

ROYAL BLOOD

**UNEDITED REVIEW
GALLEY**

ROYAL BLOOD
Sons of Zeus

By

Rachel Carrington

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Printed and bound in the United States of America.



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CHAPTER ONE

Surely the bastard had lost his mind. If he thought for one, single second that he could fuck around with the God of War and live to tell about it, then he needed to learn more about the gods he was dealing with.

Pissed beyond measure, Ares tromped down the golden steps of Mount Olympus, his face set in a scowl. At the present moment, he dared anyone to cross his path. He wanted a confrontation. No, he needed a confrontation. He needed to fight. To kill. His hands clenched into fists, he stomped across the parquet flooring, his boots echoing loudly down the halls.

"Ares, really. Do you have to be so loud?" A vision of white floated in front of his face and Ares glowered at his bubbly sister.

"I don't have time for this, Aphrodite, so unless you want to be my first casualty of the day, then get the hell out of my way."

"What's gotten into you? I mean, besides the normal bad mood."

She'd never understood the concept of time. Ares didn't have the energy to snap back at her. Instead, he kept walking, his fury intensifying. Soon, his sister's attentions would be elsewhere and he could confront the little mealy-mouthed bastard who'd made the mistake of crossing the God of War.

Pussy, indeed.

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"You actually called Ares that?" The courtyard was filled with the anxious faces of youngsters crowded around the thin-faced little boy, wanting details of the lad's bitter dispute with the powerful God of War.

Jared bobbed his head in excitement. "Yeah, I did. And you know what? I'd do it again."

One boy cleared his throat. "Then you might get your chance."

Jared's eyes widened. "Why do you say that?"

The taller boy pointed. "Cause unless I'm mistaken, that black blur is Ares."

Screams united in the yard as the kids dispersed, running toward the safety of their homes.

Ares landed with a thump, strolling toward the youth. “We meet again, young Jared.” He leaned in closer. “Cat got your tongue?”

Jared wouldn’t back down now, not with his friends watching. Instead, he squared his shoulders and stuck out his tongue. “You’re nothing but a bully and I hate you.”

Ares let out a long, hissing breath. “And you are about to become a victim.”

“Get away from my son!” The sharp tone of the feminine voice captured Ares’ attention and he turned, mildly interested to see the woman who would dare challenge him. And then his interest climbed even further.

Curvy, with blonde curls and legs that went on forever, the young mother raced to protect her offspring and when she reached Jared’s side, she clutched her son next to her bosom and glared defiantly at Ares. “Does it make you proud that you can intimidate a young boy? He’s ten!”

Ares had never liked to be chastised, but in this case, he’d make an exception. He wondered if the woman had plans for the day. He contemplated sending her husband to war so that would give him time for some afternoon delight. “Your son made some comments he never should have made.”

The blonde’s face grew cold. “And for that, he deserves the full brunt of your anger, I’m sure.”

The tone of the woman’s voice began to wear on Ares’ nerves. “Do you know who you’re talking to?”

She squared her shoulders and pushed her son behind her. “I know exactly who I’m talking to. You’re Ares, God of War.” She spat the words as though they were epithets. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ll just take my son home.”

Determined to have the last word, Ares watched her walk away for the briefest moment before asking, “Are you married?”

Before the woman could stop Jared, he spun around and ran toward Ares, pummeling him with fists no bigger than a small apple. “You killed my daddy! You killed him!”

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Chapter Two

Jasmine tried to calm her son down, but he only wanted to be left alone. She allowed him the sanctuary of his bedroom while she set about putting dinner on the table. Everything Jared said had been true. If not for one of Ares' many wars, her husband, Jared's father, would be alive.

Hiram had loved his son with a passion, but when his province had been called to war, to defend Greece, he didn't hesitate to pick up his sword. Eight months later, Jasmine had gotten the horrid news. Hiram had lost his life, but Greece had won the war.

Now, two years later, Jared still carried the hurt and bereavement while Jasmine struggled to make ends meet.

She stuffed her hands into the bread dough, kneading with more ferocity than needed. She didn't blame her son for his anger, his hatred of the god who'd sent his father to his death. She'd felt the same things herself. Only her maturity and need to support him kept her from rushing toward Ares, from drawing her deceased husband's sword and running it through the god's black heart.

Fury coursing through her veins, she spun around so quickly her hip bumped the edge of the table. The bowl went flying, crashing to the floor. Flour spilled and littered the air with a cloud of dust.

"Temper, temper."

The sexy drawl shivered its way down her spine. Jasmine whirled toward the door where Ares leaned indolently against the frame. Clad in black leather with silver gauntlets and a thick, gold chain, he looked the epitome of evil. And sex.

The word caught her off-guard and she tried to shake it off, but Ares tsked and the sound created new tingles in the pit of her stomach. She couldn't believe she was having such wicked thoughts about the god who was responsible for her husband's death.

"What are you doing here?" She finally found her voice.

"I came to see you." Ares strolled forward and with a sweep of his hand, cleaned the floor and restored the bowl.

"Don't," she snapped.

He lifted one eyebrow. "Don't what?"

“Don’t use your powers in my home. You shouldn’t be here. If Jared comes out and sees you, it’ll only upset him further.”

“You need to teach the boy some manners.”

Jasmine’s blood boiled. “Go to hell.”

Ares chuckled, a warm, husky sound. “Only if I can take you with me.” He came to stand behind her, lifting her hair away from the base of her neck.

Jasmine couldn’t move. She could barely breathe. “Stop touching me.”

“If I could do that, I wouldn’t be here.”

His words confused her. She tried to pull away, but his touch mesmerized. “Ares, please. I don’t want you here.

He pressed his lips to her skin and her knees bumped against the hard leg of the table. “From the moment I saw you, I wanted you.”

She wanted to say, she didn’t want him, but as his hands slid over her shoulders, she knew that for the lie that it was. Her anger dissipating, she drew in a long, steadying breath as he pulled her closer against his hard frame. Every nerve in her body tingled. Her senses on high alert, she prayed to an unseen deity for salvation. She couldn’t speak, could barely think.

