made his way through the halls, his heart clenched with dread when he saw Paul lying on the ground, his clothes stained with blood. As Phineas approached, Paul's eyes slowly opened, a weary but genuine smile breaking through his pain. Phineas dropped to his knees, relief mingling with

worry as he noted the wound—a brutal tear that had spared Paul's arm by sheer luck.

"I heard what happened," Paul rasped, his voice barely above a whisper. "I always knew you could do it."

A lump formed in Phineas' throat, tears threatening to spill over. "Thanks... Dad," he choked out, and it was as if a weight had lifted off his shoulders. In that single word, Dad, Phineas felt the weight of their shared past lift ever so slightly. Paul's smile was weary but proud, a silent acknowledgment of how far his son had come. For the first time, Phineas saw his father not just as a protector but as a man who had fought his own battles to keep their family whole.

Paul's eyes lit up as he took Phineas' hand in his, the touch saying more than words ever could. They had weathered so much together, and though the road to healing was long, this moment felt like the first step. But right now, in this moment of quiet after the darkest night, Phineas felt a sense of peace settle over him. Looking into his father's gentle eyes, he knew, deep down, that everything would be okay.

In the month following the battle, the Academy and its allies focused tirelessly on rebuilding.

Phineas led the charge, restoring Pethosyus' castle and the surrounding village to their former grandeur. His first act as Prince was to establish a diverse council of dragons and citizens from all walks of life, ensuring justice and equality in governance. Word of Cadmus' downfall spread swiftly across the Kingdom, leaving Phineas with little time to rest.

But today was different. Today was special.

Every citizen was returning to the Castle after years of being driven away - all to witness Phineas' coronation. The castle gleamed in the sunlight, banners fluttering proudly in the breeze as workers made preparations for the ceremony.

"Are you ready?"

Phineas turned to look at Sun, who was peeking through his door. She wore a long black dress, with a simple golden tiara on her head. She looked radiant, and Phineas felt a surge of love and gratitude wash over him.

"Not at all," he admitted, his hands trembling slightly as he gripped the back of a chair.

With a laugh, Sun's wings flared as she twirled into the room, her hands finding his with ease. She stole a quick kiss, and Phineas couldn't help but relax. They'd worked hard to rebuild their relationship, their trust, and moments like these were a reminder of how far they'd come.

"Maybe I need another one..." Phineas leaned in for another kiss, but Sun just smiled and pulled away gently.

"Sorry, *Your Highness*," she teased, "but they are waiting."

Phineas groaned and Sun's smile widened as she tugged on his hand, forcing him out of the room.

Upon their arrival, they found the throne room packed; all eyes were on Phineas as he made his way to the dais. As Phineas ascended the dais, a single beam of sunlight pierced through the stained-glass windows, casting vibrant patterns of red and green across the room—the colors of the allied dragon clans.

He paused for a moment, letting the warmth wash over him, a quiet reminder of the unity they had fought so hard to achieve. While he walked, he saw the faces of everyone he loved—his friends, his parents, the people from the village. They had all stood by him through the darkest of times, and he knew he wouldn't be here without them.

Taking his seat on the throne, Phineas felt a sense of awe wash over him. The council leader stepped forward, holding the crown in her hands, ready to begin the ceremony, and as Phineas looked out at the faces before him, the only thing on his mind was the bright future that lay ahead. But as the cheers of his people echoed around him, a shadow

of unease lingered in Phineas' heart. He had won this battle, but the weight of his crown reminded him that ruling was a war of its own, one with no end.



He had once secluded himself on a small farm, and now the world lay before him. With Sun by his side and his friends rallying around him, Phineas stepped into his destiny, knowing he had finally found his place in the story of a lifetime.