

The Last Olympian

"Get back!" I slashed the air in a wide arc, driving the rest of the demigods away from Annabeth. "No one touches her!" "Interesting," Kronos said.

He towered above me on his skeletal horse, his scythe in his hand. He studied the scene with narrowed eyes, as if he could sense that I'd just come close to death, the way a wolf can smell fear.

"Bravely fought, Percy," he said. "But it's time to surrender -- or the girl dies."

"Percy, don't," Annabeth groaned. Her shirt was soaked with blood. I had to get her out of here.

"Blackjack!" I yelled.

As fast as light, the pegasus swooped down and clamped his teeth on the straps of Annabeth's armor. They soared away over the river before the enemy could even react.

Kronos sighed. "Some day soon, I am going to make pegasus soup. But in the meantime . . ." He dismounted, his scythe glistening in the dawn light. "I'll settle for another dead demigod."

I met his first strike with Riptide. The impact shook the entire bridge, but I held my ground. Kronos's smile wavered.

With a yell, I kicked his legs out from under him. His scythe skittered across the pavement. I stabbed downward, but he rolled aside and regained his footing. His scythe flew back to his hands.

"So . . ." He studied me, looking mildly annoyed. "You had the courage to visit the Styx. I had to pressure Luke in many ways to convince him. If only you had supplied my host body instead . . . but no matter. I am still more powerful. I am a TITAN."

He struck the bridge with the butt of his scythe, and a wave of pure force blasted me backwards. Cars went careening. Demigods – even Luke's own men – were blown off the edge of the bridge. Suspension cords whipped around and I skidded halfway back to Manhattan.