

## The Phoenix

"First of all, I want to thank you and congratulate everyone involved." Brealynn starts from her position at the head of the very long conference table. "I know it was a hard fight, and many of you are exhausted from using your powers... and I also know that each of us has lost a friend - we will hold a memorial service tomorrow for all the brave warriors that gave their lives. I promise you that this will be worth it. We have taken over only one prison and only liberated some of our brothers and sisters, but we will make the government pay for what they have done to us. Their sacrifice will not be in vain. We will change this world, change the oppression of our kind out of fear. I know this has been a hard and long day, but it will be worth it. Now, go and get a good night's sleep. We'll meet again tomorrow morning - everyone is welcome - and we will discuss further plans and issues." Brealynn finishes strongly and dismisses our large group with a wave of her hands.

Sharing a glance with Abigail, the two of us leave the room in silence. Wandering down the halls, we end up at the entrance to our old dorm. We need sleep, and here seems as good a place as any, so I slip inside.

The second Abigail closes the door, I explode: "Brealynn is crazy! We must have lost nearly a quarter of our people, but she still wants to go against the government. We'll all be killed." I try to shove aside the mental image of Jayda's still body.

"We might stand a chance if she managed to liberate all of the Accursed and convince them to stand with her." Abigail replies hollowly.

I'm about to reply when I hear a quiet, almost hesitant, knock at our door.

With a sigh, Abigail opens the door. I'm not sure who I expected, but I certainly didn't expect Brooklyn.

"Is it alright if I stay the night with you?" she asks timidly.

Abigail sends me an inscrutable glance. Unsure what she wants me to do, I step forward and try to smile encouragingly.

"That's fine." I reply flatly and motion her into the room.

Neither Abigail nor I ask about Bethany because we can both figure out what happened. I got separated from the two near the end of the fighting so I hadn't known what had happened.

"I think I'll just sleep here on the couch, if that's okay." I nod and she collapses on the couch.

Abigail leaves the main room without another word, disappearing into her former room. After a moment's hesitation I head for my room as well, leaving Brooklyn in peace.

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When I wake in the morning, the events of the previous day hit me hard. I want to cry over Jayda's death, but I can't even seem to manage that. I wish I could scrub the images of death and blood from my mind.

Staggering out of bed, I find my body weak and any energy for my powers is gone. Brealynn's chilling words come to mind, along with her plan to attack the government.

I nearly scream when Abigail appears in my room, dropping onto my bed without permission.

“What are you doing? Can’t you use the door like a normal person?!” All my emotions come tumbling out in the form of anger and she flinches from my tirade.

“Brooklyn is still asleep on the couch and I didn’t want to wake her.” she answers stiffly.

“I’m sorry.” I apologize, instantly feeling badly for my reaction and hoping I wasn’t too loud.

She waves her hand through the air to dismiss my apology.

“That’s alright, I know how you feel.” Her voice sounds ready to crack and her body looks frail. I wonder how she even managed to teleport in her condition.

“The meeting will be starting soon.” I point out.

“Yeah, I know.” Abigail pauses, lifting her head to catch my eyes. “She can’t be planning on staying here long.”

At my questioning glance she explains: “It won’t take the government long to realize that we’ve taken this place over, if they haven’t already. First thing they’ll do is cancel the food delivery. With no food, we’ll have to move out... and the food they have here won’t last our big group very long.”

“That makes sense.” I mutter, running my hands through my hair and sinking onto the mattress beside her. “What was her plan? Are we attacking another base to secure more troops or going right to the government?”

“We have the service today, but I figure we’ll be leaving by tomorrow morning at the latest. If she has any sense, we’ll take out some more of these prison camps, but who can say what she’ll do?” Abigail queries.

I shake my head sorrowfully. Her plan is crazy, but we seem to have little choice but to support her.

“Come on, I’ll teleport us to the meeting.” Abigail extends her hand.

I don’t like taxing her energy further, but know we really shouldn’t disrupt Brooklyn. We can fill her in on the meeting later if she wants to know what she missed.

Abigail nearly collapses as we appear outside the door of the meeting room. I reach out, gripping onto her shoulders to keep her upright. After a moment, her face clears and she smiles her thanks.

I follow her into the room, not relaxing until she’s safely in a seat. We wait as a few more people trickle in before Brealynn starts the meeting. I don’t see Brooklyn and hope she’s okay.

“Immediately after this meeting, we’ll be holding a memorial service outside. I know this is a lot to ask, but I am asking that all the telekinetics help with the preparations of the graves.” Her blue eyes crackle with ferocity. “Our allies will receive a proper burial.” I catch the glistening of a single tear that escapes, sliding down her cheek and I wonder who she lost. “Tomorrow morning, myself and some others will go out and get in contact with some friends. Then we will proceed to attack our local government’s building.”

