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Next

The titans curse chapter 16 summary

Chapter 16 WE MEET THE DRAGON OF ETERNAL BAD BREATH "We will never make it," Zoe said. "We are moving too slow. But we cannot leave the Ophiotaurus." "Mooo," Bessie said. He swam next to me as we jogged along the waterfront. We'd left the shoppingcenter pier far behind. We were heading toward the Golden Gate Bridge, but it was a lot farther than I'drealized. The sun was already dipping in the west. "I don't get it," I said. "Why do we have to get there at sunset?" "The Hesperides are the nymphs of the sunset," Zoe said. "We can only enter their garden as daychanges to night." "What happens if we miss it?" "Tomorrow is winter solstice. If we miss sunset tonight, we would have to wait until tomorrow evening. And by then, the Olympian Council will be over. We must free Lady Artemis tonight." Or Annabeth will be dead, I thought, but I didn't say that. "We need a car," Thalia said. Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html "But what about Bessie?" I asked. Grover stopped in his tracks. "I've got an idea! The Ophiotaurus can appear in different bodies of water, right?" "Well, yeah," I said. "I mean, he was in Long Island Sound. Then he just popped into the water at Hoover Dam. And now he's here." "So maybe we could coax him back to Long Island Sound," Grover said. "Then Chiron could help usget him to Olympus." "But he was following me" I said. "If I'm not there, would he know where he's going?" "Moo," Bessie said forlornly. "I... I can show him," Grover said. "I'll go with him." I stared at him. Grover was no fan of the water. He'd almost drowned last summer in the Sea of Monsters, and he couldn't swim very well with his goat hooves. "I'm the only one who can talk to him," Grover said. "It makes sense." He bent down and said something in Bessie's ear. Bessie shivered, then made a contented, lowing sound. "The blessing of the Wild," Grover said. "That should help with safe passage. Percy, pray to your dad, too. See if he will grant us safe passage through the seas." I didn't understand how they could possibly swim back to Long Island from California. Then again, monsters didn't travel the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that. I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that. I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that. I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. I'd seen plenty evidence of that I tried to concentrate on the waves, the smell of the ocean, the same way as humans. 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I realized Idid know who Zoe's hero had been—theone who'd ruined her life, gotten her kicked out of her family, and never even mentioned how she'dhelped him: Hercules, a hero I'd admired all my life. "If I'm going to survive," I said, "it won't be because I've got a lion-skin cloak. I'm not Hercules." I threw the coat into the bay. It turned back into a golden lion skin, flashing in the light. Then, as it beganto sink beneath the waves, it seemed to dissolve into sunlight on the water. Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html The sea breeze picked up. Grover took a deep breath. "Well, no time to lose." He jumped in the water and immediately began to sink. Bessie glided next to him and let Grover takehold of his neck. "Be careful," I told them. "We will," Grover said. "Okay, um... Bessie? We're going to Long Island. It's east. Over that way." "Moooo?" Bessie said. "Yes," Grover answered. "Long Island. It's east. Over that way." "Moooo?" Bessie lurched forward. He started to submerge and Grover said, "I can't breathe underwater! Justthought I'd mention—" Glub! Under they went, and I hoped my father's protection would extend to little things, like breathing. "Well, that is one problem addressed," Zoe said. "But how can we get to my sisters' garden?" "Thalia's right," I said. "We need a car. But there's nobody to help us here. Unless we, uh, borrowedone." I didn't like that option. I mean, sure this was a life-or-death situation, but still, it was stealing, and it wasbound to get us noticed. "Wait," Thalia said. She started rifling through her backpack. "There is somebody in San Francisco whocan help us. I've got the address here somewhere." "Who?" asked. Thalia pulled out a crumpled piece of notebook paper and held it up. "Professor