

Understanding

a TIMEDANCER-FF

Von MChrisH

Kapitel 2:

Like I said, this is the "Happy Ending"-chapter.

Sekhmet looked up when she felt a magical presence. She involuntary placed herself between Nicholas and whoever arrived. When she saw who it was however, she froze.

Danu stood there, flanked by Tanabur and another man, a Halfling. She smiled sadly at what she saw. She looked at the Halfling and nodded in Nicholas' direction.

The Halfling bowed, then went to the fallen Unseelie. He knelled down and reached out to touch Garlon.

Nicholas barely noticed what happened around him. When he saw the hand reaching for Garlon however, he pulled away, drawing Garlon closer. "Don't," he whispered pleadingly.

Danu stepped forward. "Nicholas, let Clayton have a look at Garlon. He is probably Garlon's last chance to survive."

Nicholas looked up. "Survive?" he asked in a small voice, afraid to hope. When Danu nodded, he reluctantly allowed Clayton to come closer but refused to let Garlon go. He held onto his right hand with both of his own.

Clayton passed his hand over Garlon. "Hm, it looks not too bad. The arrow was poisoned but not necessarily enough to kill a full fay. It was designed for quarterlings."

"So you can save him?" Nicholas asked hopefully.

Clayton looked up. "Yes, possibly, but I have to get him to my surgery as quick as possible. Then it all depends on Garlon's will to survive."

"Can I come with you?" Nicholas asked instantly. Then he remembered where he was.

"That is..." He looked at Anath, then in the direction Grimalkin had led the others.

"Go with him! I'll explain what happened here," Sekhmet offered.

"Thank you," Nicholas whispered. He accepted Danu's hand to help him to his feet.

"Tanabur, take them there, please," Danu said.

"Yes, Milady." Tanabur bowed before transporting the four of them away.

Danu turned back to the others. She looked at Merlin and Alexander. "What about you? Are you alright?"

Alexander nodded. "I regret that I have barely any memories of Puck. I'm just happy Dad didn't have to relive it like this."

Merlin made an affirmative sound. "Yes, it is very much alike," he said softly. He swallowed. "I never saw it happen but it still reawakened the memory." He looked up at Danu. "Could you please take me to my son? I want to be there for him."

Danu nodded in understanding. "Naturally." She looked at the others. "What about you?"

"We'll take care of the situation here," Alexander said.

"Very well," Danu said. She touched Merlin's shoulder and they both vanished.

They found Nicholas sitting in a chair in a waiting room. Tanabur stood beside him, keeping an eye on the quarterling. Nicholas didn't seem to be aware of anything. He stared on the ground without seeing anything.

Merlin went over to his son. "Nicholas?" He knelt down in front of the younger man. "Nicholas," he called again, gently.

The boy slowly lifted his head. It took a few seconds before he focused on his father.

Merlin hesitated, then placed his hands on Nicholas's shoulders. "I'm here if you need to talk, okay? It helps, you know."

Nicholas pulled away. "What do *you* know?"

"I lost quite some friends," Merlin replied. He looked away, adding under his breath "Some of them because of my father."

Nicholas looked back at him. "What do you mean?" He blinked, remembering what Garlon had said. "You mean the man Garlon mentioned after...after he..." He swallowed, fighting to suppress his tears.

Merlin nodded. "Yes," he said softly.

"What happened?"

"Well, it was the day of the final battle of the Second War. I went out to meet my ...friend, Corby..."

It was over an hour later when Clayton came into the room, together with a woman.

"How is he?" Nicholas asked instantly, coming to stand in front of them.

Clayton shrugged. "We were able to heal the damage the arrow caused. The problem is the poisonous magic. While it was not enough to kill him, it took much of his power. As I said before: now it all depends on how much of a fighter he is."

"He is that, he is a fighter," Nicholas whispered. "Can I see him?" He looked pleadingly at the doctor.

"Well, I would have asked you to go to him either way. You seem to be very close to him. Your being there might give him a reason to wake up again."

"It might?" Nicholas asked hopefully. "Then can I...can I stay for a while longer?"

"If you wish. My wife will prepare a room for two people. We'll have it ready in an hour, at most."

"Thank you." Nicholas hesitated.

"Then go in, see if you can get him to survive. I'll get you some of your clothes if you wish," his father offered.