“And you want me.” The deep tones swept over her, enfolding her in promises of sex and sin. “I would give you a night to remember, Jasmine.”

“How do you know my name?” she whispered.

“I make it my business to know everything about the women I want.”

Women. The word was like a pail of icy water in her face. Infuriated, Jasmine pulled back from him and staggered several steps away. She held up her hands to ward him off. “It’s nice to know, I’m one in a long line.”

“You’re upset because I have been with other women?” His lips curled into a smile. “I like jealousy.”

“You need to leave. Jared will be coming out any moment. He has chores. I don’t want him to see you here.”

Ares strolled toward the door and Jasmine’s heart sped up as he turned to face her. “If you need me, you know how to find me.”

His words told her Ares wasn’t going away anytime soon. She swallowed and looked back down at the bowl. Flour spilled over the edges of the pottery and when Jasmine lifted her head, the god was gone.

But her knees were still weak.

And her blood still hummed.

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Chapter Three

The heat of the night only intensified Jasmine's discomfort. She tossed her legs out from underneath the thin coverlet and tossed again on the tick straw bedding. Sweat drizzled down between her breasts, making the cotton shift cling to her skin.

Crickets chirped outside her bedroom window and frustration brought her to her knees. She peered out into the darkness, allowing the breeze to wash over her flushed face. A movement caught her eye and she squinted to get a better look at the shadowy figure approaching her house.

She didn't feel fear, though instincts told her she should. As she watched, her breaths came in short gasps as the cloak of night enveloped her visitor. She recognized the rasp of the leather and his scent...by the gods, his scent reached her.

"Come to me, Jasmine," the voice beckoned her, a sultry blend of passion and plea.

She couldn't move and as the wind sifted through her hair, she felt the first touch, just a gentle brush of fingers over her skin, gliding down her spine. She shivered and lowered her head to the wall. Her forehead bumped against the rough wood and her breath sloughed out of her lungs in a desperate bid for release.

She didn't hear a sound except for the whisper of skin on skin and when the warmth of a palm caressed her shin, the sheer audacity of the man's touch startled her. Yet, she didn't push him away. She bit her lower lip and clenched her hands into fists.

His lips began a tantalizing journey up her thigh and beneath the frilled hem of her shift. She tried to keep from moaning, but heat exploded in her abdomen and she whispered a word. Just one word. His name. "Ares."

Nimble fingers brushed over her mound and she arched her back. How long had it been since a man had touched her there?

"Open to me."

She followed the instruction without hesitation, widening the gap between her thighs. The tip of his index finger found her clit easily, the roughness contrasting sharply with the sensitive nub. She let out a long moan and flattened her palms against the wall.

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So long. So bloody long since such pleasures had been afforded her. She didn't want to waste a moment dwelling on the past. She would enjoy each touch, each whisper, and each sigh.

His index finger moved lower, sinking within the depths of her sheath and Jasmine pushed back against the pressure, whispering her approval. His thumb continued the assault on her clit and the blessed wonder of release drew near. She groaned and little pleas escaped her throat.

Then the fingers disappeared. Before she could protest, hands warmed her hips, tugging and turning her until she lay against the bedding once more. She couldn't see her lover's face, but she recognized those muscles, the heat of his palms imprinting her flesh. She closed her eyes and gave into the sensations as he trailed kisses over her abdomen, sliding her shift up as he moved down her body.

Her legs fell open as the heat of his mouth bathed her mound. She knew he would taste her there. She wanted it. She craved the slickness of his tongue sweeping over her clit and laving the insides of her sheath. Her hands bunched into the coverlet beneath her and she waited for that first sensual attack.

When he touched her, her body came alive. The shock of the intimate kiss, coupled with the anticipation of the moment, wrung a cry from the depths of her soul. She dug her heels into the bed and lifted her hips. His hands cupped her ass and held her closer, allowing him to leisurely stroke her quim.

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes," she moaned. "Like that. Right there."

She bucked against his face while his tongue swirled over her clit. His teeth nibbled the sensitive skin while he worked two fingers inside of her. The room filled with the sounds of her soft pants and when she came, she fragmented, screaming and clawing at the coverlet until sweat poured down her temple.

She knew the instant her lover left. She scrambled to her knees again to stare out the window, but she only saw blackness. He'd disappeared.

And she hoped like hell he would return.

* * *

"What was all the shouting about in your room last night?" Jared asked the next morning around a bite of porridge.

Jasmine flushed and busied her hands in the dishpan. "I don't remember. Maybe I was having a bad dream."

"Can't really blame you after seeing that Ares," the young boy groused. "He likes to push kids and women around." Suddenly, he shoved himself to his feet and stomped to the fire pit. "He doesn't know who he's dealing with. Daddy taught me how

to fight and I'll take his sword and..."

Jasmine whirled around. "Jared! That's enough! I don't want to hear another word out of your mouth. Now, go wash your face and hands and go do your chores."

Jared stood glowering at her for a long moment, long enough to make Jasmine think there was going to be trouble. Then, he spun on his heel and dashed out of the house, his heavy tread carrying him to the pump.

Jasmine watched him through the window over the long, wooden counter Hiram had built a few days before he went off to fight. He'd been so proud of it. She rubbed her hand against the grain before lifting her eyes.

Jared wasn't washing. He was practicing his jabs and thrusts, using a stick as an imaginary sword.

Jasmine felt a pain pierce her heart. She didn't know how she could convince her son to let go of the anger.

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"You're right, you know."

The silky voice over her shoulder had her spinning around. Jasmine clutched one hand against the collar of her dress and stared into eyes as black as coal. "Ares, what are you doing here? If Jared sees you, I'll never be able to get him to work."

He placed one finger against her lips and Jasmine resisted the urge to shiver. Vivid images forced her to recall the previous night and the feel of those fingers inside of her.

"Why do you shake when I touch you?" He made the question a demand for information.

As if he didn't know. "You came to me last night," she whispered.

She didn't believe the innocent look on his face for one second. "Did I?"

She pushed away from him, the soles of her tattered shoes slapping against the wooden floor. Since Hiram died, there hadn't been much money for new clothes. It was all she could do just to keep food on the table. "Please go away."