Chase. Annabeth sdad." After hearing Annabeth gripe about her dad for two years, I was expecting him to have devil horns and goggles. He looked soweird, with his eyes bugging out through the glasses, that we all took a step back on the front porch. "Hello," he said in a friendly voice, "Are you delivering my airplanes?" Thalia, Zoe, and I looked at each other warily. "Um, no, sir," I said. "Drat," he said. "I need three more Sopwith Camels." Had no clue what he was talking about. "We're friends of Annabeth." "Annabeth?" He straightened as if I'd just given him an electric shock. "Is she all right? Has something was very wrong. He took off hiscap and goggles. He had sandy-colored hair like Annabeth and intense brown eyes. He was handsome, Iguess, for an older guy, but it looked like he hadn't shaved in a couple of days, and his shirt was buttonedwrong, so one side of his collar stuck up higher than the other side. "You'd better come in," he said. It didn't look like a house they'd just moved into. There were LEGO robots on the stairs and two catssleeping on the sofa in the living room. The coffee table was stacked with magazines, and a little kid'swinter coat was spread on the floor. The whole house smelled like fresh-baked chocolate-chip cookies. There was jazz music coming from the kitchen. It seemed like a messy, happy kind of home—the kind ofplace that had been lived in forever. "Dad!" a little boy screamed. "He's taking apart my robots!" "Bobby," Dr. Chase called absently, "don't take apart your brother's robots." "I'mBobby," the little boy protested. "He's Matthew!" "Matthew," Dr. Chase turned to us. "We'll go upstairs to my study. This way." "Honey?" a woman called. Annabeth's stepmom appeared in the living room, wiping her hands on a dishtowel. She was a pretty Asian woman with red highlighted hair tied in a bun. "Who are our guests?" she asked. "Oh," Dr. Chase said. "This is..." He stared at us blankly. "Frederick," she chided. "You forgot to ask them their names?" We introduced ourselves a little uneasily, but Mrs. Chase seemed really nice. She asked if we werehungry. We admitted we were, and she told us she'd bring us some cookies and sodas. "Dear," Dr. Chase said. "They came about Annabeth." I half expected Mrs. Chase to turn into a raving lunatic at the mention of her stepdaughter, but she justpursed her lips and looked concerned. "All right. Go on up to the study and I'll bring you some food." SheGenerated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.htmlsmiled at me. "Nice meeting you, Percy. I've heard a lot about you." Upstairs, we walked into Dr. Chase's study and I said, "Whoa!" The room was wall-to-wall books, but what really caught my attention were the war toys. There was ahuge table with miniature tanks and soldiers fighting along a blue painted river, with hills and fake treesand stuff. Old-fashioned biplanes hung on strings from the ceiling, tilted at crazy angles like they were inthe middle of a dogfight. Dr. Chase smiled. "Yes. The Third Battle of Ypres. I'm writing a paper, you see, on the use of SopwithCamels to strafe enemy lines. I believe they played a much greater role than they've been given creditfor." He plucked a biplane from its string and swept it across the battlefield, making airplane engine noises ashe knocked down little German soldiers. "Oh, right," I said. I knew Annabeth's dad was a professor of military history. She'd never mentioned heplayed with toy soldiers. Zoe came over and studied the battlefield. "The German lines were farther from the river." Dr. Chase stared at her. "How do you know that?" "I was there," she said matter-of-factly. "Artemis wanted to show us how horrible war was, the waymortal men fight each other. And how foolish, too. The battle was a complete waste." Dr. Chase opened his mouth in shock. "You—" "She's a Hunter, sir," Thalia said. "But that's not why we're here. We need—" "You saw the Sopwith Camels?" Dr. Chase said. "How many were there? What formations did theyfly?" "Sir," Thalia broke in again. "Annabeth is in danger." That got his attention. He set the biplane down. "Of course," he said. "Tell me everything." It wasn't easy, but we tried. Meanwhile, the afternoon light was fading outside. We were running out oftime. When we'd finished, Dr. Chase collapsed in his leather recliner. He laced his hands. "My poor braveAnnabeth. We must hurry." "Sir, we need transportation to Mount Tamalpais," Zoe said. "And we need it immediately." "I'll drive you. Hmm. it would be faster to fly in my Camel, but it only seats two." Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html "Whoa, you have an actual biplane?" I said. "Down at Crissy Field," Dr. Chase said proudly. "That's the reason I had to move here. My sponsor is aprivate collector with some of the finest World War I relics in the world. He let me restore the SopwithCamel—" "Sir," Thalia said. "Just a car would be great. And it might be better if we went without you. It's toodangerous." . Dr. Chase frowned uncomfortably. "Now wait a minute, young lady. Annabeth is my daughter. Dangerous or not, I... I can't just—" "Snacks," Mrs. Chase announced. She pushed through the door with a tray full ofpeanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches and Cokes and cookies while Zoe said, "I can drive, sir. I'm not as young as I look. I promise not to destroy your car." Mrs. Chase knit her eyebrows. "What's this about?" "Annabeth is in danger," Dr. Chase said. "On Mount Tam. I would drive them, but... apparently it's noplace for mortals." It sounded like it was really hard for him to get that last part out. I waited for Mrs. Chase nodded. "Then they'd better get going." "Right!"Dr. Chase jumped up and started patting his pockets. "My keys..." His wife sighed. "Frederick, honestly. You'd lose your head if it weren't wrapped inside your aviator hat. The keys are hanging on the peg by the front door." "Right!"Dr. Chase said. Zoe grabbed a sandwich. "Thank you both. We should go Now" We hustled out the door and down the stairs, the Chases right behind us. "Percy," Mrs. Chase called as I was leaving, "tellAnnabeth... Tell her she still has a home here, will you? Remind her of that." I took one last look at the messy living room, Annabeth shalf brothers spilling LEGOs and arguing, these still has a home here, will you? Remind her of that." I took one last look at the messy living room, Annabeth shalf brothers spilling LEGOs and arguing, the same last look at the messy living room. place, I thought. "I'll tell her," I promised. We ran out to the yellow VW convertible parked in the driveway. The sun was going down. I figuredwe had less than an hour to save Annabeth. Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html "Can't this thing go any faster?" Thalia demanded. Zoe glared at her. "I cannot control traffic." "You both sound like my mother," I said. "Shut up!" they said in unison. Zoe weaved in and out of traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge. The sun was sinking on the horizon whenwe finally got into Marin County and exited the highway. The roads were insanely narrow, winding through forests and up the sides of hills and around the edgesof steep ravines. Zoe didn't slow down at all. "Why does everything smell like cough drops?" I asked. "Eucalyptus." Zoe pointed to the huge trees all around us. "They love chewing the leaves. Especially dragons." "Dragons chew eucalyptus leaves?" "Believe me," Zoe said, "if you had dragon breath, you would chew eucalyptus too." I didn't question her, but I did keep my eyes peeled more closely as we drove. Ahead of us loomedMount Tamalpais. I guess, in terms of mountains, it was a small one, but it looked plenty huge as wewere driving toward it. "So that's the Mountain of Despair?" I asked. "Yes," Zoe said tightly. "Why do they call it that?" She was silent for almost a mile before answering. "After the war between the Titans and the gods, manyof the Titans were punished and imprisoned. Kronos was sliced to pieces and thrown into Tartarus. Kronos's right-hand man, the general of his forces, was imprisoned up there, on the summit, just beyondthe Garden of the Hesperides." "The General," I said. Clouds seemed to be swirling around its peak, as though the mountain wasdrawing them in, spinning them like a top. "What's going on up there? A storm?" Zoe didn't answer. I got the feeing she knew exactly what the clouds meant, and she didn't answer. I got the feeing she knew exactly what the clouds meant, and she didn't answer. I got the feeing she knew exactly what the clouds meant, and she didn't like it. "We have to concentrate," Thalia said. "The Mist is really strong here." "The magical kind or the natural kind?" I asked. "Both." The gray clouds swirled even thicker over the mountain, and we kept driving straight toward them. Wewere out of the forest now, into wide open spaces of cliffs and grass and rocks and fog.Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html I happened to glance down at the ocean as we passed a scenic curve, and I saw something that mademe jump out of my seat. "Look!" But we turned a corner and the ocean disappeared behind the hills. "What?" Thalia asked. "A big white ship," I said. "Docked near the beach. It looked like a cruise ship." Her eyes widened. "Luke's ship?" I wanted to say I wasn't sure. It might be a coincidence. But I knew better. The Princess Andromeda, Luke's demon cruise ship, was docked at that beach. That's why he'd sent his ship all the way down tothe Panama Canal. It was the only way to sail it from the East Coast to California. "We will have company, then," Zoe said grimly. "Kronos's army." I was about to answer, when suddenly the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Thalia shouted, "Stopthe car. NOW!" Zoe must've sensed something was wrong, because she slammed on the brakes without question. Theyellow VW spun twice before coming to a stop at the edge of the cliff. "Out!" Thalia opened the door and pushed me hard. We both rolled onto the pavement. The nextsecond: BOOOM! Lightning flashed, and Dr. Chase's Volkswagen erupted like a canary-yellow grenade. I probablywould've been killed by shrapnel except for Thalia's shield, which appeared over me. I heard a soundlike metal ram, and when I opened my eyes, we were surrounded by wreckage. Part of the VW's fenderhad impaled itself in the street. The smoking hood was spinning in circles. Pieces of yellow metal werestrewn across the road. I swallowed the taste of smoke out of my mouth, and looked at Thalia. "You saved my life." "One shall perish by a parent's hand"she muttered. "Curse him. He would destroy me? Me?" It took me a second to realize she was talking about her dad. "Oh hey, that couldn't have been Zeus'slightning bolt. No way." "Whose, then?" Thalia demanded. "I don't know. Zoe said Kronos's name. Maybe he—" Thalia shook her head, looking angry and stunned. "No. That wasn't it." "Wait," I said. "Where's Zoe? Zoe!" We both got up and ran around the blasted VW. Nothing inside. Nothing either direction down the road.I looked down the cliff. No sign of her. "Zoe!" I shouted.Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html Then she was standing right next to me, pulling me by my arm. "Silence, fool! Do you want to wakeLadon?" "You mean we're here?" "Very close," she said. "Follow me." Sheets of fog were drifting right across the road. Zoe stepped into one of them, and when the fogpassed, she was no longer there. Thalia advised. "We are following her. Go straight into the fog and keep that inmind." "Wait, Thalia. About what happened back on the pier ... I mean, with the manticore and the sacrifice—" "I don't want to talk about it." "You wouldn't actually have... you know?" She hesitated. "I was just shocked. That's all." "Zeus didn't send that lighting bolt at the car. It was Kronos. He's trying to manipulate you, make youangry at your dad." She took a deep breath. "Percy, I know you're trying to make me feel better. Thanks. But come on. Weneed to go." She stepped into the fog, into the Mist, and I followed. When the fog cleared, I was still on the side of the mountain, but the road was dirt. The grass wasthicker. The summit of the mountain seemed closernow, swirling with storm clouds and raw power. There was only one path to the top, directly in front ofus. And it led through a lush meadow of shadows and flowers: the garden would've been the most beautiful place I'd everseen. The grass shimmered with silvery evening light, and the flowers were such brilliant colors they almost glowed in the dark. Stepping stones of polished black marble led around either side of afive-story-tall apple tree, every bough glittering with golden apples. I can't describe why they were so appealing, but as soon as I smelled their fragrance, I knew that one bite would be the most delicious thing I'd evertasted. "The apples of immortality," Thalia said. "Hera's wedding gift from Zeus." I wanted to step right up and pluck one, except for the dragon coiled around the tree. Now, I don't know what you think of when I say dragon. Whatever it is, it's not scary enough. The Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://www.p