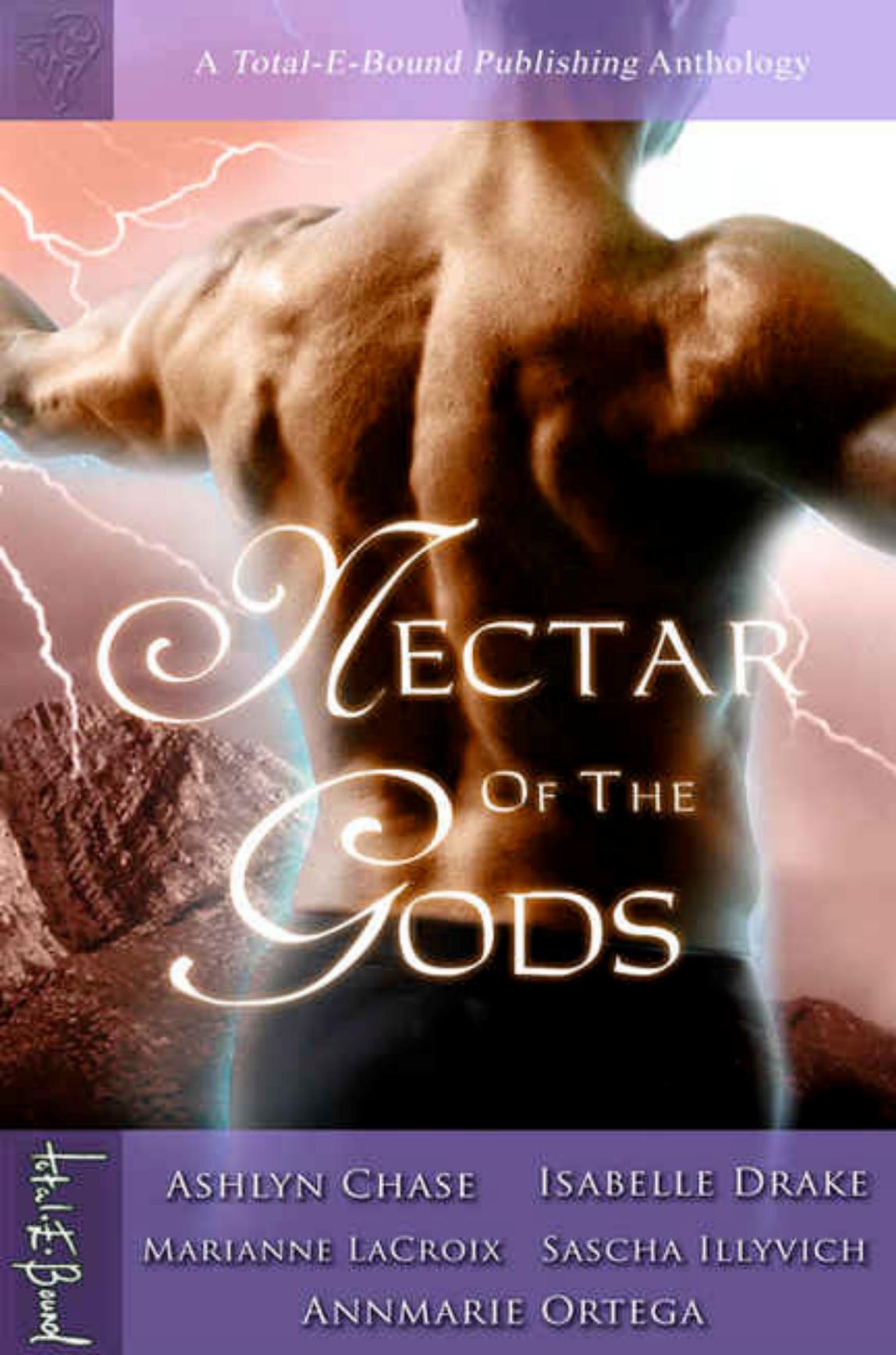




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NECTAR  
OF THE  
GODS

ASHLYN CHASE      ISABELLE DRAKE

MARIANNE LACROIX      SASCHA ILLYVICH

ANNMARIE ORTEGA

Total-E-Bound

Nectar of the Gods  
by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

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Nectar of the Gods Anthology

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**Warning:** This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

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by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

## NECTAR OF THE GODS

### ANTHOLOGY

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\* \* \* \*

Warrior Lover

Marianne LaCroix

Oh My God

Ashlyn Chase

Fate Unbound

Isabelle Drake

Apollo's Choice

Sascha Illyvich

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## Possessing Poseidon

Annmarie Ortega

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Nectar of the Gods  
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## WARRIOR LOVER

Marianne LaCroix

\* \* \* \*



\* \* \* \*

## **Dedication**

For the brave heroes who had taken part in the D-Day  
invasion, June 6, 1944.

### Trademarks Acknowledgement

*The author acknowledges the trademarked status and  
trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in  
this work of fiction:*

BBC: The British Broadcasting Corporation

Red Cross: The National Red Cross

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## **Author Note**

The portrayal of D-Day in this novella is based on fact found in various sources from research. Before the troops landed upon the beaches of Normandy, soldiers parachuted into occupied France during the early morning hours to cut-off German supply lines, disrupt communication and secure crucial transportation arteries. The French Résistance members were ready to act upon a moment's notice for the opportunity to fight for freedom and assist the Allied soldiers in the invasion. And interestingly enough, many of the Résistance fighters were women. The mission to destroy Toussaint Bridge is fictional, but has basis in real events that shaped the historic day of June 6, 1944.

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## Prologue

"Oh, yes! Yes! Fuck me, Ares. Fuck me hard!" Aphrodite cried out as he plunged his cock deep into her cunt.

Ares pumped into her wet core, lost in the moment of sexual haze. 'Dite inspired the humans into love and sexual conquests, but her powers affected him little compared to the sight of her on a massive bed with her legs spread wide. The goddess crumbled into a willing woman, wet and ready for the taking, and Ares was more than willing to fuck her into oblivion.

No attachments. No commitments. Just fucking. He needed sexual release just as much as the next god, but he hated the strings of a relationship. Who had the time to worry about pleasing a woman beyond the bedroom? Certainly not Ares. All he wanted was a good fuck in between his human playtime—war.

War threatened any moment in the human world. The Trojans were about to engage in a final battle with the Greeks. Just before bloodshed upon the battlefield, Ares felt the urge to fuck. He needed the release, and when 'Dite had summoned him to her chamber, Ares knew it wouldn't take much before she'd offer her body for his use.

As he moved in and out of her folds, she panted and arched against his ramming cock. She moaned and whimpered with each thrust. He had no gentleness within his soul, and that included sex. Who needed foreplay when there was serious fucking to be done? Ares wasn't about foreplay.

Foreplay was for lovers. He was *not* a lover. He was a fighter, a man who loved the call of battle, the thrill of the fight.

'Dite clenched about his cock and screamed her release. The squeezing sent him over the edge, and his control broke. He spilled streams of hot semen into her. Her breasts bounced against his chest, and her nipples rubbed along his skin as her hands gripped his shoulders. She tightened her thighs about his waist and held onto him as he pumped his last ounce of strength deep into her core.

Once the climax began to ebb, 'Dite stilled and loosened her grip. Ares was too dazed by his own orgasm to notice her gaze fixed beyond his head. It was her softly whispered voice that snapped him back to reality.

"Hephy." Her voice caught as she lowered her hands from Ares.

Ares froze. "What?"

Aphrodite turned to gaze at Ares, her eyes full of fear.

Then a golden net forged with magic ensnared the immortal lovers in mid-embrace.

Ares eased off 'Dite and rolled to her side, the golden mesh allowing little movement. There at the bedside stood Hephaestus, 'Dite's husband.

"Hephy, I can explain," 'Dite said in a frantic voice.

"Explain what? I think it is clear what's going on." Hephaestus scowled, fire lighting the god's eyes.

"I thought you said you and Heph were not together." Ares watched the fire god pace the room, trying to calm his enflamed temper.

"Well, he wasn't with me at the time..." she lamely began.

