

~ i Thought ~

CHAPTER 11



Phineas had always been good at studying. Like a sponge, he absorbed knowledge effortlessly, soaking up facts and ideas with a thirst for understanding that couldn't be quenched. Living pretty much on his own all his life, he'd found both refuge and an escapism in books. He'd read more than he could remember, but remembered pretty much everything he read.

So, when Phineas got to the Academy's library, it was pretty easy to find the books he was after. Like a well-tuned compass, his instincts led him straight to the shelves where the books he desired sat patiently, as they now beckoned him with a whispered invitation. Once he had the books, it was easy enough to hide in a corner and read through all the relevant information so fast that he found himself back in his room an hour later—packing his bag.

The door opened without a knock. Phineas didn't even turn.

"Oh, wow, Phineas... What's going on?"

Chee stood at the door, slowly closing it behind him with the back of his heel as he looked at the mess in the room. Clothes were scattered on top of the bed, a few books laid open on the floor, and a big map was haphazardly folded on the desk, along with an old compass he'd found among the relics of the library, and a rustic water bottle.

Phineas rubbed the back of his neck, then put a few shirts into his backpack.

"I'm out of here," he said. There was no point in lying or denying what was going on. Chee and everybody else would probably soon find out he was gone. This could be the last turn of the screw.

He hadn't run into Sun yet, who was probably looking for him trapped in a landscape of concern after he'd ditched her in the woods. In the dormitory's maze, he was a fleeting figure, the timing of their paths narrowly misaligned, as if fate was teasing them with a dance of almost-meets. Phineas was sure she'd be back here any second. If Sun discovered his plan, she would certainly try to stop him. With each passing second, he felt the clock in his chest, its steady tick reminding him that every moment counted, and he couldn't afford to lose even one. He didn't have time to doubt himself

or to think twice. If he didn't go now, he'd be stuck in the same boring and purposeless life forever. He'd be without the answers he needed. All he wanted to do was rid his heart of emptiness.

If he wanted the whole truth, then he had to go now.

"Where are you going? Back home?" Chee asked, eyeing him suspiciously.

In a way, yes, he thought. And damn, that was so close to coming out of his mouth. So close. It hurt to hear the word. *Home*. No, he didn't have a home. Not anymore. It was as if he had a place in the tapestry of existence but had yet to weave the threads of permanence that would create a true home. And maybe he'd never had one to begin with?

"Something like that," he said, shaking his head.

Chee must have sensed his intentions. He came over, like a guardian angel, his presence a soothing balm, and he gently laid a comforting hand on his shoulder, as if to convey understanding without uttering a single word.

Phineas tried very hard not to shrug him off, because Chee had nothing to do with his moody annoyance. He knew nothing about who he was or what had happened, so he shouldn't blame him. Still, he recoiled back a bit, unable to control himself. Anxiety never rests.



“Phineas... I know that in standard time, we haven’t really known each other for that long... But living in the same room and sharing almost every class every

day, I think I know you pretty well by now. Enough to know something is very wrong with you, so please... Tell me, what’s going on?”

Phineas didn’t have any intention of speaking about what had happened and what he’d discovered, but he found that as soon as he opened his mouth to dismiss the question, the truth spilled out instead. He told Chee absolutely everything. He unfolded his soul like an intricate origami, sharing every crease and fold, every hidden corner of his thoughts and experiences, as if he were opening the book of his life for his friend to read. It was as if the information was pressing onto his chest, and letting it out felt freeing.

He told him about his true identity and about the lies his parents had told him. Phineas told him about Sun and how she’d always been there for him, but also about how they all lied to him about knowing each other. After blurting this all out, it dawned on Phineas that Chee would’ve figured out Sun was a fairy godmother, because it was the only

type of fairy that would've stuck with him his whole life. Phineas had done a ton of research on it at the library, too, and now all the signs were obvious. He was no longer a candle burning in an unlit room, casting a feeble glow amidst the enveloping shadows, yearning for the illumination of understanding. Now he knew.

“Sun is... your fairy godmother?” Chee repeated, his mouth hanging open.

“Yes, and I've known her all my life. She's always been there for me.”

Chee looked around, as if she must be there now. But it was just the two of them in the room, which made Phineas feel heavier. Like a short-lived meteor falling across the night sky, he knew he had a limited window before she appeared, and he was racing against the inevitable collision..

He started moving, putting the few things remaining on top of the bed into his backpack and leaving everything else behind.

“Wait. So... Where are you going? Back to the farm?”

Phineas shook his head. He didn't think he'd ever be able to go back there.

Truth was, he didn't know where he was going. He was adrift in a sea of uncertainty, like a compass lost in a world without coordinates, each step taken to find direction amidst the chaos. Hell, he felt like

he couldn't even remember where he'd been. The place he was going was one he'd been to before. One he couldn't remember. One that hid in the deepest parts of his mind but recently came back as small flashbacks and nightmares. Phineas couldn't remember what he'd done with his life. It didn't feel like he'd even lived his life. He felt alone. He didn't know how much more he could take!