"Is that really what you want me to do?" He was behind her again. For such a big man, he moved with amazing grace and stealth. He lifted her thick hair away from her neck and Jasmine held her breath. Then his tongue touched the skin, tracing a path from her nape to the collar of her dress.

Jasmine moaned and her knees threatened to buckle. Ares held her upright with one arm wrapped around her waist. The tightness of the embrace enabled her to feel his hard sex pressed against her bottom.

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He nipped lightly at her ear. "Do you like when I touch you like this?"

She shouldn't. By the gods, she shouldn't like anything about this god, but his touch was magic. Intense feelings washed over her and she leaned back against him, rolling her head forward to give him better access to her neck.

"I'll take that as a yes," he chuckled.

The sound of thumping footsteps pulled Jasmine out of her trance and her head snapped back just in time for her son's arrival. "Jared, I..." She didn't know what to say.

Jared stared at her. "Why do you look so strange?"

"He can't see me," Ares noted in a sly voice.

Jasmine's shoulders sank with relief. "Never you mind. I didn't see you washing up out there."

A scowl darkened Jared's features. "That's cause I'm not going to do my chores."

Jasmine took two steps forward to meet the boy halfway. "You most certainly are, young man. Now, you march right back out to that pump and wash up like I told you to or there will be no playing with your friends after your chores are done. How would you like it if Billy and Waylan went fishing without you?"

Jared's features fell for a brief second before he regained his fire. "I don't care."

"Need my help?" Ares offered for her ears alone.

She gritted her teeth. "No, I most certainly do not."

Jared's lips puckered. "You don't what?"

She blew her hair out of her eyes. "Nothing. I'm not going to tell you again, Jared."

The little boy began backing toward the portion of the small shack that held his bed. "Good. Because I don't want to hear it." He ducked behind the curtain before Jasmine could respond.

Her mouth gaped open. Her son had never spoken to her in that manner before. Irritated and more disgusted than she had been in quite some time, she stormed outside into the early morning air.

Ares fell into step beside her. "He has more anger than he knows what to do with." For a brief second, Jasmine caught the spark of interest in his eyes and she stopped walking to poke him squarely in the chest with her index finger.

"Don't even think about it."

He raised one eyebrow and looked down at her finger. "Think about what?"

"My son will never be in one of your wars."

He wagged his finger. "Never say never, my darling."

“I will say never and I’m not your darling.”

“You need my help.”

Jasmine huffed out a sharp breath. “What I need, is for you to leave. I don’t want you here and I certainly won’t take help from the God of War.”

His brows lowered. “You say that like it’s a bad thing.” He cupped one side of her cheek. “But I can show you a world you’ve never seen, Jasmine. I can give you more power than you’ve ever imagined.”

She swallowed hard and stared into his enigmatic eyes. “What are you saying?”

“Don’t you want this unhappiness to end?”

Her heart began to thud faster. “Just spit it out, Ares. I don’t have time for this.” She swept a hand toward her house. “I have an errant son to deal with.”

“That’s my point. I can take away your son’s anger and bitterness, give you back the happy little boy you had before your husband’s unfortunate demise.”

Jasmine clamped her arms together under her breasts. “For what price?”

His black eyes raked up and down her body, a slow, leisurely journey that created a languorous heat at the center of her woman’s place. “One night...alone...with you. And,” he trailed one finger down the valley between her breasts, “I will make sure you never want for anything again.”

There had to be a catch. There was always a catch. You didn’t make a deal with the God of War without getting into trouble. Her father had taught her that. She swallowed hard.

Why didn’t the thought of one night with Ares repulse her? Perhaps, it was the wealth of muscles or that glowing, sun-kissed skin. Or most importantly, the memories of last night. His fingers. His tongue.

Jasmine bit back a moan as a rush of liquid pooled between her thighs. Even now, in the bright daylight, her temperature climbed. She pictured those fingers raking lightly over that sensitive spot between the slick channels of her flesh and her breaths came in short gasps.

“You know what I can do for you, Jasmine.” Ares voiced dipped to a seductive rasp. “You will experience the passion your body yearns for and in the end, your happiness will be secure.”

Would her conscience allow her to give her body to the man who ultimately caused her husband’s death? And would her son forgive her if he ever discovered the knowledge?

“Jared will never know.” Ares read her mind. “He will only have the warm and

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fuzzy memories of his father and you, my sweet,” he touched her lower lip with his thumb, “You will feel more in one night than you’ve felt in a lifetime.”

“Will you promise me that you will leave us alone after this?” Was she seriously considering his offer?

He inclined his head once and a dark lock of hair fell over his eye, adding to his rakish good looks. “But of course.”

“And you’ll take away my son’s anger today?”

His eyes flashed. “What assurance do I have that you won’t back out?”

Because her body wouldn’t allow it. She squared her shoulders. “I always keep my word. Besides, you’re a god. You could take what you wanted.”

His jaw clenched. “I am a God. I do not need to take a woman against her will.”

“But you need to make deals to get them into your bed?”

For a brief moment, Jasmine wondered if she’d pushed him too far. His hands clenched into fists and he didn’t speak. Then, his shoulders relaxed and he gave her a soothing smile. “Only one, my dear Jasmine. Only one.”

She drew in a deep breath and said the words that sealed her fate. “Then you have a deal.” She ran a hand down the side of her dress. “Should we shake on it?”

Ares gave her a wicked, sultry smile. “No shake.” He didn’t touch her, but Jasmine knew the exact moment when his power swept over her.

She gasped as invisible fingers lifted up the hem of her skirt to climb up the length of her leg. “By the gods, we’re in broad daylight.”

“We cannot be seen,” he assured her in a voice thick with suppressed desire.

The fingers began to probe gently at her linen undergarments and Jasmine closed her eyes. Swells of pleasure swept over her. If he could touch her like this standing such a distance away, she could only imagine what he could do to her when they were alone. And she fulfilled her end of the bargain.

Ares chuckled low. “No, you can’t imagine, my sweet Jasmine.”