“At this time, I don’t know the locations of any other prison camps, except that they are very far away.” she explains. “They’ll also be more heavily guarded in light of our attack here, so it only makes sense to strike the government while we have the

element of surprise.” Here, Brealynn pauses and gazes around the room. “Are there any objections?”

I don’t look at Abigail while I rise to my feet. “Yes.” I swallow nervously at all the eyes upon me before hurrying on. “The government building will be much more heavily defended. We lost too many people simply attacking this one prison camp. Do you really believe that any of us will survive attacking the government themselves? For all we know, they may have Accursed among them who are loyal to them and much better trained than we are!”

I sit down quickly, my face burning. Abigail places her hand on my arm, and when I turn to look at her, I read approval in her expression.

Brealynn stares at me for a moment longer, then turns her attention to the rest of the group. “No Accursed would ever stand with the very people who imprisoned them.” Her voice is strong, confident and firm and I can almost believe her. “It is true that we may have been somewhat unprepared for their defenses, but we will not be caught by surprise this time. We will organize ourselves and we will defeat them.”

To my growing sense of despair, I can see nods of agreement throughout the room.

“If no one else has any objections, we will proceed to the memorial service.” Brealynn announces and, following her lead, we solemnly file out of the room.

“I’ll go get Brooklyn. She should be there.” I whisper to Abigail and dart off down a side hall.

I knock gently at the door to our room, more of a courtesy than anything else, and step into the room quietly. Brooklyn glances up at me with dull eyes from her seat on the couch.

“They’re holding the memorial service now if you want to come.” I tell her.

“Thanks for coming to get me.” She stands and follows me out of the room. “There was a meeting, right?”

I nod and fill her in: “Brealynn wants to attack the government building in town tomorrow. She’s going out to contact some friends of hers today.”

Brooklyn laughs - a dry, hollow sound. “Sounds exactly like her. I shouldn’t be surprised, really.”

At our hurried pace, we catch up with the tail end of the slow procession. Brooklyn falls silent and I spot tears glistening at the edge of her eyes.

Reaching the exit, we file out onto the lawn, spotting Abigail. At Brealynn’s command, all the telekinetics, myself and Brooklyn included, lift a large section of turf.

Brealynn signals once more and all the teleporters teleport the bodies into the mass grave. I can’t stand the sight and feel rather sick. Hearing Brooklyn’s stifled cry, I reach out and take her hand.

The rest of the service passes in a blur of tears and pain and I barely hear any of what Brealynn says.

Once the service has ended, Abigail steers Brooklyn over to the side to sit on the grass. Wiping my eyes, I see a few others making their way over to us, gathering on the grass around the three of us.

Abigail eyes them curiously, but Brooklyn doesn’t bat an eye.

“We don’t want to attack the government, either.” A boy speaks up, who seems to have been elected spokesperson. “What’s your plan?”

I’m shocked to find that the group of them, maybe fifteen in total, are all looking at me. “I don’t have a plan... I just don’t think fighting is the right solution.”

Abigail suddenly joins in. “We should leave. With a few teleporters, we could all go somewhere else. Like an island, maybe! We could teleport to a tropical island and build our own society.”

The confidence in her voice drags me into her dream and I realize it’s a good idea. A chance to start over, to build our own world...

“An island? We’d all die!” one girl squeals.

“People have been shipwrecked and survived. Besides, we have our powers and if things get really bad, we can just teleport back.” I point out.

Looking at Abigail’s face, I can tell she’s in.

“We’ll leave tomorrow morning. If you want to come with us, you’re welcome. We won’t force anyone. If you know of anyone else who may want to come, let them know. Meet here tomorrow at 6 a.m. Bring anything you need, extra clothes or anything like that.” I instruct the group.

“I’m in.” The boy is the first to speak.

A few people wander away, clearly uninterested but the rest voice their support as well. Taking a quick count, I find twelve people plus Abigail and I.

“Good. Be here at 6 a.m. sharp!” I caution them and then stand, pulling Brooklyn along with me.

Abigail and I hurry away, returning to our room with Brooklyn.

“Are you serious about this?” Brooklyn speaks for the first time since Abigail came up with the idea.

I nod with conviction. I don’t want to fight and I thought we had no choice, but this seems to be the perfect solution.

“Do you think it will work?” Her voice seems thin and feeble.

“It will. I’ve heard of people who have survived shipwrecks. And besides that, we have our powers to protect and help us.” I encourage her.

“I promise, if you decide to come with us and don’t like it, I will personally teleport you back to the mainland.” Abigail smiles reassuringly at her.