"I can't trust you, 'Dite! I go to follow Zeus's bidding, and in the mean time, you fuck Ares." Hephaestus clenched his fists at his side.

"I'm the goddess of love. I can't help myself. I have to have sex." 'Dite was struggling to justify her infidelity. It couldn't be easy for the goddess, gifted with ruling over love and sex. She was insatiable, and in turn, not loyal to her husband.

Despite this knowledge, Ares grew angry with her lying. "I would never have come if I had known she lied just to get me between her legs," he said to Heph. "She lied to me and deceived you. Sorry Heph."

Hephaestus nodded sadly. "She's a temptress, the goddess of seduction. None are immune to her desires."

"And I desire you, my husband. I love you with all my being. All my heart. If only you hadn't been away from my bed for so long." Her voice turned whiny as she turned on the tears.

Ares knew too well that this was an act. 'Dite didn't love just one man. Not one god for that matter. She was not loyal, not devoted to anyone but herself.

However, Heph didn't seem to realise this yet. His eyes softened at her crying and pleading to forgive her.

"I love you. Please, release us. Come to me. Let me love you," she cried.

Hephaestus relented and unfastened the golden net. Ares slipped quickly from the bed as 'Dite tempted her husband to forgive her. She rained kisses over his face, and he held her

tightly, drinking in the sweetness Ares had sampled only moments before.

As Ares stepped towards the door, he turned back one last time. Heph was too quick to forgive her. If it was any other goddess ... Artemis or Athena ... perhaps her words would weigh more than mere empty promises. But Aphrodite was different. He was sure 'Dite would take a new lover to bed the next time Hephy's back was turned.

She used her husband for convenience. She used Ares for sex.

While sex was all he asked for in their encounter, somehow her vicious lies cut him. She was not to be trusted.

"What the hell am I doing?" he asked himself as he strode from her palace on Mount Olympus towards his awaiting chariot. "I am the god of war, not of love and sex." He didn't need love to survive, he needed the fight—blood, battle and victory.

He needed to get back to business. He'd fucked 'Dite. He was done with her. She'd served her purpose. He had more important things to tend to. There was a war to enjoy.

From now on Ares would concentrate on his specialty, his purpose of creation. As long as the humans roamed the earth, there would be war. It was inevitable. With free will, as his father Zeus decreed it, came disagreements and anger. Those were the building blocks to war, and Ares loved it.

"After all, a god of war should love his *job*."

The fresh call of battle screamed in his ears—Trojans crying in alarm as an army piled out of a giant wooden horse. Ares jumped into his awaiting chariot, his mighty horses

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whinnying in excitement. The smell of blood stinging the air about him, and they sensed the coming battle.

He smacked his horses with the reins and cried, "To Troy!"

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## Chapter One

*"Les sanglots longs des violons, l'automne blessent mon coeur d'une langueur montone."*

Belle listened to the radio message with quiet excitement. This was the message they had waited for.

*"Répét. Les sanglots longs des violons, l'automne blessent mon coeur d'une langueur montone."* The long sobbing violins of autumn hurt my heart with a monotonous languor.

The members of the small group of French mercenaries flipped off the *Résistance* radio program and began to gather up their supplies. This was the night they had worked for, dreamed of, prayed to God to come. The Allied invasion was here at last.

"Belle, be careful," her brother warned with a worried tone.

"What? Fear? Now? No, *mon chou*. This is no time for fear. This is our hour of freedom." She picked up her M1 rifle and checked her rounds.

"I know. I just hate that this happened, that you were forced to take up a gun instead of marrying a nice man."

"I feel more comfortable holding a rifle than a baby." She clicked her ammunition into the rifle and swung the leather strap over her shoulder. "I wasn't ready for that life."

It was true. Belle had no desire to tie herself down to the life as wife. At least not yet.

At seventeen, the war had invaded her backyard, the Germans marching through the country, taking everything for

their own. It was hell living in France with Hitler's S.S. running things from Paris. Leaving the house had become dangerous, and travelling to the next province over was out of the question. Having seen her parents killed before her eyes when the Germans demanded to know where a rumoured fortune in gold was kept, Belle vowed to fight this battle the best way she knew how.

There was no gold in their village. Her *mère* and *père* died for nothing. Apparently, the Nazis were ill-informed, and they left her and her brother, Jean-Luis, without parents. No apology. No compensation.

They had left a young girl tenacious enough to see the invaders pay for their crimes against her family and all the families of France.

She was unable to join the fight directly on the front line, but quickly decided to thwart the German army in a more subtle, yet crucial, manner. She joined the underground of loyal men and women determined to hurt the enemy in any and every way possible.

Within a few weeks, Belle was taught the basics of bomb building and the best locations to place explosives for maximum effect. She became so good at destroying bridges and railways, she'd been sent to head up this division of men awaiting the order for the invasion.

Now, four years later, the Allied Forces were about to attack in a huge wave of weaponry and manpower that would surely defeat the invaders. She would get her revenge and win freedom once again. *Vive la France!*

"Belle, the British Allies should be flying overhead within the hour. Want to wait by the signal light while we set up the dynamite?"

Their mission was to blow up a supply train filled with ammunition and guns. Destroying the train would put a major kink in the German defensive located near the beaches where the Allied Forces would begin their landing.

"Everything has to pop when the two a.m. train arrives," he continued.

"We also have to cut those telegraph lines," she added, stuffing a spare clip of ammunition into a garter belt on her left thigh. They had to make sure no messages—warnings or orders to and from the S.S. Headquarters in Paris—made it through. No communication meant disorganisation.

"We'll take care of that," piped in Jacques. He stood with his younger sister, Elise, each carrying a hand axe and a rifle.

"Good. I'll watch for the British." A squad of soldiers was to arrive. Their mission was to help the *Résistance* in cutting off the German troops at the beaches from their superiors inland. In addition, they were to make sure the Germans did not rebuild the railway bridge. For what they had planned, nothing would be rebuilt for days.

Climbing out of their crude underground bunker, Belle was met with darkness. She nodded at Jean-Luis and headed off for the planned drop zone.

The area the British Allies were to parachute into was a small clearing off the woods approximately two miles from the Nazi lookout post and checkpoint.

As she ran quietly through the dense woodland, Belle went over the plans silently within her mind. While she led the British to the bridge and checkpoint, Jacques and his sister, Elise, would take care of cutting off communications via telegraph lines. If all went as planned, the train filled with ammunition would be derailed and in the bottom of the river by two a.m. The bridge, a major artery, would also be obliterated. If the intelligence was correct, the train carried tons of explosives. When their charges were ignited, it would set in motion a chain reaction of destruction. It would be a significant blow to the German forces.

Arriving at the edge of the drop zone, she uncovered a hidden lamp to signal the gliders above. This would help the paratroopers to zero in on their target.

Fifteen minutes went by, and the skies remained clear.

Then she saw the first shadow above. She lit the lamp and gave the signal.

Her nerves were on edge, her breathing erratic. She was so excited, she wanted to scream with joy, "The Allies are here!" but she fought to remain calm. This was the moment she'd prayed for since the day her parents were killed.

The first parachutes came into view. Four parachutists jumped from the low gliding craft, silent in the night. She put out the lamp and hid it again in a nearby hollow tree stump. Covering it with branches, her hands shook. A certain amount of fear welled within her soul, and she had to beat it down. This was no time for cowardice.

She ducked into the trees as the paratroopers touched ground. In silence, they gathered their chutes and bolted for the trees.

As one passed her, she reached out for his arm.

He pulled a knife in a flash, and she gasped.

Then she saw his face.

It was the face of a god, and she felt her body respond fiercely. Dressed in green fatigues, helmet, belt filled with ammunition, grenades, and other supplies, this man appeared well fit for the role of soldier. He was commanding in stature with broad shoulders and a powerful energy seeping from his body. She was drawn to that essence and had to shake herself to break from its invisible grip.

*"Mademoiselle? Parlez vous Anglais?"* he asked, his sea green eyes sparkling in the faint moonlight.

*"Oui. Come with me,"* she stammered and turned from his gaze. Did his face have to be so appealing even when covered in dirt and grease? Grasping her rifle, she motioned for him to follow.