She tried to turn away, but heat scorched her skin. Pressure built between her thighs. She couldn’t move while his thumb tormented her, rolling over her woman’s nub.

Their eyes met, locked, and her breaths came in short pants. “Ares, please,” she whispered.

“Oh, I will please you. That, I can promise. When the night is over, I will know every inch of your delectable body and every imaginable way to pleasure it.” His eyes narrowed and Jasmine’s knees almost buckled.

The strokes intensified and she clenched her hands into fists. She felt the invasion of his fingers sinking deep into her quim and she moaned aloud.

“Say my name,” he commanded.

She didn’t think of denying him. “Ares.”

“Now, give yourself to me. Cry my name as your sweet juice flows over my fingers.” His own breaths were now coming in hard gasps.

The orgasm broke over her and she reached for him. She clutched at his muscular arms as her knees gave way.

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Chapter Four

The gods were angry. Simply put, cavorting with the mortals wasn't allowed, but then, Ares had never been one to follow the rules. He lived his own life and damn the consequences.

"And there will be consequences," boomed a heavy voice from just over Ares' left shoulder.

The God of War didn't even stand to welcome his father into his abode. "Father, what brings you here or dare I ask?"

Zeus, long, white robes flowing around his whipcord lean body, strode forward, the heels of his boots clicking against the marble tile. "By Olympus, what do you think you're doing? We cannot interfere in the mortal's lives unless they ask for our assistance."

Ares gave him a sardonic grin and dropped his propped foot to the floor. "Jasmine did ask for my assistance. In a manner of speaking." He winked, pushed himself off the plush, red velvet chair and stretched.

The castle's stone walls prevented even the barest hint of moonlight from entering his domain, but Ares' internal alarm clock told him night was falling. Anticipation hummed through his veins. Tonight would be the night. His night. With Jasmine.

By the gods, she was an extraordinary beauty. With all that creamy skin and wealth of hair. Even now, he could feel it sliding through his fingers.

"Are you listening to me, boy?" Zeus barked.

"Truthfully, no. I tuned you out. Oh, don't look at me like that. I've done it many times before." Ares strolled toward a long wooden table laden with wine goblets and the very best of pastries and fruits. "Okay. I'll make a deal. I'll give you five minutes to rant and rave, but then you have to go."

Zeus' heavy brows lowered in a thunderous scowl. "You dare to mock me."

Ares lifted his hands away from his sides in a mock gesture of surrender. "What can I say? I'm the God of War. I get off on pissing people off."

Zeus came forward so suddenly, Ares had to jump back to avoid a collision.

“You cannot involve yourself in the lives of the mortals!” The roar resounded against the walls, reverberating all around them.

Ares grinned and tapped one finger against his father’s chest. “You know, if you weren’t immortal, I’d worry about your heart. Tantrums like this can’t be good for it.” He slicked his hair back with one hand and waved the other toward the door. It creaked open, finally allowing a splash of moonlight over the entranceway. “You’ll see yourself out, won’t you?”

With a low growl, Zeus waved a hand and disappeared in a flash of blue light and fury.

Ares sniffed. “Show-off.” But he didn’t have time to worry about his father. Tonight, Jasmine would be his.

As he walked down the long hallway toward the bedchamber he’d prepared, he considered allowing a moment of guilt to invade the pleasant excitement. Then, he immediately squelched the notion. He was a god and Jasmine should know better than to make a deal with an immortal...especially with him.

* * *

Nerves twisted her stomach, but Jasmine couldn’t stop walking. She’d made a deal and she would honor her word. Amazingly, Ares had already honored his.

Jared had changed, becoming the little boy she’d known before Hiram had died. Now off to spend the night with a friend, he’d spent the afternoon laughing with Jasmine and teasing her about how much time she was spending on her hair.

She’s brushed it one hundred times, long enough for the silky strands to glow in the light of the waning sun. And she’d taken an inordinate amount of time with what she wore. She didn’t own fancy clothes, but the creamy blue dress she wore hugged her waist and dipped low enough over her breasts to give her cleavage. She’d even seen a few stares from the menfolk in town as she walked by.

She hadn’t seen that in a long, long time.

Her sandals made small impressions in the sand as she passed the local tavern and made her way to the edge of town. To Ares’ castle.

He’d summoned her as the sun began to sink low. The note had been succinct. Come fulfill your promise.

Swallowing hard, she climbed up the stone steps leading to the great entrance. The heavy wooden doors loomed ahead and for a brief moment, her courage failed her. But then, she heard the rasp of the hinges.

Ares waited for her. Just beyond the threshold. She had no choice but to give

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him what he'd bargained for.

Ah, the sweet scent of victory.

Ares curled his hand around the wine goblet and brought the liquid to his lips. He could smell Jasmine's light, floral fragrance as she climbed the steps and if he were to open the world to his view with a simple sweep of his hand, he'd see her.

But he would wait. Anticipation was half the fun. He licked the tart taste of the wine from the corners of his mouth and with a spark from his eyes, lit the candelabras lining the walls. The soft glow of light spilled over the table, the floor, and down the narrow pathway leading to the chamber.

Ares didn't need to return to his room to recall the images awaiting him there. He'd taken his time, conjuring the perfect vision of seduction, a room where any woman would feel seduced by simply stepping over the threshold.

As the door creaked open, he got to his feet, carrying his goblet with him. He heard the light tapping of Jasmine's slippers and the punchy notes of her breaths. She was scared. Her fear was almost palpable.

"Don't be scared, Jasmine." Her quick inhalation made him smile. He walked toward her, one hand extended. "I will not harm you."

She gazed up at him, her beauty as perfect as the most exquisite of statutes. He'd traveled the world, but had never been so enraptured by one woman. His cock swelled, pushing against the crotch of his leather pants.

"You are safe here," he reminded her.

She swallowed and the delicate skin at the base of her throat drew his gaze. "How can I be safe when I'm about to give myself to a stranger and a god at that?"