rocesstext.com/abclit.htmlserpent's body was as thick as a booster rocket, glinting with coppery scales. He had more heads than Icould count, as if a hundred deadly pythons had been fused together. He appeared to be asleep. Theheads lay curled in a big spaghetti-like mound on the grass, all the eyes closed. Then the shadows in front of us began to move. There was a beautiful, eerie singing, like voices from thebottom of a well. I reached for Riptide, but Zoe stopped my hand. Four figures shimmered into existence, four young women who looked very much like Zoe. They allwore white Greek chitons. Their skin was like caramel. Silky black hair tumbled loose around theirshoulders. It was strange, but I'd never realized how beautiful Zoe was until I saw her siblings, the Hesperides. They looked just like Zoe—gorgeous, and probably very dangerous. "Sisters," Zoe said. "We do not see any sister," one of the girls said coldly. "We see two half-bloods and a Hunter. All ofwhom shall soon die." "You've got it wrong." I stepped forward. "Nobody is going to die." The girls studied me. They had eyes like volcanic rock, glassy and completely black. "Perseus Jackson," one of them said. "Yes," mused another. "I do not see why he is a threat." "Who said I was a threat?" The first Hesperid glanced behind her, toward the top of the mountain. "They fear thee. They areunhappy that this one has not yet killed thee." She pointed at Thalia. "Tempting sometimes," Thalia admitted. "But no, thanks. He's my friend." "There are no friends here, daughter of Zeus," the girl said. "You know he will kill thee," the girl said. "You know he will are no match for him." "Artemis must be freed," Zoe insisted. "Let us pass." The girl shook her head. "You have no rights here anymore. We have only to raise our voices and Ladon will wake." "He will not hurt me," Zoe said. "No? And what about thy so-called friends?" Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html Then Zoe did the last thing I expected. She shouted, "Ladon!Wake!" The dragon stirred, glittering like a mountain of pennies. The Hesperides yelped and scattered. The leadgirl said to Zoe, "Are you mad?" "You never had any courage, sister," Zoe said. "That is thy problem." The dragon Ladon was writhing now, a hundred heads whipping around, tongues flickering and tastingthe air. Zoe took a step forward, her arms raised. "Zoe, don't," Thalia said. "You're not a Hesperid anymore. He'll kill you." "Ladon is trained to protect the tree," Zoe said. "Skirt around the edges of the garden. Go up themountain. As long as I am a bigger threat, he should ignore thee." "Should, "Should," I have a support of the garden. Go up themountain. As long as I am a bigger threat, he should ignore thee." "Should," I have a support of the garden. Go up themountain. As long as I am a bigger threat, he should ignore thee." "Should," I have a support of the garden. Go up the I said. "Not exactly reassuring." "It is the only way," she said. "Even the three of us together cannot fight him." Ladon opened his mouths. The sound of a hundred heads hissing at once sent a shiver down my back, and that was before his breath hit me. The smell was like acid. It made my eyes burn, my skin crawl, andmy hair stand on end. I remembered the time a rat had died inside our apartment wall in New York in themiddle of the summer. This stench was like that, except a hundred times stronger, and mixed with thesmell of chewed eucalyptus. I promised myself right then that I would never ask a school nurse foranother cough drop. I wanted to draw my sword. But then I remembered my dream of Zoe and Hercules, and how Herculeshad failed in a head-on assault. I decided to trust Zoe's judgment. Thalia went left. I went right zoe walked straight toward, then back. Some of the mouths closed. Some kept hissing. Dragon confusion. Meanwhile, the Hesperides shimmered and turned into shadows. The voice of the eldest whispered, "Fool." "I used to feed thee by hand," Zoe continued, speaking in a soothing voice as she stepped toward thegolden tree. "Do you still like lamb's meat?" The dragon's eyes glinted. Thalia and I were about halfway around the garden. Ahead, I could see a single rocky trail leading up tothe black peak of the mountain. The storm swirled above it, spinning on the summit like it was the axis forthe whole world. We'd almost made it out of the meadow when something went wrong. I felt the dragon's mood shift. Maybe Zoe got too close. Maybe the dragon realized he was hungry. Whatever the reason, he lunged at Zoe. Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html Two thousand years of training kept her alive. She dodged one set of slashing fangs and tumbled underanother, weaving through the dragon's heads as she ran in our direction, gagging from the monster'shorrible breath. I drew Riptide to help. "No!" Zoe panted. "Run!" The dragon snapped at her side, and Zoe cried out. Thalia uncovered Aegis, and the dragon hissed. Inhis moment of indecision, Zoe sprinted past us up the mountain, and we followed. The dragon didn't try to pursue. He hissed and stomped the ground, but I guess he was well trained toguard that tree. He wasn't going to be lured off even by the tasty prospect of eating some heroes. We ran up the mountain as the Hesperides resumed their song in the shadows behind us. The musicdidn't sound so beautiful to me now—more like the sound track for a funeral. At the top of mountain were ruins, blocks of black granite and marble as big as houses. Broken columns. Statues of bronze that looked as though they'd been half melted. "The ruins of Mount Othrys?" I asked, feeling like a fool as usual. "The mountain fortress of the Titans," Zoe said. "In the first war, Olympus and Othrys were the two rivalcapitals of the world. Othrys was—" She winced and held her side. "You're hurt," I said. "Let me see." "No! It is nothing. I was saying... in the first war, Othrys was blasted to pieces." "But... how is it here?" Thalia looked around cautiously as we picked our way through the rubble, past blocks of marble andbroken archways. "It moves in the same way that Olympus moves. It always exists on the edges ofcivilization. But the fact that it is here, onthis mountain, "Zoe said. "Where he holds—" She froze. Her voice was ragged with despair. "Where he holds—" She froze was ragged with despair. "Where he holds—" She froze was ragged with despair. "Why?" "This is Atlas's mountain, "Zoe said." "Where he holds—" She froze was ragged with despair. "Why?" "This is Atlas's mountain, "Zoe said." "Where he holds—" She froze was ragged with despair. "Why?" "This is Atlas's mountain, "Zoe said." "Why?" "This is Atlas's mountain heavy vortex, making afunnel cloud that almost touched the mountaintop, but instead rested on the shoulders of atwelve-year-old girl with auburn hair and a tattered silvery dress: Artemis, her legs bound to the rockwith celestial bronze chains. This is what I had seen in my dream. It hadn't been a cavern roof thatArtemis was forced to hold. It was the roof of the world. "My lady!" Zoe rushed forward, but Artemis said, "Stop! It is a trap. You must leave now. "Generated by ABC Amb er LIT Converter, http://w ww.p rocesstext.com/abclit.html Her voice was strained. She was drenched in sweat. I had never seen a goddess in pain before, but theweight of the sky was clearly too much for Artemis. Zoe was crying. She ran forward despite Artemis's protests, and tugged at the chains. A booming voice spoke behind us: "Ah, how touching." We turned. The General was standing there in his brown silk suit. At his side were Luke and half adozen dracaenae bearing the golden sarcophagus of Kronos. Annabeth stood at Luke's side. She had herhands cuffed behind her back, a gag in her mouth, and Luke was holding the point of his sword to herthroat. I met her eyes, trying to ask her a thousand questions. There was just one message she was sending me, though: RUN . "Luke," Thalia snarled. "Let her go." Luke's smile was weak and pale. He looked even worse than he had three days ago in D.C. "That is the General's decision, Thalia. But it's good to see you again." Thalia spat at him. The General chuckled. "So much for old friends. And you, Zoe. It's been a long time. How is my little traitor? I will enjoy killing you." "Do not respond," I said. "You're Atlas?" The General glanced at me. "So, even the stupidest of heroes can finally figure something out. Yes, I amAtlas, the general of the Titans and terror of the gods. Congratulations. I will kill you presently, as soonas I deal with this wretched girl." "You're not going to hurt Zoe" I said. "I won't let you." The General sneered. "You have no right to interfere, little hero. This is a family matter." I frowned. "Afamily matter?" "Yes," Zoe said bleakly. "Atlas is my father."