"Wait, all my men—" He looked back, and three other soldiers approached from the darkness.

"Follow me. We have a short walk to the bridge." She watched the handsome British officer, wondering why he seemed so different. He had a certain aura about him that was out of the ordinary. Even his accent seemed ... different.

Her eyes quickly scanned his form, settling on his crotch. It was bulging. A hard on? Here? Now?

He cleared his throat, and she blushed. She was caught ogling this man's groin.

"Shall we go?" he asked.

"*Oui, oui.*" Before she said anything more, Belle bolted off into the woods towards the bridge. She didn't turn to see if the men followed. The sounds of footfalls and bodies brushing past low branches told her they did.

What was she doing staring at a strange man's crotch? She was Belle, leader of a *Résistance* unit, well-respected and trusted. She did not get excited over a bulge. At least, she'd never let a handsome face make her insides turn into tapioca. His strong virility pulled at her insides, sending her body into a hormonal overdrive. She needed to concentrate on the mission. The battle. The victory.

The soldiers kept pace with her until they arrived nearby the bridge. They gathered on the edge of the woods across from the south end. Approximately a quarter mile long over the Merderet River, the bridge was a challenging target for the small band of *Résistance* fighters, which was why the British Allies were dropped in as additional help.

"There it is, Toussaint Bridge. My men are digging charges there," she whispered, pointing out Jean-Luis from a distance. Even dressed in black, she could spot him easily. It helped that she had mapped the area down to the last pebble, and she knew exactly where to dig in explosives.

"Marshall, Jackson, Jones ... go assist." The handsome soldier waved to his comrades. They nodded then crept towards the bridge.

"I can't tell you how we looked forward to this night," she said. Belle was unsure what to say. His body radiated appeal,

drawing her. *Merde*, this was no time for her panties to get drenched from want.

He watched her face intently. She shivered despite the warm night.

"I'm Lieutenant Colonel A. Reese. You may call me Ares. Everyone does."

"Like the Greek god?"

He chuckled.

She squeezed her thighs together tightly. The sound of his laugh sent a tingling awareness rushing through her, pooling at the apex of her legs. She was unused to having such a reaction to a man. And on a night like this, the night the tides of war were to shift, she was fighting with her own sexual arousal.

"Ares was the god of war. I have a talent for fighting. The name just fit."

Watching his full lips move as he talked was strangely erotic. She wondered what those lips would feel like kissing her skin.

Glancing back to the bridge, she closed her eyes and inhaled slowly. *Calm yourself, Belle. This is not the time to give into your body's demands.*

"Where is the check point? We may have to take care of a few Germans before the train gets here. Or do a bit of diversion."

Good, talk about the war. That would help her jumping heart. "Just up the tracks about a mile from here. The guards do routine patrols every half an hour." She checked her watch. "They are due for the next round in ten minutes."

"And the plan?"

"Eliminate before any suspicion is reported."

"And the telegraph lines?"

"They will be cut as the train is about to cross the bridge."

"And that is how long?"

"Twenty minutes."

"Good." He paused and leaned in. His gaze pinned her with its intensity. "*Mademoiselle*, you are unique. If this wasn't a mission, I'd ask you out to the movies for a Saturday evening."

Her cheeks burned pink, and she was glad the darkness shadowed her blush.

"And your name is?" he asked in a low voice.

"Belle."

"Suits you, Belle." Her name rolled off his tongue like an endearment.

And she loved hearing him say it.

\* \* \* \*

Ares was not himself tonight. Not since he landed in France and set eyes upon the *Résistance* leader. She'd struck him with her dark brown eyes, and he was speechless. He—Ares, great god of war—was unable to control his body's reaction to her.

How long had it been since he'd felt a woman's soft flesh beneath his? Had it really been several centuries since that day when he'd vowed to never touch a woman again? He had urges just like any other god, but his lust for battle usually trampled any whispers of desire. But now, even in the midst

of war—the turning point of the entire campaign—he wanted to escape with this incredible woman to his private retreat. Sexual pleasure between her legs would be more momentous than impending bloodshed.

He watched her skirt through the woods before him, as though she'd been taught by his sister, Athena. She was quick as a rabbit, silent and sure. Following behind her, he kept pace with her as she led him to the German checkpoint.

They needed to cause some sort of diversion, and she said she had a plan. He was sure he wasn't going to like it when she stopped and unbuttoned her blouse. Exposing more skin made him hunger for her more desperately.

"What are you about to do?" he asked, gazing at the creamy breasts that spilled from the edge of a lacy bra. His mouth watered.

"The guard here has made several indications in the past of wanting me. Tonight, I will give in."

"Oh, hell no!"

"What?"

"I'm not going to let you do it." He was jealous with anger. No man could touch her. He'd already staked a claim from the moment he'd seen her.

"You, Lieutenant, have no say in it. I know what I am doing. Do you honestly think I haven't been raped by the likes of the enemy?"

"This won't be rape if you offer."

"My body is numb to the likes of the Nazis."

He paused. *She'd been raped*. Looking at her face, written with strength and determination, he realised there was much

more to her courage than patriotism. "You've been hurt by them before, haven't you?" he asked tenderly, a hand reaching for her face. He was taken aback by the warmth of her skin beneath his fingers. It had been so long since he'd tasted a woman and much too long since he'd kissed willing lips.

"My family was killed when the Germans marched into France. My parents were slaughtered before my eyes, then..." A tear welled in her eye, and he brushed it away with his thumb when it fell.

"I can't let them hurt you, darling."

She checked her watch. "With only ten minutes until the train crosses the bridge, there will hardly be time for him to do anything to me."

He thought on it for a moment. He hated the idea.

"I don't have time to argue with you, *monsieur*." She set her rifle in the bushes and turned to head on to the guardhouse.

He grasped her arm and was shocked by the contact. His body was on fire for her. "I'll be watching. Any sign of that Nazi hurting you, I come in and gut him like a fish."

She smirked. Then she trotted out of the woods, leaving Ares behind with a rock hard cock and a rage burning to let loose upon the world. Ten minutes, and if that guard so much as brushed her skin with his hand, he'd show his true powers.

"Ares, do you really think this is the right time and place for such emotions?"

He didn't have to turn to know it was his former lover. "'Dite, I don't see how this concerns you."

"Ares, my love, you were my greatest lover. When you swore off women, I never thought you could do it. And here you are, about to take part in a human war ... again ... and have fucking a mortal on the brain." She paused and stepped next to him. "And a very plain mortal at that."

He glanced over at Aphrodite's shiny blonde hair and her sheer gown made of golden silk, shimmering in the night like the goddess of love. She had a face that could bring a man to his knees, and many had done just that, including Ares. But now, a pair of dark eyes and a courageous soul filled his mind with lust and something else ... something tender.

"Could it be that the god of war is falling in love with a mortal?" Aphrodite voiced the thought that caught within his throat.

"I don't love anyone. The emotion has no meaning to me." He turned his eyes back to Belle approaching the railroad checkpoint and the appearance of the guard stopping her. Ares clinched his fists with silent rage.

Aphrodite laughed. She moved and her gown tinkled like small bells as it brushed seductively against her naked form beneath the gossamer dress. "Ares, dear, you're besotted. When a god of your power falls in love, I know it. I sense it. I'm drawn to it."

The guard talked with Belle, and Ares watched as he touched her hair, pulling the clip from the back of her head, letting the black tresses fall about her shoulders.

Aphrodite chuckled softly. "See him caress her hair. How do you feel about some other man touching her so intimately?"

His anger charged his powers. His own fury fuelled the magic he held tucked beneath his mortal appearance. "I want to blow his brains out," he growled, aware his skin began to glow with his godly aura. The rifle he held was a child's toy compared to the destruction he could do with a simple wave of his hand.

"Take her, Ares. You've waited long enough. She has the courage of a warrior, fit for a god. Don't let that man bruise her skin—or her soul."

The soldier escorted Belle inside the guardhouse, and Ares was set to explode.