Ares caught hold of several strands of her hair and brought them to his nose. "By day break, we will be strangers no more. I will know every inch of your body." He took a step toward her. "I will have tasted you as thoroughly as I have this wine." For emphasis, he took another sip of the fruity liquid. "Your essence will linger on my lips and tongue and I will fill you until you cry for more." He saw her shiver and a smile tugged at his lips. Placing the wine goblet on the table behind him, he began walking backwards. "Come with me."

She took a hesitant step forward. Then another. Her teeth nibbled her lower lip and with each footfall, her eyes held his.

"Think not of the future, my sweet Jasmine. Think only of this night and the pleasures we will award one another. Tonight, we will be as one."

* * *

His words washed over her in a sensual wave. Jasmine wished she could forget about tomorrow and concentrate on the night ahead. But it wasn't that simple for her. She had a son to think about and the memories this night would bring would last forever, long after she was little more than a passing thought to the God of War.

Still, she followed him down the great hall, her footsteps echoing over the solid, stone flooring. A gigantic, wooden door loomed ahead, with brass knockers shaped like a lion's head.

Ares stood there, waiting for her, one hand extended and suddenly, Jasmine realized night had fallen. The candles lining the walls gave an intimate glow to the hallway, shadows playing over the Greek God's sculpted features.

He was beyond magnificent. Every inch of his body was made in the image of perfection. And Jasmine refused to hate herself for wanting him. Dampness lingered between her thighs as she walked toward him and once her breasts pressed against his naked chest, her desires became a living, breathing entity, more potent than the wine Ares drank.

"Come. See what I have for you." The door creaked open and Ares tugged her inside the bedchamber.

Jasmine gasped, staring in awed disbelief. Ares had prepared for her arrival by setting a seductive tone. Lit candlesticks surrounded a downy mattress, which lay on the floor. The air smelled crisp and clean with just a slight hint of jasmine in the air. Ares' attempts to offer her romance enticed her.

He nuzzled her neck from behind. "Do you like it?"

"How could I not?" she whispered, tilting her head forward to give him full access to her skin. By the gods, the feel of his lips made her muscles clench.

His hands moved up her sides and around front to cup her breasts. "I want to see all of you, Jasmine." Without giving her a choice, he waved a hand and her dress fell to the floor. He moved to stand in front of her, his hands clenched at his sides.

She gasped and tried to cover her nudity but the heat of Ares' eyes stilled her hands. His gaze raked over her, blistering in its intensity. Her own eyes dropped to the thickening bulge pressing against his black leather pants. Her worries resurfaced. Ares had, undoubtedly, known many women. Would she be able to stand up to the competition? Could she please him?

"Do you even know how beautiful you are?"

She didn't know what to say. Her throat went dry. Ares hadn't moved. He simply stood there, taking in every inch of her. His eyes lingered on the triangle of hair

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covering her quim.

“Do you remember when I tasted you?”

Jasmine saw no reason to lie. “How could I forget?”

“My tongue craves your sweetness again.”

Any second now, she would fall, her knees giving way. “Ares, I don’t think...”

“Lie down on the bed for me, Jasmine. I want to savor every second of this night with you.”

As Jasmine followed his command, he knelt before her, running his palms over the sensitized skin of her thighs. “You taste like a sweet confection I’ve never had before. More pleasurable than the finest dessert.” His index finger followed the crease of her pussy while Jasmine laid back, eyes huge.

Her heart slammed repetitively against her ribcage. “Such talk is more heady than wine.”

He smiled down into her flushed face. “Before the night is through, you will be intoxicated by my touch.”

The God of War had mastered the art of seduction. “Touch me,” she instructed in a throaty voice. She couldn’t remember ever being so wanton, so needy, and she wouldn’t make excuses now. She wanted Ares. Desperately.

Pressing the long length of his body against hers, he lapped his tongue around one nipple. His leather vest chafed her skin and Jasmine pushed against the offending fabric. “Take it off.”

Ares responded to the command instantly, but he didn’t stop with the vest. And when he stood before her, proudly naked, the thickness of his cock jutting from a bed of coarse hair, Jasmine moaned aloud.

“Now, my sweet. Where were we?” He rejoined her on the bed, his hot mouth latching onto her nipple once more. He drew the taut peak into the moisture of his mouth while he palmed her abdomen. The tips of his fingers inched lower and lower until one press against her clit.

Jasmine jerked and gasped.

“Is that it?” Humor laced his voice.

She squirmed in response.

Ares began to move his finger rapidly, pumping her sensitive nub while he suckled her breasts in turn.

Jasmine bit into his shoulder and clutched at his biceps. The room began to swirl, becoming a kaleidoscope of colors. As she came, Ares inserted three fingers deep into her sheath, drawing out the spasms. She screamed and clutched at his wrist.

“Easy, easy,” he instructed, withdrawing only to slide down her body. The muscles in her abdomen clenched when his hot breath blew over her belly button. He laved the slight indentation with his tongue before traveling lower...and lower.

“Will you taste the same?” he asked in a husky voice rife with desire.

Jasmine quivered. She couldn’t find her voice. Instead, she dug her hands into the coverlet beneath her and held her breath. Until Ares kissed the lips of her quim. Then, she exhaled violently.

He made humming noises, indicating his pleasure as he swept his tongue back and forth over her sheath. Still, he held off from touching that most sensitive part of her, driving her mad with wanting. She shoved her hands in the thickness of his hair and jutted her hips upwards, a demanding move.

Ares’ laugh was full of wickedness. His thumbs gently parted her swollen flesh and he tipped his head back to look up at her. “What is it you want me to do exactly, Jasmine?”

“No,” she moaned. She couldn’t say it aloud. Surely, he didn’t expect her to say it aloud. But he didn’t move. He simply watched her as she laid there, her body exposed in the most elemental way. “Ares, please,” she finally relented.

“That’s all I want to do, my sweet. Please you.” His tongue traced a circle at the peak of her mound. “All I ask of you is a command. I will give you that which you crave.”

She bucked feverishly against his lips, silently compelling him to ease the ache between her legs. White-hot sparks whipped through her, electrifying her nerves. Wild sensations cascaded down her body until finally, she screamed out, “Touch me! Let me feel your tongue.” Her legs scissored on the coverlet.

