

~ No One Promised You A Good Life ~

CHAPTER 10



Stumbling numbly back through the portal, Phineas ran. He didn't know where he was going, but he had to move, had to get away.

Away from the lies and the heartbreak, away from the pain and the look in Monika's eyes. He tasted bile, his legs protested each step, pulse raced, and he stumbled through the bushes tripping over roots and tangled foliage, trying to stay upright but failing.

It couldn't be. It couldn't be real.

He fell like a shooting star, crashing onto the ground with a sudden and impactful force, as if the earth itself had reached up to reclaim him. His knees hit the grass. Curling on the ground, he hugged his stomach, determined to vanquish the relentless pain that gnawed at his chest. He tried to breathe past it. His chest became a vice, squeezing with an unyielding grip, as if it were attempting to confine his breath within its steel embrace. His neck felt

tight, his mother's words repeating in his mind like a broken record.

I'm sorry, Phineas.

We promised to keep the secret.

It was safest that way.

I might not have given birth to you, but I'm still your mother.

Phineas, look at me. I love you, and I'd do anything for you.

A lie. His entire existence was a lie.

He hadn't been able to stay there, looking into the eyes of the people that had lied to him his whole life. They had called themselves his parents, but he no longer knew who they were. Who *he* was. So he ran. Until he couldn't.

Now, curled up in a ball and barely able to breathe, he wondered what he'd do next. He hated himself for not getting more answers before running away like the coward he was. Being alone with his thoughts now only made things more complicated.

"Phineas!"

Like a dreamy kiss, the wind graced his face, leaving behind the fleeting essence of freedom and the promise of adventure. The wind was like a messenger, carrying the scents and whispers of his past, delivering them to him with a touch that felt familiar. Phineas closed his eyes. He was not ready

for anyone. He didn't want to be seen like this. Didn't want to feel like he did. With each sigh, he sought refuge from the stormy waters of his own emotions. He closed in on himself, hoping the battered bushes would conceal him. Wishing he was invisible.

“Phineas!” that well-known voice said, getting closer. He heard the buzzing of the wings, felt it in his chest. She could speak again. Good, at least his previous blunder hadn't been irreversible. But this was. Like an open wound, this hurt was a reminder of his vulnerability.

He wished to be a ghost, a fleeting specter that dissolved into the shadows, leaving behind only a whisper of his existence. But even though he wanted to disappear, he couldn't hide anymore because breathing was hard and he needed her more than ever before. He needed her by his side. She had never promised him a good life, but she was all he really had.

“Sun,” the words were a raspy whisper, but she materialized at his side in a heartbeat, as if she had mastered the art of teleportation just to save him.

Sun patted his cheek and the warmth of her essence seeped into him somehow, the air now flowing more freely into his lungs as if by a miracle—or magic?

“That’s it,” she said in a soft voice he’d never heard from her before. One that reminded him of his childhood, though. “Breathe, Phi, breathe.”

And so he did, tears now rolling down his cheeks like when he was a three-year-old child, two waterfalls without an end. All those times Sun had been tiny and had laid on his chest, comforting him with the melody of her wings, almost like the purring of a divine cat. The electricity of those memories bathed the air.

This time, though, she placed her bigger hand on his chest and the soothing sensation of a loved one anchored the storm of his thoughts. The touch of her skin was like a peaceful sunrise! Her skin was a canvas of warmth, radiating a gentle glow that seemed to kindle a fire within him. A hand over his heart on his chest would always calm him, no matter what. He remembered this now. Phineas felt that familiar glow that made everything easy. That helped him breathe again.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he sobbed. He couldn’t conceive of her not knowing, not after the whispers he’d heard around the house. Not after everything had fallen back into place and the picture had become clearer than ever. It hurt to think that she could know all this time. Like an exposed nerve, this thought sent jolts of discomfort through his consciousness, a reminder of the delicate nature of

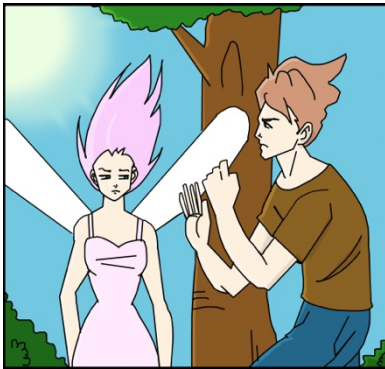
trust. He wanted her to say she had no clue what he was talking about, but Sun sat politely by his side, cradling his hand.