It was as if he had stepped into a novel without knowing the plot, a protagonist navigating the pages, eager to discover what lay beyond the next paragraph. He inhaled like a diver preparing to plunge into the darkest depths; the air filling his lungs like a reservoir of strength. A moment of pause before the next chapter began. Then he spoke confidently.

"I'm going to the Pethosyus Castle," he admitted.

"You, WHAT?!"

Phineas stopped fumbling with his clothes and looked straight at Chee, who was pale. His lips were almost paper white, a bare hint of pink in them..

"No, no, no," Chee said, snapping out of it. "You can't go there, Phineas! Don't you know what's there?!"

"The truth!" he snapped. The wind picked up outside, making the window in their room rattle. "My family died there, and anything that's left of

them will be there. The textbooks speak of relics and hidden passages only the royal family could access. Of magic trapped within that's so strong it could destroy the dragons. That's why the war started, that's why the first place they hit was the castle. So, I'm going to go there and understand it so I can get rid of all the dragons that killed my family."

Chee shook his head again, but there was no real determination there—his friend looked clearly defeated. It was like trying to halt an avalanche with a spoon, a futile endeavor. He knew he couldn't talk him out of this.

Phineas still expected him to keep arguing.

Instead, Chee turned to his side of the room and grabbed a pack from under his bed. Then he started grabbing clothes from the shelves and throwing them inside.

"What do you think you're doing?" Phineas asked, unable to believe what was going on.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" Chee replied. "I know I can't convince you not to go, so I'm going with you."

"I can't let you do that," Phineas mumbled. "It'll be dangerous outside of the barrier."

He knew now that the barrier around the school was also a protection from the things that lurked outside—especially the dragons. Phineas had a map of the land and knew how he planned on

getting to the castle, but the journey would probably take weeks. He wouldn't drag Chee into that.

"I'm not asking for permission, just like you aren't waiting for anyone's approval to leave. I'm not letting you go out there alone. I might not be the best magician, but at least I know this land and its creatures. Trust me, you'll need me. You can thank me later."

"Thank you for what?" the soft voice came out of nowhere, as both Phineas and Chee jumped in the air, turning slowly towards the now open door.

Sun stood there pissed off, arms crossed over her chest and her pink hair looking rather messy.

"I..." Chee opened and closed his mouth, looking like a fish out of water.

"You can't convince me not to go," Phineas said, holding his pack to his chest.



"I'm not going to," Sun said, surprising him so much that he dropped the bag and took a couple of steps towards her.

"What? You're not going to stop me?"

Sun shook her head and walked in,

closing the door behind her.

“I kept my promise, and I’ll keep doing just that. I know you’re not a kid anymore. As much as I also know, I won’t be able to convince you to stay. So, if you’re going to go on this crazy and stupid adventure that will surely get you killed, the least I can do is tag along and make sure you have a slight chance of surviving. To make sure there’s someone there to continue to train you with your magic.”

With each second that passed, it was like acknowledging the dawn of a new era, the stepping stones of maturity paving the path forward, a tapestry of lessons woven into the fabric of their story.

Smiling, Phineas picked up the bag again and looked at both his friends standing by his side in the exact moment he needed them to be there. There were a lot of things he didn’t know, and a lot he wasn’t sure about, but with Chee and Sun next to him, he felt hope. He felt like answers were something he would find. And he felt like, he could probably survive this crazy adventure he’d planned for himself. It would be like navigating a turbulent river with nothing but a makeshift raft, holding on with white-knuckled determination as the currents of uncertainty and excitement propelled them forward on this wild expedition.

All his life, he hadn't known what to believe or when to believe it. He hadn't known if the creatures in his yard were real or part of his vivid imagination, or if he was certifiably crazy. But now that he knew everything was real, he finally had something tangible to believe in. He believed that he could make it. That, now with his friends by his side, he'd understand it all. In the theater of his life, he was the intrepid star, the leading role in a grand performance filled with drama that was about to unfold.

As the three friends walked out under the shelter of the night, heading towards the barrier, Phineas felt his palms sweating.

Of course, he wasn't entirely sure of what he was doing or exactly where he was going. But he wasn't stupid. He knew nothing about the world outside the barrier that surrounded the school, and he was barely just learning how to manage his powers. But he was determined. He was a lionheart, unwavering in his resolve, a force of nature with a steel determination that could move mountains and conquer any obstacle. So on they walked.

As he looked back over his shoulder, he watched the Academy's lights fade. He'd barely been

there a few months, but he had learned to love the palace—to love the people within and to love how much he was learning. His whole life had been planned around attending the University. He'd researched all the options, thought about the many majors, and looked forward to everything he was going to learn. But instead, he got this.

This was certainly not what he'd imagined doing when he finally left his parent's home. It was like stepping into an uncharted realm, a script rewritten by the whims of fate, a scene unfolding with unexpected twists and turns that veered far from the original storyboard he had envisioned when he first spread his wings and departed from the sheltered cocoon of his parent's home.