Ares’ response was instant. He lapped at her juices like a cat licking the finest cream. With just the right amount of pressure, he teased her, tortured her, until her hands fisted in his silky, black hair.

Jasmine threw one leg over his shoulder and shoved her sheath closer to his face. “Yes, yes, yes,” she panted. “That’s it. Eat me.” She moaned loud and long as she came and her muscles quivered. Her heel dug into his back while she rode the waves of intense satisfaction. Sated and almost purring, she flung one arm over her eyes.

“Jasmine,” Ares’ guttural voice caused her to peek down, but only he was kneeling, rising over her, the glistening head of his cock beckoning her.

Shivers of anticipation darted down her spine. He was sheer perfection, a god unlike any other, and she would have him, would know what it felt like to feel his hard

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length invading her body. She lowered her hand to her pussy and dampened her fingertips with her own moisture. “Do you want to be inside me, Ares?” Feeling wanton and sexy, she brought the digits to her mouth and licked each one.

His eyes darkened and his breath whooshed out of his lungs. One knee depressed the mattress and his hands cupped the backs of her thighs. “You’re teasing the wrong man, wench.” He yanked the lower half of her body up off the makeshift bed, forcing the petals of her sheath against his cock. “Now, I will take what I crave.”

Did he know she craved it, too? Heat sliced through her and Jasmine held her breath in anticipation as Ares’ began to push into her wetness. She whispered his name as her pussy accepted every inch of his length. He rocked his hips forward and a scream burst from her throat.

His eyes closed and he grew still, holding her aloft. “I knew it would feel like this. As perfect as Ambrosia.”

Her feet pressed into the mattress. “Fuck me, Ares.”

The dark orbs feasted on her face once again. “I thought you’d never ask.”

The movement was slow at first, meant to tantalize and tease, but Jasmine began to pump her hips in time with his thrusts. Ares’ fingers dug into her flesh and he lowered his head to kiss her abdomen while he fucked her.

She felt him everywhere. The brush of his balls against her ass. The smooth silk of his cock stroking the walls of her sheath. The warmth of his lips against her belly button and the dance of his tongue inside that indentation. She was close to coming again, but she wanted more. She wanted to feel his body atop hers, pressing, pushing until their eyes met when she climaxed.

“Ares, please,” she whispered.

He raised his head. “Am I not already pleasing you?” His breaths came in short pants.

“I want you on top of me.”

He didn’t hesitate to obey. Shoving her against the blankets, he kept pace inside of her as he covered her. Jasmine hooked her legs around his hips, the soles of her feet against his ass.

“That’s it.” She rewarded him with a kiss, dragging his lips down to hers to taste her own wild essence. Her tongue swirled against his and Ares groaned against her lips. She clenched her pelvic muscles and he broke the kiss to curse.

“By the gods,” he muttered, lowering his hands to squeeze the globes of her ass. “I want to hear you scream again, Jasmine.” He began to pump harder.

She tightened her muscles again and watched his eyes glaze. Her hands wandered

everywhere, over his spine, his shoulders and up into the thickness of his hair. “You first,” she finally responded.

His head fell into the curve of her neck and he began to pump faster, making little noises of excitement. “Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.” The refrain became unrelenting and then he threw back his head and groaned while spasms rocked his body.

Jasmine squeezed her pussy tightly and milked him while he jerked atop her. Perspiration coated his skin and she touched her tongue to the saltiness. It had been a long time since she’d felt like this. Sexy. Alive. Wanted. She couldn’t hate Ares for bringing her back to life again.

Her lips nuzzled his cheek before traveling down to his jaw. He mumbled something unintelligible and turned to catch a kiss.

Jasmine’s eyes widened. “You’re hard again.”

He raised one eyebrow. “I’m a god.”

She thanked Zeus silently. “Yes, you are.”

* * *

Ares knew he would never tire of fucking her, but beyond that, he would never tire of hearing her voice, of tasting her, seeing her eyes come alive when he pushed into her. Like now. The way she caught her breath drove him wild and her teeth worrying her lower lip nearly sent him over the edge again, but he would wait. This night would last forever. He would make sure of it.

* * *

“I’m going to kill him,” Zeus raged. “He is your son.” He pointed a finger at his wife who only stared back at him with a bored expression on her haughty face. “I don’t know how he has managed to succeed where others have failed, but a god is not supposed to halt the sands of time!”

Hera glided across the marble floors of Mount Olympus, elegance in every move. “Zeus, my darling, calm yourself. Ares has always had a wild streak. Eventually, he will realize that it is unfathomable to spend all of eternity in bed with that...that mortal.” Her nose wrinkled on the last word. “Why he couldn’t find himself another god is beyond me.”

Zeus whipped around, rage exploding. “Will you listen to yourself? Ares has tampered with the laws of destiny and you’re worried about his choice of fucks for the evening.”

Her expression grew haughtier. “I’ve never cared for that language.” She inspected her nails. “And I wouldn’t imagine you would concern yourself with our son’s

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dalliances given you've been known to dally a time or two yourself."

Zeus winced. Hera never failed to remind him of his indiscretions, but he refused to take the bait this time. "We are discussing Ares. He cannot remain in bed indefinitely. One of us needs to talk to him."

Hera glided toward the Greek posts bordering her throne. "A task you can handle, I'm sure."

"I do not care to interrupt my son's sexual escapades."

She crossed her legs in a gesture Zeus recognized as boredom. The gods knew he'd seen it often enough in their bed chambers. And she blamed him for fucking around. The woman was as warm as the Aegean Sea in the middle of winter. "And I do not care to discuss this matter further. If you don't stop him, Ares will simply fuck the poor wench to death."

Zeus' eyes narrowed. "Or he will make her immortal."

That caught Hera's attention. She launched herself to her feet and flew through the air. "Impossible! I will not allow him to bring the trollop into our realm! She is not a god and does not deserve our abilities."

He smirked. "Then you will be the one to stop him, I gather."

With a low hiss, Hera disappeared.