\* \* \* \*

"*Fräulein*, you're not permitted to be out about walking at this time of night," the guard said, stopping her as she approached the checkpoint. His German accent and broken French fractured her native language with a guttural enunciation.

"*Oui*, I know. But I have been thinking about you, Luther." She'd been approached by this guard before. She had taken great pains into setting up this seduction for months, tempting him with a smile and a flash of leg. After which, she would promptly find a patch of grass and vomit.

He reached up and pulled the clip from her hair. "It's been a long time since I first saw you, *Fräulein*. I've wanted to taste you for months."

She suppressed her nausea as she smiled. "And I've wanted you too, Luther." Then she added with a breathy voice, "I need to be handled ... desperately."

"I want to fuck you." His hand wrapped about her hip, and he pulled her closer. "I want to fuck your tight little pussy while you come around me."

His vulgarity was not unexpected, yet it made her insides lurch with dread. It took all her strength not to turn and bolt back to the woods—and into the arms of the lieutenant.

What was it about the lieutenant that made her want to clutch to him? Within moments of their meeting, she'd felt a connection to the British officer that was not only unexpected but unexplainable. His eyes called to her, filled with pain and humour, an odd combination here at the front. Why of all days of the war did he have to arrive tonight? An overwhelming need to have him kiss her ate upon her soul. For the first time in years, she wanted to escape from the daily fight for a few moments of pleasure.

A moan escaped her lips at the images of the lieutenant suckling her breast and kissing her into oblivion.

"I knew you were a lusty woman. You want Luther to eat your cream." The guard misunderstood her moan, but no matter. The diversion was working, and he led her into the small guardhouse.

Sex was never for fun or pleasure for her. Raped years ago, she harboured painful memories of the act. The concept of letting this animal have her made her sick. Yet, her body was alive with dreams of gentle caresses by the British officer. Perhaps if she thought it was he who now tugged at her blouse, she could endure the next few moments.

"Let Luther see those breasts. My mouth waters to taste your buds."

She moaned, closing her eyes. "Don't talk. Just fuck me." She pictured the lieutenant within her mind, surrendering to him not the Nazi before her.

He pulled forcefully upon her clothes, and she let him. She could endure.

The German took her nipple into his mouth, sucking rough and hard. Pain shot through her body. Was it truly supposed to be like this? Ares would never hurt her. This man would. They were two different men. There was no pretending. No dream lover could save her body from the coming assault.

When he shoved her down upon a desk, she changed her mind. This was a mistake.

Just then, the door crashed open, and the guard was lifted off her body in one mighty heave of strength.

She opened her eyes to see the lieutenant plunge a knife into the guard's abdomen and his bleeding body slipping to the floor.

Numb, she lay there staring at Ares as he turned to her, her clothes ripped from her body, bared before him.

"That is not the behaviour of an honourable soldier," he said.

The room began to fade about her into a mist, rainbows of colours swirling about his body. He stepped to her and lifted her from the desk. The trauma of the past moments fled from her mind as the rough feel of his clothes against her bare skin burned into her.

"What's happening?" she asked with a croak.

"I'm taking you from here. I can't bear to have you used or hurt."

She glanced about her and saw the inside of the room had disappeared. Columns were lined up in rows forming a faint outline of a place carpeted with sparkling clouds.

Simple pieces furnished this heaven, gold-leaf wood with white fabric draped over comfy-looking cushions. A grand chair, or throne as it was so large, sat alone on one end of the room before a pool filled with crystal clear water with lotus flowers floating on the surface. A four-poster bed stood nearby, large enough for a king and several others to sleep in complete comfort. Gauzy curtains encircled the bed in an ethereal flow, and gold trimmed pillows were piled upon it in a large mound, inviting and enticing. The comforter was like a cloud captured and sewn into a dreamy covering.

"What is going on?" Was she going insane? Had she just died at the hands of the German, and this was her angel taking her to heaven?

He held her close, his scent of masculine arousal filling her nostrils. It was spicy and alluring. Never had she smelled this scent before.

This was when she noticed the glow about his skin. She gingerly touched his face, and he stopped, his eyes melting her under their heated gaze.

"You are now *mine*, Belle."

Without another word, he kissed her.

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## Chapter Two

His mind had snapped. Knowing she'd dreamed of him while that guard touched her was too much. Sometimes, being a god with special powers was a curse. He couldn't take her thinking it was him kissing her nipples while another used her. Ares wouldn't stand for any of it. He'd sped to her side and killed the human touching *his* woman.

Was 'Dite right? Had Ares, the great warrior and god of war, fallen in love with a mortal?

No, he did not fall in love. Lust, definitely. Affection, maybe, but not love. A warrior did not feel such tenderness.

Gazing down upon the woman in his arms, his heart jumped. It had to be affection, nothing more.

Her lips were pink, moist and full, and her eyes were dark brown drops of chocolate, tempting him to taste her sweetness. Before he realised his actions, he kissed her again.

Feminine laughter was heard in the distance as his mind exploded in the tenderness. Sensuous and appetising, he feasted upon the woman within his arms. It was unfair to rip her from her world to bring her here to his private retreat on Mount Olympus, but he had to protect her. Her body moulded to his, her heat radiated through his clothes. She was alluring, and he needed her.

He wanted her. For the first time in eons, Ares needed a woman. Not just any woman, *this* woman, this mortal.

Her fingers threaded through his hair, and their kiss deepened. He was painfully aware of her nakedness against his body, and his fingers dug into her, pulling her even closer.

"You're mine," he whispered again against her lips, and she groaned in surrender.

"*Mon chere*, make love to me." Breathless, she wriggled in his arms.

He floated across the room to his bed and placed her upon its soft surface.

The tinkle of Aphrodite laughing brought him back to reality.

"No," he said, leaving Belle upon the bed. Stepping away, he watched her. She was confused and her half-lidded eyes were heavy with desire. He could smell her juices flowing from her slit, beckoning to him. "I'm supposed to be on earth, taking part in the battle." He tried to convince himself of his duty.

"Who are you?" she asked, scooping up the downy coverlet and wrapping it about her body.

"I'm more than a mere man, Belle." He sighed, then added, "I'm the god of war, Ares."

She lay back on the heavenly bed, looking at him. Before her eyes, he changed. He went from the grizzled soldier set for battle to an immaculately groomed man, well-oiled and godly.

Light shone behind him like a halo, his dark hair gleaming and his skin toned and tanned. His full lips were drawn in a serious line.

She was going insane.

"No, you're not," he said, approaching her. His chest was perfectly clean of hair, and her fingers itched to touch its smooth surface.

"I must be, or I'm dead. Things like this don't happen. It's impossible."

He sat upon the bed, and the mattress gave under his weight. "I assure you, you aren't dead, nor are you losing your grip on reality."

"Then how is this happening? I just don't understand how and why this is happening."

"As a god of war, when the humans go to battle, I am there. It calls to me like a flower in spring attracts the nectar gathering honeybee. War and battle sustain me. It's what I was created for. Father and Mother knew my purpose the day I was born."

"And your parents would be...?" She almost hated hearing his answer.

"Zeus and Hera. I am the son of Zeus."

"Of course you are." He was insane.

"I'm not crazy, Belle."

She paused. "Can you read my mind?"

Smiling, he nodded. "Sometimes. Usually I hear thoughts better when it pertains to battle, hatred or fear." He paused, then said, "You're afraid right now, which is understandable"

"But if you are Ares, a Greek god, what were you doing with the Allies?"

"I disapprove of the Nazis. They torture for no cause. Their leader is truly insane. And I believe the British and the

Americans have the best chance to win. I don't do defeat very well."

"Can't you predict the future, being a god?"

"No, it doesn't work that way. Humans have free will, and no one can predict how each will act or react."

She thought for a moment then leaned into him and kissed his mouth gently.

He touched her face with his fingertips, tracing her jaw with a tender caress.

"You're so beautiful, Belle," he whispered.

"Why did you bring me here?" She couldn't think clearly with him so close. His body was built strong and powerful, and his face was handsome. What woman could resist such masculine beauty and allurements?

He wrapped his arms about her, and she nestled into his embrace. She fit so perfectly, and the steady thump-thump of his heart by her ear was oddly comforting.