“Did they finally tell you the truth?” she asked.

“They told me I’m not their son,” he affirmed, almost choking on the words. “How?!”

How could it be real?

Sun’s eyes held the weight of unspoken stories, each glance a chapter of longing and regret. As she looked at him, a window to her soul cracked open, revealing the depth of her emotions, a reflection of the turmoil she carried within. “I’m sorry for not telling you, but I was part of the promise they made. Your biological parent’s last wish was to protect you at all costs, and it’s not a promise easily broken. They didn’t want you to know your real identity, so you’d be safe.”



*Last wish? So...
They were dead. Gone.
Really gone. Memories
from the nightmare he’d
had a few days ago came
back. It was as if the
nightmare had left its
mark, like a scar on the
landscape of his mind,*

and now the memory of it resurfaced with an eerie persistence. Flashes mixed with the history of magic

lessons he'd been learning at school. They were recollections of agony and the smell of blood. Of creatures chasing him.

"What happened?" he asked, needing answers more than anything else. It was as if his mind had become a labyrinth, and the answers were the keys that would unlock the secrets hidden within its winding corridors. He was angry at Sun, angry at the lies, but the truth was more important right now and he needed to know.

"Your parents died during the war, Phi," Sun said softly. "Paul and Monika took on the responsibility of looking over you and moved to the farm to keep you safe."

Safe. There was that word again.

"Why? Safe from what?"

"Because... Because your dad was Paul's best friend. He was not only his friend and confidant but also his personal guard. He devoted his whole life to looking after your father, and you."

None of it made sense. The puzzle pieces didn't fit. Phineas finally sat down, taking one deep breath before turning to Sun again sitting right across from her. Finally, though, he was getting answers, so he would not waste another moment, no matter how much the truth would hurt. No matter how confused the answers would make him.

So he sat there, squared his shoulder, and asked Sun to tell him everything. He was fully engaged in this moment, ready to absorb the answers as if they were the most valuable lessons he could ever learn.

“I understand nothing that’s going on, so please, help me understand,” he said.

“I don’t think you’re ready for all of it,” Sun said. “And I don’t think you’ll ever forgive me if I tell you the truth.”

Phineas remained serious as he replied, “Let me be the judge of that. Haven’t you taken away enough?”

His whole life, he’d constantly had questions, and the answers were never there. They’d all taken away the truth, his identity, everything he was, and without his permission. He deserved better than that.

“Be stronger than your excuses,” Phineas added, “Tell me the truth. I deserve it. If you care about me, you’ll tell me. My mind’s struggling to cope.”

Sun sighed loudly, her wings extending behind her and covering some of the wind that had picked up. It looked like a storm was coming, but he didn’t care. He only cared about the truth. Sun sighed again. Her sigh was a gentle breeze through the

quiet forest, a subtle exhale that carried the weight of the world in its breath.

“All I’ve done my whole life was care for you, Phi,” she said. “Since my earliest memory, that’s all I’ve done. That’s the whole reason I’m alive.”

“What do you mean?”

And so, in the middle of the woods, the only place Phineas had ever felt like home, Sun told him the truth. She wove a tale as ancient as the first starlight, each word a thread connecting him to past generations. A story about a war between the magical realm and the fiery dragons. Sun told him a story about a castle, where twenty years ago, a young couple ruled in peace.

She told him a story about the Pethosyus, the royals. With each exhale, she felt like a storyteller releasing the tension of a well-told tale, a moment of closure after carrying the weight of the narrative.