* * *

Jasmine came again, forced to obey the dictates of her exhausted body. "Ares, wait," she moaned. Her heart beat slower. She needed sleep, restoration, but Ares was insatiable. With each climax, he wanted more. As promised, he'd learned every inch of her body and she'd enjoyed the passion he'd elicited within her. But his desire was unquenchable. She simply couldn't keep up. "I'm tired."

He raised his head, blinking without comprehension. "Tired?"

She pushed against his shoulders. "I'm not a god, Ares. I need sleep."

His eyes lit up. "Well, that is one problem I can solve." He leapt from the bed and spun to face her. "Are you ready, my love?"

Jasmine shrank back against the mattress. He looked dark and downright dangerous and with the wild gleam in his eyes, she was more than a little frightened. "What are you talking about? Ready for what? We've already done all the things I know to do." And a few things she'd hadn't.

Ares snapped his fingers and a silver chalice materialized in his hand. "I'm talking about something even better." He held the cup out to her. "Stay with me, Jasmine. One drink of this and you never have to leave. We can be like this together. Forever. And I do mean forever."

She stared at the chalice. “What are you saying?”

“He’s saying immortality, my dear,” came a cold voice from across the room.

“Mother!” Ares barked, quickly clothing himself.

Jasmine struggled to pull the coverlet up over her nudity. Pushing the tangled strands of her hair away from her face, she couldn’t take her eyes off the woman clad in a black, silk robe. Hera. The Queen of the Gods. How could one mistake her?

“Oh, do not be so alarmed, Ares. I gave birth to you. I have seen you naked.”

He glowered at her. “Several centuries can make a lot of difference, Mother. Now, what are you doing here?”

Hera brushed her hand down his hair. “I came to warn you, love. Your father is not amused with this latest stunt of yours.”

“Stunt?” Jasmine sat up straighter.

“It’s nothing,” Ares dismissed. “Why don’t you and I talk outside, Mother?” He took hold of Hera’s arm.

“No! I want to hear about this stunt.” Jasmine scrambled from the bed, wrapping the blanket around her like a toga.

Hera smirked and sent Jasmine a pitying look. “You mean you don’t know?” She tsked and shook her head. “For shame, Ares.” Then, with glee in her voice, she walked closer to where Jasmine stood. “You should consider yourself favored, Jasmine. It’s not every god who would be willing to stop time for a good fuck.”

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Chapter Five

Jasmine ran. She didn't stop until she reached the front door of her house. The door banged shut behind her and she slid down against the wood. Damn him! She should have known that Ares wouldn't settle for just one night. How long had he planned on keeping her there like some love slave?

"That was never my intention," Ares' deep voice made her head whip around. He materialized next to the window, arms folded, black hair awash in the sunlight. "You ran before I had a chance to explain."

She scrambled to her feet and swept past him, back held rigidly straight. "What's to explain? You had no intentions of allowing me to leave."

"Jasmine," his voice held a warning, which she didn't heed. "Damnit. Stop."

Her feet froze. She couldn't move, couldn't escape, but she could still fix him with a loathsome look. "Is this how you capture all your women, Ares? By forcibly bending their will?"

"I did not force you." His hot breath bathed her face as he spoke. "You wanted me as much as I wanted you."

"I slept with you because of a deal."

His hand fisted in her hair. "Like hell you did."

She wouldn't cry out, though he was tugging too hard. "So what now? We stand here for what's left of the day and battle one another?" She dropped her eyes. "It won't do any good, Ares. My son will be home any moment and..."

"Your son is perfectly safe...and perfectly happy."

She felt the change in the air the moment Ares' voice dipped a notch. Shivering, she wrapped her arms around her waist. At least, that much of her body could still move. He moved around behind her, so close she felt the whisper of his leather pants against the blanket she still wore. She'd ran so fast from Ares' castle she hadn't taken time to get dressed.

"Whatever you're thinking, don't. I fulfilled my end of the bargain and that's the end of it."

Ares chuckled and hooked two fingers in the top of the blanket. Though Jasmine

tried to hold on, he pulled it free. It pooled around her feet, leaving her naked and extremely hot.

The God of War came to stand in front of her and as his black eyes raked up and down her body, Jasmine could barely breathe. Would he touch her again?

His head shot up. "Is that what you want me to do?"

She shook her head almost violently. "No!"

He gave her a decidedly wicked smile. "Liar." His fingers tiptoed up her leg, moving over her thigh with maddening slowness. Jasmine closed her eyes and waited, anticipated. God, how she wanted to hate him for this, but even now, she quivered, wanton need pooling between her legs in the form of moisture.

With the speed of a lightning strike, Ares shoved his fingers deep inside her quim and Jasmine cried out, surprised and excited. "No, you don't want this," he taunted in her ear.

She couldn't stop the breathless moans or pleas escaping her lips as his thumb worried her clit and as the release broke over her, dragging her under, she succumbed willingly, clinging to his broad shoulders like the wanton sex slave he craved.

Ares quickly shed his clothes and stood before her, his cock hard and erect. "Taste me."

Jasmine couldn't take offense at the command for it was the very thing she wanted to do. She had yet to wrap her lips around his glistening sex, to roll her tongue over each throbbing vein.

"For the love of the gods, Jasmine, do it!" Ares roared.

She held her hands away from her body. "You'll have to release me, Ares."

He caught her around the waist, almost shoving her to her knees. "You're free."

Taking her sweet time, she skated her nails up the backs of his thighs while blowing, warm, soft puffs of air over his cock. She rubbed her cheek against it and then pressed a kiss against the hot flesh. Ares gripped her shoulders while the muscles of his ass clenched beneath her fingertips.

She licked him experimentally, rolling the salty texture of his juice over her tongue. Swirling, licking and grazing her way down to his balls. With each curse, Ares clenched his hands against her skin.

"Take me in your mouth."

"Not yet," she whispered, trailing her tongue down to his sac. He squirmed with every stroke and cried out when she suckled his tightly drawn balls.

Hips flexing, he framed her face with his hands and pulled her head up.

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“Jasmine, please. You’re killing me.”