"I wanted you safe. I heard your thoughts when the guard touched you. I couldn't stand it. I needed you to be..." He didn't finish, and she inhaled deeply, breathing in his spicy scent.

"Tell me," she encouraged.

"Because I needed you. That's all." He captured her face with his hand and said, "I haven't wanted a woman for a long time, content to sink into men's wars. That was where I felt at home, secure, glorious. But seeing you afraid ... I just snapped."

She touched his face and felt the rough hint of a beard along his jaw. "I'm glad you saved me. I've never reacted to a man like this. It's completely foreign to me."

"I don't believe in love. That is Aphrodite's department."

Did she need love? Of that she was unsure. Her body ached for his touch, yearned for him to take her, but did she really desire his heart too?

"You have such a serious look on your face. What are you thinking about?"

"You couldn't read my mind?"

"Only hatred and fear. Sexual desire and lust, I can't." He inhaled deeply and added, "But, I can *smell* your excitement."

He pushed away the covers, revealing her body and laid her down onto the soft comforter, its cottony thickness embracing her from the back. He covered her with his body, and she relished the warmth radiating from his skin. His cock, hard and hot, lay between her legs. She was incredibly aware of how vulnerable she had been to the guard ... and now to Ares.

"I'd never hurt you. You can rest assured of that." He kissed her neck, and she held onto his shoulders, riding the shudders of delight running through her veins. "I'd only give you pleasure, my sweet Belle."

His fingers mapped her body as he kissed her neck and back below her ear. She surrendered to his touch, a man she hardly knew for more than an hour, and one who claimed he was Ares.

She froze. This was all too unbelievable. He must have felt her tense, and he leaned back to gaze into her eyes.

"I know this is too much for your mortal mind to comprehend. I'm real, just like you. However I am immortal, having been created centuries ago."

"And I'm in your little getaway?" Then she added with a chortle, "Where is this, Mount Olympus?"

"That's correct." He was serious.

She began to laugh. "This is all impossible. I don't know you, and here I am in your bed about to..."

"Get fucked," he declared in a stern tone. She gazed up into his green eyes, flashing a fire within like emeralds glinting in the morning sun. "And honey, I *am* going to fuck you."

Awareness washed through her, and hot honeyed desire gathered between her legs at his declaration. Could she let him steal a few moments of passion? What would it be like to submit to her innermost desires? From the first moment she'd seen him, she'd wanted him. She had never been with a man for the sake of sexual pleasure, only as a victim of rape. She'd never known the loving touch to bring her to sensual completeness.

He pushed her gently into the softness of the bed beneath her, and whispered, "I'll make this pleasurable for you, I promise. If I don't satisfy you, you will be free to leave here and go back to your mortal world."

"Am I a prisoner?" she croaked, tracing his jaw with a fingertip. So handsome. So gentle. Yet, if he was who he said he was, would he be a brutal lover?

No. She couldn't believe that as she gazed into his sea green eyes. Tenderness was reflected within their depths. He'd never hurt her.

"You're a prisoner to my desire, Belle. I hope a *willing* prisoner."

She moaned as he closed his mouth over hers.

Her senses reeled in the flood of sensations that crashed into her. His hands burned paths over her skin, his mouth seared heated kisses, and his tongue delved deeply, tasting her, dancing with her intimately. Her tongue glided across his, and the gentle loving became frenzied. He needed more. She wanted more.

Surrender to his expert skills was inevitable. "Ares," she moaned in a voice thick with desire. Arching her back, she offered her body to his touch. His skin, smooth and warm against hers, was unlike any other experience.

"I've waited so long ... so long to feel a woman beneath me," he murmured against her ear, sending tiny shivers of delight coursing through her veins.

"I've never..." She clasped his shoulders with her hands, guiding him to continue his loving against her ear and neck. "I never knew it could feel so beautiful."

"You were meant for me. No mortal man could do what I was meant to do." He moved his body, covering hers, his erection, hot and hard, brushing against her thighs. "And no man, mortal or immortal, will ever have you."

The head of his penis lay at her slick entrance. She groaned at the beauty of the feel of him poised at her folds.

Her channel was ready, pulsing for the invasion. She ached for him to fill her.

"Ares, take me. Make me yours," she panted, flexing her hips upward, urging him to enter her.

When he plunged into her core, she screamed. Not in pain, but delight. Instantly, her body climaxed as he filled her sheath.

Colours burst about her eyes as she rode the spasms beginning in her belly and shooting through every muscle. She was unable to control the orgasm that over took her.

As she eased down from this unexpected reaction, he began to move.

"You're not done, my sweet. You're just beginning."

In and out, his cock slid through her folds into her centre, and she gloried in every inch of his size. Her walls stretched about him, and she quickly recovered from one climax and began building into another.

She didn't care who he was, or what he claimed to be. All that mattered was that his cock entered and retreated, entered and retreated in tempo with the ache within her soul. She opened her eyes and stared up at his eyes gazing down upon her. A glow, white and pure, emanated from beneath his skin. He was not a normal man. He was special. He was a god.

"Belle, my sweet, I've waited for you so long," he gasped, as he grew larger within her body. She didn't think it possible, but it was true. She engulfed his penis deep within her, his head striking the mouth of her womb. Such ecstasy!

His skin, slick with sweat, glided along hers, their bodies in perfect harmony as they climbed high to their heavenly destination. She had no control, no consciousness in her actions. She moved purely by instinct, her body recognising his as its other half. He was the missing piece to her existence. Nothing could ever feel as right as it did at this moment. He was the man who completed her.

"You make me whole," he moaned with another thrust, as though reading her mind.

"*Oui, oui, mon chere.*" She wanted to shout her love, a sudden wash of emotion she had never known. But, she held it back as her body quaked and rattled with another orgasm.

"Oh, by Zeus!" he cried, spilling into her his heated essence. His seed sprayed deep within her womb, locking them together in a moment of passion and unexpected love.

\* \* \* \*

Ares pulled her close to him as they lay in the glow of their lovemaking. He'd realised this was no ordinary woman right from the beginning. She was beyond what he'd expected. What was it he'd thought would come of coupling with a human? Not just any human, but one with the face of a muse and the courage of a warrior. His entire being was drained by the innocent loving of this woman.

He stroked her long dark hair, wondering at the silky softness, listening to her breathing calm from excitement to contentment.

He closed his eyes and inhaled the scent of their union—sweat and musk. It filled him, wrapped about him, embracing him like he never had felt before.

Holding her tight, he realised the great god of war was indeed falling in love with a human. How could he survive without Belle in his bed, her courageous strength to guide his temper when the battle was lost, or have her beautiful face light up with a smile, easing his ire? He had only known her for a few hours, and already, he couldn't imagine his existence without her.

The problem at hand was she was mortal. He could love her for a short while, but would she want him when she aged and he didn't? Resentment would replace any tenderness of feeling. His heart ached at the prospect of losing her to Hades and his death grip.

"What is the matter, Ares? You're so tense, *mon chere*."

She obviously felt his body straining against his sad thoughts. How could he dwell upon such negativity when she was there within his arms, soft, willing, and well loved?

"I'm sorry, love. My thoughts got the better of me."

"What was it you were thinking about?"

"That ... that you must be hungry."

She propped up on an elbow, looking down at him. "I don't believe you."

She was smart. A smile curled his lips. "Perceptive little female aren't you?"

"I know when something is wrong."

"I don't want to worry you, love. Forget about it."

"Just tell me," she persisted.

He sighed. "I'm thinking on how I don't want to lose you."

She sat and thought on this for a moment, then said, "I'm here with you now. Let's enjoy the few moments we have." She gasped, "The train!"

Struggling up out of the bed, she began to hurry about the room looking for her discarded clothes. She was gloriously naked, and he chuckled to himself watching her.

"What is the problem, my sweet?"

"I have to get dressed. You have to take me back."

He bolted up in bed, no longer amused. "You're not leaving here."

She stopped and glared at him. Even nude, she was a commanding figure of a woman.

By Zeus, he loved her.

And he didn't know how to tell her. But one thing was for sure, he would not let her return to earth. As long as she remained at Mount Olympus, she was safe and ageless.