Nicholas hesitated, then nodded. "I have some clothes at Fenris Industries."

"Okay, I'll be back soon." He squeezed Nicholas' shoulder again before turning to leave.

Nicholas looked after his father. They had finally talked again but he couldn't bring himself to feel happy, not when it was still unsure if Garlon would survive.

He blinked slowly. The room he found himself in was unknown to him. He stiffened when he felt a presence close to him. Looking down the bed, he saw Nicholas lying with his chest on the mattress, sleeping. He looked paler than when he had last seen him. He noticed something glittering on his cheek. Looking closer, he saw that they were dried tears. Garlon frowned, not liking Nicholas' troubled expression. He flexed

his right hand, loosening the stiff muscles, then slowly reached out and touched Nicholas' head, stroking his hair.

Nicholas awoke to the feeling of someone petting his hair. He wondered for a second if it were his father but then remembered that Merlin had left the previous day to help in Europe and would only return in one or two days. Curious, he opened his eyes. He stared in surprise when his eyes met Garlon's.

"Hey," Garlon said, voice rough from lack of use.

Nicholas swallowed, not speaking. Without warning, he hugged the older man.

Garlon was startled at first but then he returned the hug.

"You're alive, you really survived," Nicholas whispered.

"Not to sound ungrateful but why am I alive? Last thing I know I had an arrow in my chest." Garlon instantly regretted his last comment when he felt Nicholas flinch.

Nicholas pulled back. "After...after you... lost consciousness, Danu appeared with some others. One of them, a Halfling, is a doctor. He healed you but he wasn't certain if you'd survive." He kept his gaze on his hands in his lap. "He asked me to stay with you because..." he trailed off, unsure if he should continue.

"Because I needed a reason to stay alive," Garlon finished.

Nicholas nodded. "That's what he said." He still didn't look up again.

Garlon slowly pushed himself in a sitting position. "Well, I guess there are some things we should talk about." When Nicholas simply nodded again, he frowned. He reached out and covered Nicholas' hands with his. "Look at me, please." He waited until complied before continuing. "I'm really sorry for lying about the past. When I first met you, I just did and said what was necessary to convince you."

"Yeah, father told me about the first two wars. Madoc really was a...a..."

"Bastard? I know." He stared into space, debating whether he should tell Nicholas everything.

"It certainly achieved what Madoc tried when he brought Umbriel in the Court: hurting the Seelies," Nicholas said softly.

"Wha--? No!" Garlon exclaimed. "No, not only," he repeated more gently when he saw the younger man jump. "I mean, it was part of the reason I first talked to you. But it was also what I told you before the Morrigan shot: you changed the court for the better."

"*We* did," Nicholas corrected softly.

Garlon nodded. "Yes, we did. But the court lost its main importance after a while. Hell, I would have never done what I did for the court. It was you."

Nicholas swallowed. "You...you said that you...love me," he whispered.

Garlon took a deep breath. "I do," he affirmed. "I'm in love with you."

"Oh." Nicholas hadn't expected Garlon to repeat it. He had thought Garlon would deny it, ignore it or say that he had meant it in a purely platonic mentor-student or master-servant relationship. "I-I ... I should...tell the others you're awake. Sekmeth wanted to talk to you," he said and practically fled the room.

Garlon looked after him, a troubled expression on his face. He should have stayed quiet.

He was pulled out of his thoughts when Sekmeth entered. "Garlon?"

Garlon gave her a quick grin. "Hello cat lady."

She smirked. "Well, seems you're better again, mouse."

"Nicholas said you wanted to talk to me?"

"Yes, I do." She went closer to the bed. "I don't know if the boy told you but after you were shot, the fight quickly ended. Some returned to Germany and are waiting for your and Nicholas' return. Others fled and are in hiding again."

"I already guessed as much. I don't think you're here for that."

"No, I wanted to tell you that Danu offered the protection of the Elder Court for those who are willing to give up the ways of the Unseelie Court – Madoc's ways, that is."

Garlon stayed quiet for some moments. "So you're accepting?"

"Yes, I am."

"What about Nicholas?"

"From what I saw, he seems to enjoy meeting his great-grandmother. I think he'll stay with her for a while."

"Good, that's good. He needs someone to guide him now, someone he can trust."

Sekmeth frowned. "What are you talking about? He already has you to take care of him."