Smiling, she licked her way back up his cock while he jerked. She hesitated over the head, lightly touching the tip of her tongue to the damp crease. His musky scent intoxicated her and she felt her own liquid run down her thigh. Rising up onto her knees again, she clamped her lips around his engorged cock.

Ares let out a shout of pure relief and snagged his hands full of her hair. “Yeah, that’s it. Suck me, baby. Suck me. Ah, that feels good. So good.”

Jasmine formed a suction cup with her lips and rode his cock up and down, faster and faster while the God of War pleaded and begged with her for release. Her hands alternated between tickling his balls and stroking his shaft.

“I’m coming,” Ares moaned. He yanked hard on her hair and staggered forward. Jasmine braced her hands behind her as the creamy liquid shot down her throat. She continued to suckle him until he sagged against her, his knees bumping her shoulders.

They both tumbled to the hard plank floor. Ares wasted no time in breathing. He palmed her breast and squeezed the soft flesh, drawing the nipple closer to his lips. “I want to fuck you again.”

She curled her hands around his wrist. “This solves nothing.”

His eyes darkened. “We don’t need a solution. There is no problem.”

She continued to hold him at bay. “I have a son.”

“And the two of you can live with me.”

Jasmine shot to a sitting position, causing Ares’ hands to drop away. “I can’t move in with you.”

Glowering, Ares rose up beside her. “You can and you will.”

“You can’t force your will on me, Ares.”

“I can, but I don’t want to.” His face grew taut with the challenge. He wouldn’t give her a choice. She read it in his eyes.

“What will the townspeople say?”

His hand returned to her breast. “Fuck them.” His lips nuzzled her nipple, tongue flicking the tight peak.

Jasmine’s chest grew tight as she climbed onto his lap. She couldn’t give him the rest of her life as he wanted, but she could give him this. Securing his cock with one hand, she guided it deep into her channel, watching Ares’ eyes widen as she took him all the way in.

“Mmmmm,” she moaned, lowering her head to his shoulder. “Now, shut up and fuck me. That’s what you wanted to do, isn’t it?”

He didn’t immediately move. “Jasmine, I’ve wanted you since the day I saw

you.”

“Wanting me isn’t enough,” she whispered.

His hips began to move, driving his cock deeper into her dripping quim. Their bodies created moist noises as Ares braced his hands against the floor, giving him more leverage.

“Tell me what you want,” he instructed with a low, guttural groan. “I need to know.”

She couldn’t think, but his words forced her to. She gripped his shoulders and leaned forward to push his cock against her clit. Rocking, she held him close against her breasts, needing to feel every inch of him. By the gods, how had she allowed herself to feel something for the God of War? He was a brutal, savage beast who thirsted for the blood of others. He reveled in wars and destruction and...her thoughts scattered as the orgasm ripped through her. She arched her back and let out a long wail.

Ares continued to pound into her, sweat beading on his brow. His chest muscles grew taut and he came on a series of grunts, wrapping his arms around her waist. Burying his head between her breasts, he drew in several, deep breaths. “I don’t want to lose you.”

The words struck the center of her heart. “You never had me, Ares. This wasn’t meant to be more than one night.”

He raised his head and focused his eyes on her face. “Then let’s make it more.”

Her heart pounded loudly in her ears. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying I want as much as you do.”

She tried to disengage herself from his body, but he held fast. “You can’t mean that.” Desperation had her framing his face with her hands. She kissed him, gently gliding her tongue across his teeth. His hold around her waist tightened.

One hand slid up her spine as Ares held her, cupping the back of her head. His tongue danced with hers, absorbing her fear, her frustration and finally, her protests. She raised her head and tears glistened in her eyes.

“I can’t move in with you, Ares. It wouldn’t work.”

Lifting her in his arms, he stood. He set her on her feet and jammed his hands on his hips. “We’ll make it work.”

“Both of us have to be willing. All we have between us is great sex.”

He yanked her closer, snatching her ass to hold her in place. “Bullshit. There’s something here between the two of us. Something more and you want to know as much about it as I do.”

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Jasmine shook her head almost violently and tried to pull away again. Ares refused to release her. She tried to peel his fingers away from her ass. "Listen to me, Ares. I have a son, responsibilities which you will never understand."

"And who do you think could give your son the very best of everything? I can take care of him and you, Jasmine."

"And train him to be a warrior?"

"It's better than being a pussy."

She recoiled as if he'd struck her. "My son isn't a pussy."

He lifted one eyebrow. "I didn't say he was, but you have to admit he needs a man around. Give him that chance to grow into the man I can make him."

"Since when did you become so generous?"

A long pause followed then, "You're carrying my child."

Jasmine gasped and pushed against his shoulders, desperately needing space. "What? You can't know that!"

He gripped her arms and gave her a little shake. "I do know that. I'm a god, remember?"

She stared at him, a mixture of horror and disbelief raging within. "You knew, didn't you? You knew I'd get pregnant."

He slid his knuckles along her jaw. "No. I hoped. I can't think of a better way to live my life than to raise a child with you. I promise that I'll spend the rest of my life showing you my better side. You'll never want for love, Jasmine."

"Jared will never understand."

He drew her into his embrace again. "Yes, he will. Everything will be fine. I promise."

* * *

Ares watched Jasmine tussling with Jared on the fresh, green grass and he felt a burst of pride unlike anything he'd felt before. Almost smirking, he settled back against the warm ground and tucked his hands behind his head. And Jasmine thought it wouldn't work out. He'd proven her wrong.

Jasmine raised her head and threw him a wink. She wagged her fingers before returning to the game with her son.

He closed his eyes and continued to smile. The last three months had been glorious and even though the warlords were bitching at the lack of battles, Ares couldn't complain. He'd spent all those days with Jasmine. Loving her. Teaching her.

And making her immortal.

Life didn't get any better than this and he couldn't imagine it could get any

worse...unless she discovered the truth behind his little white lie.

His shoulders relaxed. But he'd deal with that another day. For now, his life was perfect.

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BIO

Rachel is the published author of contemporary, fantasy and paranormal romances with small yet vibrant presses. She works full-time as a paralegal and is also the editor for Vintage Romance Publishing, a publisher dedicated to nostalgic romances.

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