And she belonged to him.

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### Chapter Three

"You have to take me back. You have to."

"No, I don't. You're my prisoner, remember?"

"I'm not joking, Ares. My men, they need me."

"Time on earth is of no consequence here with the gods."

She couldn't believe this conversation. Everything she fought for, all the years she waited to rid her country of the Nazis, and she wasn't there to complete her mission. "I have to go back."

He rose from the bed, his body naked and muscular. Her mouth went dry watching his sinew glide under his perfect skin as he strode to her.

"I can't let you go back, Belle. I just found you after waiting centuries. Battle and war filled my days. Death, destruction, pain, fear. I never felt such a connection to a human without some sort of weapon in my hand."

Was he so deprived of all love and tenderness? "You mean to say you haven't known..." Love? Could she say it? Would he laugh at the thought of loving her? A god involved emotionally with a human woman? "...known tenderness, pleasant feelings towards another?"

"The gods use the humans for their playthings." He laid his hands upon her shoulders. "I'm no different. I used them as a way to feed my desires to fight. The others use them to sate their own needs—Aphrodite uses men as her lovers, Dionysus quenches his thirsts with their wines and sex, and even Zeus

uses the humans to ease his sexual lusts. I can't even count how many brothers and sisters I have anymore."

"Just because the other gods use the humans for their own means doesn't give you the right to use *me*."

He touched her face, and she shivered. Why did she have to be so sensitive to his touch?

"My sweet Belle, I want to you stay with me. Exist here with me in my world. Here, you will never age nor die. In my realm, you will become as I, immortal."

"You mean just staying here I will become immortal?"

"Well, after I feed you the ambrosia. It is the food of the gods. A taste of its nectar and you will become impervious to injury or mortal weaknesses."

He moved close, nuzzling her neck. "Stay with me, Belle. Be my mate. Remain by my side as my goddess of war. Your strength and courage will be an inspiration to the humans. You will balance my anger with reason and the touch of your hand against mine."

Her mind was clouded by his kisses. She sighed, tilting her head to allow him better access to her neck. His naked warmth pressed against her body, and she was lost. He was seducing her, and she allowed it. There was no reason in her thinking. Only desire—and love.

"Ares," she whispered, holding his head to her neck. His black hair threaded between her fingers. She was falling under his spell—cast by his naked body and talented lips. Her insides danced at his touch, her centre oozing the cream of ecstasy, readying for more passionate acts by her lover.

When his lips caressed hers, she moaned and opened to his demands. He deepened the kiss, and her toes curled under such expertise. How could any woman resist such a man so talented in kissing? Her tongue danced with his, mingling in wetness, mimicking the act of love. She clung to his body, powerful and dominating, and she surrendered the momentary thoughts of returning to the war for his silent promises of sexual pleasures.

"*Mon chere*, make love to me."

Perhaps she could finally find peace within his world—and within Ares' arms.

He kissed her deeply, and she surrendered within a heartbeat to her body's demands. Getting closer was all she wanted. As he fed upon her mouth, all thoughts of the outside world dissolved.

Then he scooped her up into his arms and walked to the pool on the other side of the chamber. The lotus flowers floated upon the surface where she could see a misty heat rising into the air. A heated pool.

Ares stepped down into the water still holding her aloft. He kissed her with a fierce passion she returned with equal intensity.

When her skin touched the warm waters, she moaned. He lowered her, and the pool's water embraced her body. Was it truly only water or some sort of magical essence? She was unsure because the sensation was simply heavenly.

"You're mine," he moaned against her lips as he lowered her legs to stand. "You're mine for eternity."

Emotions flooded over her like the tide in the ocean, and she was overwhelmed by its strength and unexpected pull.

"Ares, I need you inside me." She hardly recognised the urgency in her voice. Husky and low, she sounded like a sexually deprived nymph.

Her core ached for him to fill it as he had before.

He lifted her body, gliding it along his, water sluicing over their skin, and he lowered her onto his erection. She gasped as his cock impaled her to the hilt.

"I can't get enough of you, Belle. Tell me you will stay with me. Tell me who you belong to." His voice was forced, control lost in the passion of the moment as he lifted her gently then pulled her down once again.

"Oh yes," she groaned with delight. Wrapping her legs to secure their connection, she shuddered.

"Tell me, love. I need to hear you say you belong to me. Say you will fuck only me. I will be your lord. Tell me I am the master of your body."

"Ares, darling, you're the only one. Fuck me. I only want you to fill me."

His movements became urgent, quicker, searching for the height of ecstasy as he moved in and out of her sheath.

"So tight, so precious. Dear Belle, I love you."

He exploded into her core as she met him over the edge of an orgasm. Her body shook with the intensity, and she screamed his name as the spasms squeezed his penis deeper and deeper.

She collapsed against his shoulder, drained of strength to even hold herself up. Even though her body still quaked with

the aftershocks of such a climax, she relished the man holding her tightly within his arms.

*He said he loved me.* Was it something brought on by a moment of passion? Or was there more to his declaration? He'd pleaded to hear her pledge her body to him. What about her heart? He'd claimed he had no need for love. As he held her, his skin slippery from the water, and his body heat warming her, she wondered if offering Ares her body was enough—for her.

She wanted to give her heart. But would he accept it?

Exhausted, she relaxed into his embrace and closed her eyes.

"You'll be forever mine, my warrior lover," he whispered.

\* \* \* \*

"Ares, you can't keep her like a pet." Aphrodite appeared by the edge of the pool after he had tucked Belle into his bed to rest.

"I'm keeping her here. She'll become my goddess." He walked over to his former lover who sat at the edge of the pool, her delicately painted toes dipped into the water. Dressed in a gossamer bodysuit, he wondered why she even bothered to wear anything. It was completely see-through.

"You can't. It is fine to take her as a temporary playmate. I do that all the time. But to keep her here ... you are changing human history."

"What do you mean?"

She sighed. "I mean if you keep her here, you are affecting the lives of hundreds."

He glanced back to Belle within his bed, asleep and dreaming—hopefully of him. "But I may lose her if I let her go."

"And she will resent you for it. She cares for you, Ares. But, she wants more than a sexual fling. *You* need more than that. If she stays here, those men could die and the course of the war could change, and then she would resent you. Any hope for her to love you will disappear if that happens."

"I thought love is blind." He really hated the course of this conversation. He wanted Belle and was not going to risk losing her.

"It is blind but not stupid. How can she love you if you destroy all she has fought for? If you keep her from her mission, any love growing in her heart will turn to hatred." Aphrodite turned and gazed down into the water watching the soft ripples created by her toes. "Love and hate are such powerful emotions that one can easily turn into the other."

"Did Zeus send you here?" he demanded, suspicious of his father butting his nose into his son's affairs. *As if Zeus was a pillar of sexual monogamy.*

"No, though this is a major topic of discussion in court. Your father is concerned over the results of this war. It was never supposed to happen. He dislikes the man who set himself up as a god, judging which humans are worthy of procreation. He has taken quite an interest in this war, and your interference will prolong this leader Hitler's rule. I believe your mother, Hera, has stopped Zeus' wrath at least once, letting the humans paint their own history rather than his sending down a bolt of lightning."

He chuckled as he strode the length of the pool opposite of Aphrodite. "I will not risk Belle dying at the hands of a Nazi. I would think Father would understand this."

"But at what price?" She stood and brushed her body with her hands. That outfit was really see-through.

"Does Hephy like you walking around, dressed like that? Seems to me he was the jealous sort."

Once again, she sighed. "Hephy and I are no longer together. I roved around too much for him to tolerate. I can't help it. I'm the goddess of love. I was born to love lots of men."

He snorted. *Figures*. "And you are here out of the goodness of your heart to help me in my affair?" Something was just not adding up.

She lifted her eyes to him. She was beautiful beyond description. If she had come to him before he met Belle, he may have wanted to seduce her.

"Ares, I loved you. You were special to me. And I only want to help. I know how love and desire can cloud one's better judgment. I came to offer advice. That's all." She paused, and a tear ran down her cheek. "Seeing you loving the human has hurt me. It really has. But I know I've hurt you in the past. Regardless of what happened, I always loved you. If you weren't with the human, I may have tried to entice you into my life again."