“I’ll go.” Brooklyn finally agrees, taking a seat on the couch. “... I thought I wanted to fight the government.” She pauses and looks Abigail and I in the eye. “My father was Accursed, a telepath. He escaped from a prison camp and lived undetected for some years with my mother. The police tracked him down when Bethany and I were seven. They shot him and our mother right in front of our eyes. They tested us then, we were only seven, but apparently having an Accursed parent increases one’s chance of being Accursed. We were found to be Accursed as well.

“Even though our powers hadn’t developed, we were taken to a prison camp where we were separated, mistreated, and bullied by the other Accursed because we had no powers. The day our telekinesis developed, we broke out and met up. In the city we ran into Brealynn and she took us in. I’ve always wanted to avenge my father’s death. I still do. But, now with Bethany dead... I’m not sure fighting is the answer. More than that, Brealynn doesn’t hold a chance and she knows it.” Brooklyn shares her tale.

I don’t know what to say.

“Fighting can’t be the answer because it only leads to more fighting. They fear us and our attack will only make things worse. There must be some way to make peace. I think my father would have wanted this.” she whispers. “He never harbored ill-will towards the government for what they did to him, even in his dying breaths.”

Unsure what to say, I walk over to the couch, sit down beside her, and wrap my arms around her.

Abigail stands by uncertainty, then speaks. “I know I never met your father, but I think you’re right.”

Through her tears, Brooklyn smiles.

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“Can you think of anything else we’ll need?” I ask Abigail and Brooklyn as I return to the main room with our bag stuffed full.

I took all the extra clothes and towels, including the bed linens which I figure could come in handy even just as rags. I raided our bathroom cabinet, removing all the medicinal items. There’s not much else in the place that we can take that would actually be of use.

“The clothes, towels, linens and medicine?” Brooklyn checks.

“Got all that.” I affirm.

“I can’t think of anything else we’d need. And if we really need anything we can always come back for it.” Abigail reminds us.

I nod and set the bag down by the door. Unable to contain my nervous energy, I pace the room.

“Calm down. We still have half an hour before we have to meet.” Abigail appears just as anxious as I am.

“Do you think anybody will come with us?” I ask as I take a seat on the edge of the table.

“Yes. Lots of people don’t agree with Brealynn but were just too afraid to stand up to her. Now that you’ve stood up, others will follow your lead.” Brooklyn sounds certain and I suppose she would know.

“How many people do you think we’ll have?” I fight to stay still.

“Twenty.” Abigail picks a seemingly random number.

“Thirty-five.” Brooklyn voices her opinion.

“Do you think we can really build our own society?” I can’t keep from asking question after question.

“For the last time, yes!” Abigail faces me, frustration coloring her face.

I raise my hands in surrender. “Sorry.”

“Let’s go.” Brooklyn’s voice suddenly seems hushed and Abigail and I follow her lead, grabbing the bag on the way out.

We walk silently through the building. I see nobody else and wonder if everybody is already at the meeting spot or not on their way yet.

When we reach the outer door, we slip out quietly and round the corner to find a small crowd already waiting. At first glance I estimate fifteen people.

Upon spotting me, the boy from yesterday approaches. “From what I’ve heard, we’re still waiting on a few more.”

I nod my thanks and survey the group once more. There’s a bag for almost every person, some sharing a bag, but most are relatively small.

“Find out how many are teleportic.” I instruct him.

He hurries off into the crowd and I note a few more people melt into the group. After a while, he returns.

“I think that’s everybody. We have forty-five total Accursed, including you and myself. Fourteen of these are teleportic.” he informs me.

“Find two other volunteers to teleport three people. You can teleport with Brooklyn, Abigail and I.” I decide, knowing Abigail will oblige.

Once the groups have been arranged, I pull out a map and pass it around.

“The circle indicates where we are. The dotted lines show distances we’ll teleport and the x’s are for each spot we’ll stop. The last x is a tropical island which should be large enough for our small community. It won’t be easy, but we can take breaks inbetween teleports.” I take charge easily enough.

After everyone has seen the map, I roll it back up and slide it into my bag before moving over to stand beside the boy, Abigail and Brooklyn.

“Teleport.” I order with a wide smile.

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### **Five Years Later**

We raise our glasses, made of hollowed out coconut shells for a toast. Today is a day of great celebration: the birth of the community’s first child, a girl.

“Who would have thought?” Abigail muses, scaring me. I hadn’t heard her walk up beside me.

“We knew this was going to happen sooner or later.” I smile.

Brooklyn sidles up with an odd expression. “This time it’ll be different.” she declares fiercely. “Whether the girl is Phoenix or not, all will be accepted in our community.”

We’re now the Phoenix because we’ve been reborn from what we once were. This island has been an opportunity for all of us to start over.