“George Pethosyus was a great king,” she said. “A kind one.” She spoke with sorrow in her voice, the pain of the loss clear in her facial expression, too. “He was your father, Phi. Miranda was your mother, a woman so caring that her only dying wish was to see you safe. She protected you until the last minute, her magic flowing into you. Miranda was a woodland nymph...”

Phineas thought about his connection to the forest and how he’d always been able to speak to the

trees, almost as if he was one of them. And now, he found out his mother had almost been a part of the forest. A protector. The reason he could speak to the trees as easily as he could breathe was his mom.

“And my dad?” he asked. “What about him?”



“Your father was a mage, a powerful one. I think some of your magic comes from him, too. What I saw this morning felt a lot like him,” she added with a small smile, the first she’d given him since finding him in the woods. She looked

proud.

“What about Monika and Paul?” he asked next, pronouncing their names a harder task than he’d expected.

“Paul doesn’t have any magic,” Sun explained, “But he’s a great warrior. His parents were sorcerers, and he’s tried alchemy in the past, but he prefers to stay away from magic. After all, magic is the one thing that took his best friend away from him... He teaches here to stay connected to this world, and to help us as much as he can. But his

proper focus for the past eighteen years has been looking after you. And Monika... Monika is a seer.”

Wow. Everything. Everything was a lie.

Phineas looked at her, taking in the pointy nose and the freckles, the gentle smile, and the pink and happy hair. Their eye contact was like a conversation, a dialogue of souls exchanging understanding and empathy without uttering a single syllable.

“And you?”

A part of him already knew the answer. A part of him already understood her avoidance when speaking about her family or her kind—the reason she never let him know the type of fairy she was. It made sense now. It did. But he needed to hear it from her.

“I need to hear it,” he said when Sun stayed quiet, looking at him with pleading eyes.

“Please, don’t hate me, Phi. Everything I’ve ever done was to protect you. I never wanted to hide anything from you, but I swore to. I swore to listen to Paul and Monika and do as they wished. I made a vow to your parents. Still, you’ve always been my priority.”

“Why?”

“You know why...” Sun looked away, her cheeks flushed pink. He hated himself for pushing her, but he needed to hear it. He needed the whole truth.

“Sun...”

She turned to him and stood abruptly, her combat boots hitting the ground next to him and sending dirt flying.

“Because I’m your fairy godmother, Phi! I’m tied to you and everything I’ve ever done was to keep you safe! To keep the last of the royal family alive. And trust me, it’s been a hell of a ride and a hell of a task. I watched my whole damn family die, and I... I...”

Phineas stood, and without thinking, he pulled Sun into his chest, holding her close.

He had no memories of that time, no memories of what had happened. But Sun did. She probably remembered specific details of the battles, the whole war. He’d seen her cry in class when Mr. Payn talked about the godmother fairies being extinct, and now he understood her pain. Saw where it came from. And he hated himself for not knowing, for not realizing it earlier. For not being there for her when she’d always been there for him.

She’d sacrificed a lot for him, and as much as he wanted to be angry with her, he knew she’d always been there for him. She’d always held him when he needed it. Like a broken compass, he had lost his way, and the guilt of not being there for her weighed on him like an anchor. This was his chance to give that back.

“I’m so sorry you had to go through all of that to protect me,” he said.

Sun sobbed into his chest. It felt like a dam breaking, the floodgates of her feelings bursting open, unable to contain the weight of her agony any longer. She was confused, pushing him away a bit to dry her tears with the back of her hand, looking annoyed at herself, and then trying to put on a serious face. “I would do it again,” she said. “It’s an honor to be in my position, Phi, never doubt that.”

There was still one thing he didn’t understand. “Why all the secrecy, though? Why not tell me who I was from the beginning? Who even am I? Phineas Pethosyus?”

The last name felt foreign, but also familiar.



Sun nodded. “You’re the heir to the throne,” she whispered. “If the dragons are ever defeated, you could take back your rightful place

on the throne. And your magic... It runs in your blood.” She shook her head, as if she’d said too much, but she had promised to at long last reveal the truth to him. She knew what she was doing. “The strength of your lineage is... I can’t even explain it. If anyone knew who you were, they’d try to steal your magic, to steal your blood even. It was too

dangerous, you were too vulnerable, just a child. It's still dangerous," she corrected.