"But you won't now? Yet you want me to send her away."

"Only to ensure she will continue to have love grow in her heart instead of it turning to resentment. I came out of fear you'd be hurt, Ares."

He really wasn't sure if he should believe his former lover. Aphrodite had a history of deceit. He remembered her lying to Hephaestus of her love for him while she lay trapped within the golden net naked next to Ares. It was a mortifying moment he longed to expunge from his memory.

"Please leave, 'Dite. No god or goddess can convince me to let Belle go. She will stay with me."

She faded into the air, her flowered scent of roses left behind. On the breeze, she whispered, "If you love her, set her free. If she loves you, she will return to your side."

\* \* \* \*

Belle stirred as Ares caressed her cheek with his fingertips. Misty dreams of sex and sensuous pleasure danced across her memory. Never had she dreamt such passions, and with Ares, she was finally finding out the glories of sexual gratification.

Stretching like a contented cat, she groaned, "I think I may sleep for the next five years before getting up."

"Sleep? I have much more planned than wasting our time with sleep."

She laughed softly. "Oh, better yet. As long as I get to stay in this bed. It feels divine. I never felt such a pleasure to rest in." Truly, the bed was luxurious and a treat. It beat the hard pallet back in the underground bunker.

The bunker. Cries in the dark. The smell of dirt, blood and gunpowder. Her mind reeled with memories and a horrid realisation. She had forgotten her comrades. They were fighting without her.

She bolted upright in bed. "Jean-Luis ... Jacque ... Elise ... they all need me." Heedless of her nakedness, she sprang from the bed. "I can't stay here."

Ares sighed and took her by the shoulders. "I can't let you go."

"I have to."

His face was grim as he asked, "You'd rather fight than stay here with me and make love?"

"Ares, it isn't that. I love being here with you. But, I can't turn my back on everything I've cared for until now. Tonight is the night everything changes. I know it. I can feel it."

He sighed. "'Dite was right. I can't keep you from your destiny." Pausing, he pulled her against his body. "I'll let you go back to fight. Only the woman I ... only a woman worthy of me would choose to return to the battle."

For a split second, she thought he'd mention love. He had said it during a moment of ecstasy, so could that be trusted? But then she realised he could never fall in love. It was probably for the best. She wasn't sure she could return any degree of the emotion to him. Even she was incapable of love in the romantic sense. It just didn't exist.

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## Chapter Four

In a few moments, Belle was home, surrounded by darkness in the woods by the guardhouse. She glanced down at herself noting her clothes, mended of the tears from the struggle with the guard. Ares crouched by her side, looking the part of the grizzled soldier once again. Only the smile upon his face told her the entire experience in his arms was not a dream.

He leaned in and kissed her. When his lips met hers, her entire body heated in response. It recognised the passion they'd shared and longed to taste once again.

"I brought us back to only moments from the precise time we left," he whispered. "We have to go. The train will be at the bridge in a few minutes."

She nodded, trying to clear her head from the confusion swirling around. She grasped her rifle from its hiding place in the bushes, and she raced off through the trees, hoping the action would clarify her purpose. She'd asked to return. She'd pleaded to come back and finish her mission. But then why was she sick to her stomach with disappointment?

They stopped at the edge of the trees overlooking the bridge. In the distance, she heard the train rumble down the tracks. Then she spotted Jean-Luis, running towards them. Sounds of gunfire burst into the air.

"Damn it," muttered Ares. "Nazis discovered the team."

She almost sprinted forward, but he caught her arm. "We have to draw their fire," she said.

"Wait, you rush in like that, you'll be shot right off." He scanned the area, noting the Germans were in the woods on the opposite end of the bridge. "If we create another diversion, they may have better a chance of getting out alive."

Acting before she fully worked out the diversion, Belle snatched a grenade from Ares' waist, pulled the pin and tossed the explosive towards the tracks, away from the bridge.

The ground erupted, and she began to fire as she raced to the guardhouse, attempting to tempt the Germans to follow her—and the explosion.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Ares called to her as he fired his own rifle.

The Germans were all around, emerging from the woods closer to the guardhouse. She estimated three were causing the disturbance and two were now in pursuit. Especially when they became more immediate targets, since they were running out in full view across a small field.

Ares pulled another grenade from his belt and tossed it at the guardhouse as they ran by.

What she didn't expect was a store of explosives igniting, destroying the small building and causing more of a diversion than they'd intended.

The explosion rocked the ground, and Ares knocked her to the grass for cover. Fire, soil and debris shot out at them from the structure, sending dangerous fragments shooting through the air along with the bullets they were already dodging.

He landed on her, covering her body with his. "When I said a diversion, I didn't mean for us to wake up the entire German army."

"*Oui*, but..." She checked her watch, and the train's whistle blew sharply just up the tracks. "We bought the few seconds we needed."

That was when the train filled with ammunition crossed the bridge and was blown off the tracks in a massive detonation of her team's charges. Orange flames lit the sky and the ground shook with the blast.

Belle smiled and said softly, "*Vive la France!*"

He wanted to fuck her again, right there in the middle of the field with a burning building nearby, bullets flying overhead and a train blowing up into tiny bits of scrap metal. This woman had made sure the mission was won. She'd risked everything to draw fire from the bridge team to herself without a second thought to her own safety. His blood boiled at her risks, but then, in the name of the fight, he was turned on beyond reason.

His mouth crushed down on hers in a heated kiss, possessive and bruising. He wanted to mark her as his, the property of the war god—his warrior lover, his war queen.

She answered his passion with a fury, her fingers pulling at his clothes in her rising desires. He moaned, and as the explosions boomed through the night, the Nazis now alerted to their presence, and he didn't care. All he wanted to do was strip her down and lick every inch of her luscious body.

"Ares, we have to go," she said against his lips.

"I just want to..."

"They're coming ... I hear them ... the Germans."

He paused and listened. In the distance, the Germans raced to the explosion. He could hear the trucks' tires splash through the mud, speeding to the area. In about five minutes, the entire area would be crawling with German soldiers.

Just then, overhead, Ares spotted gliders carrying the 82nd Airborne Division, heading for their drop zone. They needed to secure the town Sainte-Mère-Église, a pivotal point that sat at the crossroads and rail line that connected Paris to the coastal town Cherbourg.

"Right on time." She glanced up, and he noted the tears in her eyes. "The day is just beginning. There's a long morning ahead." The trucks were getting closer. "Come, let's hide in the woods. We've set up a meeting area in an underground bunker to regroup."

He nodded and eased off her. Looking over the shell of a guardhouse and the fiery mess of the train piled into the river ravine, the bridge gone, he was proud to be a part of this night. Gunfire was being exchanged back and forth between Belle's team and the Germans. He could see more had arrived to join in the fight.

By the time the Germans could clean up the mess, the invasion would be over. It would take weeks to make the bridge operational again.

Another explosion crashed through the night.

Belle tugged on his arm, and he followed her back under the darkness of the woods.

German voices broke through the night, yelling out orders to capture the *Résistance* trouble-makers. They weren't too

happy about their supply train being sabotaged and the guardhouse levelled. Ares chuckled, and repeated, "Only the beginning."

He ran behind Belle as she led him through the darkness, seemingly knowing every branch and bush. Behind him, another box of ammunition exploded from the train. But that didn't concern him. It was the sound of the soldiers closing in.

Fear should be coursing through him—if he were mortal. Instead, he was rock hard and horny. Battle always did it to him, especially with Belle jogging before him with her smooth and round ass encased in a tight skirt. *Damn it, what am I thinking?* She was too tempting the way she courageously fought for her beliefs. He admired her for it ... but he still wanted to ravish her, stealing her away back to his bed. His erection hurt while he ran.

"Come, *vite*, Ares," she called to him in a soft voice, commanding yet feminine. It was a tone he imagined calling his name in the height of ecstasy.

He really needed to get his mind back on things. If she wanted to fight this night, he was going to do it with her. Not that he minded the combat. He lived for it, he was bred for it. However, he'd rather be in bed, pounding out his desires deeply into her core.