Garlon shook his head. "No, I lost him."

"What do you mean? If you're talking about lying about Madoc, then he already forgave you, at least if his staying by your side while you were out cold is any indication."

"I told him how I feel," Garlon said quietly, partly to himself.

Sekmeth drew a deep breath. That was unexpected. She just didn't understand why this meant that he had lost his pupil.

Garlon saw her confusion. "He ran away after I told him," he explained quietly.

"Oh, Garlon, I'm sorry," Sekmeth said.

Garlon shrugged, trying to appear indifferent. "I should have expected it. Remember, I told you he's in love with Maeve." He sounded tired.

Sekmeth wanted to say more but thought better of it. "I'll let you sleep some more." She turned to leave.

"Wait. Can you tell the other that I'll leave as soon as I can?"

"Are you sure? You almost died four days ago."

"Four... - Well, whatever. I don't really have a reason for staying. It's better for everyone."

"Well, it's none of my business." Sekmeth stopped at the door and looked back at him. "If you need any help, however, you know where I live."

"Thanks," Garlon whispered tiredly.

Sekmeth nodded before leaving the room.

The Banshee was waiting for her. "I never thought I would ask this after what happened but: will he be alright?"

Sekmeth nodded. "He probably will." She glanced at the window where Nicholas stood. "It's also good to know you don't mind all that much because he might visit me. At least he should, considering he has not recovered enough yet to travel."

The Banshee blinked. "He's leaving? Has he lost his mind?"

The demi-goddess kept an eye on Nicholas who had turned around and was staring at them. "I wondered the same when he told me but he is convinced that he has to." She turned in the direction in which the main building was. "Danu mentioned something about Anubis visiting with other Egyptians. I have to admit I'm curious who it is." She nodded to the quarterling. "Nicholas."

He didn't reply. Instead he rushed back to the room Garlon was in.

The Banshee looked after him. "You enjoy meddling, don't you?"

"Just making sure I'm not disturbed again for a while," Sekmeth said.

Garlon looked up when the door was opened. He had not expected to see his beloved again so soon. He did his best to school his features, already trying to suppress his feelings. "My lord," he greeted.

Nicholas stood there. "I...you...you said..."

"Don't concern yourself. You won't have to deal with it. I'll leave as soon as possible, if we're lucky today."

Nicholas paled. "No!" He rushed to the bed. "You can't leave me! I...I just got you back! You...you can't just leave me again!" He swallowed, trying to keep from crying.

Garlon stared. "Wha--? Nicholas, Nicholas, calm down!" He touched Nicholas' lower arm. "I probably made a mistake by burdening you. It's better if I..."

"Don't tell me what's better!" Nicholas snapped. "I don't want you to leave." A tear run down his cheek.

Garlon brushed it away. "Didn't I tell you not to cry for me?"

"Have you ever known me to do exactly as I'm told?" Nicholas gave a teary smile. "I need you with me," he whispered.

Garlon pulled Nicholas closer until he sat on the bed. "Nicholas?"

"I-I'm just so confused. I always believed in this dream of fulfilling Madoc's vision and marrying the good lady Maeve. Now everything has changed. Now I finally know Madoc's a bastard and I couldn't be happier if I never saw Maeve again." He looked down, the heartbreak still fresh.

Garlon tenderly lifted his chin. "I understand that. I'm really sorry for what you had to suffer because of Maeve." He caressed Nicholas' cheek.

Nicholas timidly leaned against the hand. "I know," he breathed. "As for what else you told me... I don't... I never considered you... or any other man... I mean..." He blushed.

"It's okay." Garlon took Nicholas' hand and placed a gently kiss on his palm. "I just wanted you to know. I don't expect anything from you."

Nicholas blushed even more. His heart quickened and he felt his whole body tingling, starting from his palm. "Garlon..."

The older man blinked, then his eyes widened. "I didn't mean to push you. I'll try to leave you more room." He pulled his hand back.

"No!" Nicholas exclaimed. He captured Garlon's hand and drew it back, leaning his cheek against it. "You...you don't have to," he whispered, looking down on his lap. "I don't want you to."

Garlon looked stunned, then his features softened. He leaned forward and placed a chaste kiss on Nicholas' forehead. "Okay, boy. – Now, you told me that we are here at Queen Danu's home and Sekmeth mentioned her offer. Have you decided already?"