His whole life, he'd been hiding. Hiding in a house in the middle of nowhere. Hiding from his parents when he was angry. Then, hiding from himself when he didn't know better. Even hiding in the woods when life got too hard. His whole life, he'd been running. He'd run from the battle, from the war. Next, he'd run away with his life intact when his whole family had been murdered. He'd run away from the pain. The scariest moment, it's always just before you jump.

Something had to give. Something had to change.

"Who killed them?" he asked, swallowing the lump in his throat. "What do you know about this war?"

Sun shook her head. "I think that's enough for today, Phineas. It's too much to take in at once, and your magic is very feeble at the moment. Your emotions rule your magic, and you're feeling too much, hurting too much. Take some time, and I promise you by my name that I will tell you everything you want to know. I will help you train your magic so you can take all of this in, and more."

"I can handle it!" he snapped.

Sun looked around them, pointing to the woods. "Can you?"

Phineas noticed the wind had picked up while Sun had been talking. She'd protected him with her wings before, but now that they were by her sides, their hair was billowing madly in the wind, strands of pink dancing all over them. *He'd thought a storm was coming, but was it not? Was that all him? Was that what Sun was telling him?*

She nodded, as if listening to his thoughts, "This is you, Phineas. Your magic is tightly wrapped with the one from this forest, with the trees. Let's go back to the farm. You can talk to your parents, hear them out. I'll be there with you. I'll always be with you."

Phineas shook his head. "Not yet. I'm not ready to face them after what happened." He didn't want to worry them, but he couldn't face them right now either. "Can you talk to them, please? Tell them I'll be around later? Maybe tomorrow? I need some time."

Sun nodded. "Do you want me to go now?" He nodded. "Okay, wait for me here, and I'll be back shortly... I'll walk back to the Academy with you, okay?"

Phineas nodded again and sat back down, feeling the grass under the palms of his hands, feeling the frisky wind on his face, and listening to Sun's steps retreating.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” he asked the trees when he was finally alone.

“It wasn’t our story to tell,” they replied.

And it hurt. It hurt so much that he dug his fingers into the ground, blackness engulfing the surrounding area, plants receding and escaping his shadow.

He was like a shattered mirror, the fragments of his spirit reflecting a fragmented image, a mosaic of pain and pieces that no longer fit. Like a coiled spring, the injustices he perceived had wound him up, and now he was on the edge, ready to release that pent-up energy. He was mad.

He was blackened within; he was rotten to the core. No one had ever promised him life would be easy, but he never thought it’d be this hard. His birth parents had never promised him anything. His adopted parents never made things seem easier than they were going to be. They’d always been just. They’d let him find by himself that some plants would sting if he touched them, that the water was dangerous if he went too deep into the ocean. But he hadn’t thought life would be as difficult as it was.

Still, he could see now that they had sheltered him his whole life. He’d had no actual battles to fight. It seemed like life wanted him to fight, to fight back until he made things right. Until he found the truth.

And now that he had most of the truth, he would do it. He'd fight back. This was a fork in the road where every step would shape the narrative of his future. It was time.

He'd find out who had murdered his parents, what had happened eighteen years ago.

And he knew just where to start. If Sun would not give him all the answers just yet, he'd find them on his own.

Phineas stood up and started walking back to the Academy. *He'd promised to wait, but hadn't they promised him plenty of things they hadn't done? Hadn't they lied more than he had?* He'd head to the library and find the answers he was after. There had to be books about the war, and they would detail the answers among their pages.

He was done with it all. Done with the lies and the hurt. Done with being a puppet in someone else's game. As he walked, the trees called back to him, urging him to remain calm, to wait, but Phineas tuned them out, ignoring their pleas to go back to the forest and wait for Sun as he'd promised.



Like a roaring fire, he didn't need to be subdued; he would burn brightly, radiating the heat of his passion, lighting up the darkness around him. He didn't need to be calm.

He needed revenge.