He never thought he'd find another world, that he'd find actual magic, and that all the creatures he thought lived within his overactive imagination would be real. He could never have imagined finding out his family wasn't really his family. Or fleeing every comfort he knew in the middle of the night to chase the unknown and navigate a dangerous trail.

Yet, here he was.

Finally, they got to the barrier, an almost invisible shimmering wall. All three of them stopped. It was like arriving at the edge of the known world, the point where their journey seemed to pause, inviting them to carefully contemplate the next step.

“Are you sure about this?” Chee asked nervously, looking over his shoulder back at the school.

“I’m sure,” Phineas replied with a blend of uncertainty and determination.

Chee shuddered and shook his head. “If I don’t die out there, I’m sure my father will kill me when he finds the note I left for him. He’ll hunt me down and rip off my skin until I’m only bones.”

“You can still turn around,” Phineas replied.

Chee shook his head again. “Nah, we’re in this together, mate.”

Sun looked back and forth between them and then held her hand out, touching the portal.

“You know there’s no way back, right?” she asked, her eyes a burning fire in the night’s darkness. “Once we step out, the decision is final, the danger is real.”

“I know.”

“Then let’s do this,” she replied, sounding as fierce as ever.

Phineas had been so sure Sun would stop him the minute she figured out his plan. He still didn’t understand why she hadn’t—why she hadn’t simply spelled him into forgetting or used some other magical enchantment. There was so much to her magic he didn’t know, and he was looking forward to learning more about it while they traveled.

As the portal twisted and then opened up for them, like plastic wrap burning up and creating an opening barely big enough for the three of them to get past, something else flashed behind them. It was a light so bright that they all squinted at it, and then they witnessed a blur of motion, a streak of velocity tearing through the air like a comet on a daring escapade, a sudden glimpse of something alive with urgency and purpose. Its hair was on fire as it flew past the opening and crashed against a nearby tree.



The three friends rushed through the opening, which promptly closed behind them.

Sun poked the fallen figure on the ground. “Is he dead?”

Phineas watched in horror as Lukas laid on the ground

unconscious, his hair smoking at the tips.

“What was he doing?” he asked.

“It looked like he had half-shifted... But it looked wrong somehow.”

“You look wrong, asshole,” a rumbly voice said from the ground. Lukas opened a single eye and tried to sit down, grumbling.

“What in Hell were you doing out?” Phineas asked.

“What did it look like I was doing?” he snapped back. “I was taking a leisure walk under the moonlight...” Lukas looked around, finally catching on to his surroundings. “Wait. Are we... Outside?”

Sun nodded, and Phineas crossed his arms over his chest, waiting for Lukas to snap at them again. He couldn’t wait to tell him to shut it.

But instead, Lukas smiled.

“Wicked,” he said.

“Excuse me?” Phineas couldn’t believe his eyes as Lukas stood and cracked his neck.

“Whereabouts are you headed?”

“Nowhere that matters to you,” Phineas replied.

But, Chee opened his big mouth, “The Pethosyus Castle.”

Phineas smacked him on the back of the head so hard that he expected him to spit out his brain. The impact landed like a sudden thunderclap, a swift reprimand that echoed through the night.

Sun chuckled, shaking her head in disbelief.

There was a moment of silence, in which they all stared at each other, and then Lukas smirked.

“Great, unless you want me to go over to the principal right now and rat you out, which means

you'll be busted within minutes, I suggest you gladly accept my invitation to tag along."

"No one invited you!" Phineas snapped, the wind picking up around them.

But Lukas was already walking ahead, as if he knew precisely where to go.

"I think you want me to tag along," he said as he ambled onward. "Because I know where the palace is. I know how to get there, and I know how to avoid the barriers so you can get in."

Phineas looked at Sun, who simply shrugged, and then at Chee, who had his jaw set hard but nodded after a moment as he realized they needed the help.

He was an unexpected guest at the table of his intentions, a surprise course in the banquet of his carefully laid-out strategy. But Phineas guessed it was like receiving a lifeline during a storm, a buoy to cling to amidst the turbulent waves of uncertainty, a signpost that whispered the promise of progress. So he reluctantly agreed, even though Lukas had been an ass to him at the school and he didn't know why he'd ever want to join them. It looked like they all had secrets of their own. Phineas could accept that.

In time, he'd find out everything. In time, there would be no more secrets.

But first, he had to go across these magical lands to find his way back to the place that had birthed him.

One adventure was over, but another one was just about to begin. He couldn't wait to see what would happen next. His heart was a drumbeat of excitement, like a child on the eve of an adventure, eyes wide open with wonder, eager to unwrap the gift of the unknown. So, Phineas embraced what would happen next. His destiny waited. His friends would stand beside him. Recently, Phineas thought he couldn't fight any longer, but he knew now he could and would.

The beauty of life lay not just in the destinations but in the journey, in the exhilaration



of not knowing precisely what waited around the corner. This was a precious gift. Their next adventure was a canvas awaiting the colors of his experiences to paint the chapters yet to be written...

stop them.

Nothing would