Nicholas smiled. "Great-grandmother is very nice. I think I'd really like to spend some more time with her. She and father have been telling me more about the past and she even gave me a book about the first two Unseelie Wars. She said she's sure the previous owner wouldn't mind my having it."

Garlon started. "...who wouldn't...? Might I see the book?"

Nicholas was confused. "Sure, wait a second." He left the room but returned quickly, carrying a book.

Garlon opened it on the first page, looking for the name of the previous owner. When he finally found it, he leaned back, a look of surprise on his face. "I should have known." He looked at Nicholas. "Danu is right. He really wouldn't have minded. He would have been happy to help his cousin's son." He shook his head. "I'm just surprised how fate connected our lives."

On the top of the first page stood three words in a flowing script.

Robin Goodfellow
Puck

Two days later, the sun rose to nine people, four women and five men, standing in a normally empty family plot in Maine.

One of the women stepped forward and placed flowers in front of one grave.

"I always wondered who the flowers were from," a young red-haired man said.

"Just because we fought on different sides doesn't mean that I didn't respect him," the woman replied.

"Not all of us fay are that forgetful when it comes to family," an elderly woman replied. She smiled sadly at two of the men. "I asked Robin to leave but he refused to leave you to fight on your own."

The redhead returned the smile. "I think father would have preferred him to leave and survive." He looked at a nearby double grave. "It was hard for him to never know how Uncle Puck would have reacted if he'd told him the truth."

An older man spoke up. "I think my dear cousin loved him just as much."

A brown-haired man nodded. "I don't know exactly what he felt but I remember him saying that the Eyrie were his home. He'd never said that if he hadn't cared deeply for you." He hesitated. "I wonder if he had any idea how much it would influence me."

The woman who had placed the flowers at the grave cleared her throat. "Well, either way, I should return to Egypt. Who knows what my servants did when they grew bored." She looked at a man standing somewhat to the side. "You and the others are always welcome to visit, Anubis. I'd like to see you all again." She vanished quickly before he could reply.

"Sekmeth's right. It's time to return home," another woman said. "I wouldn't have been here if she hadn't convinced me." With that she also left magically.

The redhead wrapped his arms around the young woman standing by his side. "All this made me see again just how lucky I am to have my family together."

The woman elbowed him gently. "Don't make yourself sound that old." She smiled up at him. "But I'm also happy that we didn't lose anyone again."

The elderly man nodded. "Yes, we were all very lucky." He stepped closer to the grave. "I think cousin Puck would have been happy to know that he kind of helped protect us, even in death." He respectfully touched the stone. "Thank you, cousin." He lowered his voice. "Thank you for helping me get my son back." He smiled slightly when the wind picked up and blew through his hair. It reminded him of how Puck had ruffled his hair when he'd felt down. He looked back at the others. "Could you take us back to the castle, grandmother?"

The elderly woman nodded.

A dark-haired young man spoke up. "We'd like to stay a bit longer." Without noticing it, he had taken the brown-haired man's hand shortly after they had arrived.

The others nodded and Danu transported herself away with Alexander, Serena and Merlin, leaving Garlon, Nicholas and Anubis in the family plot.

Nicholas looked down, only now noticing his holding Garlon's hand but he didn't let go. He had spent the last two days brooding but now Alexander Xanatos' words had reminded him that even though he and Garlon were practically immortal, that didn't mean that they'd endless time. So instead of letting go, he squeezed Garlon's hand.

Garlon looked surprised at the younger man. "Nicholas?"

Nicholas hesitated before looking up at his mentor. He was still too unsure to speak

the words but he hoped that his gaze would tell Garlon what he was trying to say.

Garlon smiled gently and pulled Nicholas in his embrace. "Just tell me if I pressure you too much," He told him before leaning down and kissing Nicholas tenderly on the lips.

Nicholas' cheeks were reddened when the kiss ended but he was smiling brightly.

"Home?" Garlon asked.

Nicholas nodded before leaning his head against Garlon's shoulder.

Garlon looked back at the grave. "Thanks," he said before vanishing with Nicholas.

Anubis smiled slightly, looking out at the sea. "Are you content with how it turned out?"

Almost transparent lips curved into a smile, blue eyes gentle. "Yes," the wind seemed to whisper. "That I am."

The End