Then fire burst across his shoulder. A familiar sensation of war, he'd been shot. Since the invention of firearms, he'd been shot many times. It was a shocking sensation compared to the slice of a blade through the skin. A gunshot wound was something he'd gotten used to over the years, and he didn't

let it slow him down. He was immortal. This was nothing more to him than a mere nuisance.

A damnable *pain* of a nuisance, but luckily, it was a fleeting one. Even as Belle slowed and turned towards him, the bullet melted within him, absorbed into his body, and the wound closed. Only the blood spatter of impact would be left behind upon his clothes. Even that could be wiped away with the mere thought, just like he'd repaired Belle's clothes earlier.

"Just up here is the hidden entrance to our bunker." She stopped, appearing majestic in the pale moonlight that crept through the dense foliage of trees around them.

"Good, how long until your team leads my men here?"

She pushed back the branches that hid the small circle of an underground tunnel, dropping straight down into darkness. "They will come as soon as they can."

He read the fear in her heart, afraid for the safety of her brother and friends.

She directed him into the tunnel, climbing down the slim wooden ladder. He wasn't sure how far he'd have to climb until his feet hit the floor. It was probably about fifteen feet below the surface. She followed him. When she got down, she moved about and eventually struck a match, lighting a small lamp on a wooden table.

About the room were wood chairs and a table covered with maps and papers. The bunker was about thirty feet wide and reminded him of an old wine cellar. Along the edges of the room were several cots lined up against the walls. Obviously, the people in this unit spent a lot of their time here, plotting

their next mission to thwart the Germans and cause chaos. They'd strike then hide below while the Germans searched in vain.

"This is an interesting set-up here," he said as he sat down at the table, eyeing the markings on the top map.

She worked at a small stove set to the side of the room. "Cold coffee sound good?"

"Coffee in any form sounds good."

She handed him a tin cup of the cold brew then poured herself a cup and sat down across from him at the table.

With a sip of the liquid, he thought he was in heaven. Even cold, the coffee was strong and bitter, just how he liked it. Humans outdid themselves when they'd discovered coffee.

"Delicious."

"Sorry I can't heat it up. We can't chance them discovering our hideout, especially tonight."

He noted the stove's smoke stack that ran up the wall and disappeared into the ceiling. Taking another sip, he glanced again at the map. "How far are we from Sainte-Mère-Église?"

"About ten miles. Why?"

He hesitated to say what his next objective was for the morning. "I was ordered that once the train and bridge were eliminated, I was to lead my team to join up with the rest of my unit and assist in securing Sainte-Mère-Église."

She sat her cup onto the table. "You're leaving me?"

He shook his head and reached across the table for her hand. "Sweetheart, I'm not going anywhere without you by my side."

For a second, she thought he'd leave her behind. Even if her mission was complete, the day was only beginning. She was ready to continue the fight.

"Hopefully Jean-Luis and the rest will get here within the hour. Then we can make plans to go to Mère-Église." She paused a moment then asked, "Are we to destroy the railway there?"

"No, the opposite. H.Q. determined that Sainte-Mère-Église is a pivotal point in the success of the landings. For the Americans to secure the town, and control the transport of the railway and crossroads there, it would mean better chances of a victory at the beaches in the morning."

"That town has been under heavy German control for a long time, since they invaded years ago. I am sure I can speak with some of the town people to help you." She glanced down into her coffee. "We hate the Nazis. They persecuted us for years. They kill us without thought. If they find one of their soldiers dead, they'd kill one hundred civilians in retribution and fifty civilians if one of their soldiers is wounded."

"The Nazis are led by a twisted man that even Zeus abhors. They are brainwashed by a lunatic who feels he is a god, able to judge the worthiness of others. Such a man and government system should never have come into power."

"Be as it may, we will do whatever it takes to help the Americans and British with their plans."

He glanced about the room, noting the chests pushed beneath the cots. "Guns in those? Bullets?"

"*Oui*, the Allies dropped us supplies periodically so we could continue our fight from within as they prepared for today. We've waited a long time to finally get the message that the invasion was coming."

They sat in silence as they drank their coffee. He was an enigma even as only an hour before, she was naked in his arms in a world far beyond her dreams—beyond her comprehension. This was turning out to be more than a night of fighting. It was changing her life in a way she'd never expected. She gazed at his face, the man who'd parachuted into her life only a while ago, claiming he was a god, and she believed him.

She'd noted the blood on his jacket before he'd sat at the table. Having seen blood so many times before, you could never be too sure if it was splashed or seeping from a wound beneath the fabric. But he moved with no apparent pain and no acknowledgement of a wound. She saw the hole from the bullet, and he didn't indicate any reaction.

But then, he was Ares, a god of war. Would he be able to heal so quickly? Her clothes were not tattered from her encounter with the guard. Everything else during the night was unbelievable, so why not this? He was what he claimed, an immortal god.

And she was falling for him.

Death. Destruction. Misery. Fear. They all were wrapped up in the night, and she found time to fall in love despite the pain and madness.

With a god.

"Tell me, how many wars have you taken part in?" She was curious if Ares, a god of war, would have been to them all.

He sighed. "I've lost count. I am usually there when the action happens, right through until peace is declared. Of course, that is never really for long. No one can live in peace, not even the gods." He laughed softly, and added, "The gods are sometimes worse than the humans with their wars."

"But, what do you remember? Tell me, what battles were you in?"

He rolled back his head and breathed deeply the moist air of the former wine cellar. "I've seen Troy fall to the Greeks, the Norman Conquest of England at the Battle of Hastings, Marc Antony's defeat in the Battle of Actium, King Richard's doomed Crusades, Queen Elizabeth's victory over the Spanish Armada, Napoleon's failure at Waterloo, George Custer's death at the Battle of Little Big Horn, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. These are only some of the wars I've taken part in. I've seen a lot of death and destruction."

So much death and war. So much history. She couldn't even comprehend the massive knowledge and experience this man held. She could only relate to the most recent history he'd mentioned. "You were at Pearl that morning?"

He nodded solemnly. "I knew what was coming. That morning I was aboard the USS Tennessee when we spotted the planes. I had tried to warn my commanding officer of my feelings of unease about an attack only about thirty minutes before. But, it had gone unheeded. I really dislike sneak attacks."

"What about tonight? This is a sneak attack."

"But, we are already at war. The Nazis know we are coming, they just don't know *when*."

"Why aren't you in a position of power, like a commander?"

"I've learned long ago that a position of authority in a war makes you a target. I don't wish to have my name included in history books as turning the tides of war. I want to go with the battle as things unfold. I don't even use my powers while in battle. Causes too many questions. I live it out like any other soldier, then I move on to the next one."

She sat reflecting on the horrors she'd heard on the BBC radio about the attacks, and the terrible blow it was for the American Naval fleet. "What happened that day at Pearl was horrible."

"It was bad, considering the United States had no clue it was going to be in a war. The Japanese ambassador only announced the declaration of war while the bombing at Pearl was underway. Hundreds of civilians were killed because they ran to the base first. They were being turned away quick, because the base was a target. I've even heard of people hiding under their autos until the raids were over."

Just then the tunnel hatch opened, and a man began to climb down.

"Jean! Oh, Jean!" she called as she bolted up from her seat. Her brother made it.

"Belle," he said weakly as he slumped to the floor.

Two of the British soldiers followed him down into the hideout.

"Jean has been shot," she said in a horrified whisper as Ares scooped him up from the floor and placed him on one of the cots.

"We need a medic and quick. He's got a belly wound," Ares said looking up at his two comrades. "Where's Marshall?"

Corporal Jones shook his head, his face covered in black grit and his uniform dishevelled. "He got shot in the neck by a Jerry."

"There's no medic near here. The closest surgeon is in Sainte-Mère-Église." She retrieved the first aid kit from under the cot and rummaged through for some gauze. "He's bleeding so bad, I don't think I can stop it."

Jean grabbed her hand. "Mirabelle, I'm tired. Don't waste time on me. Help them instead."

She pulled the dirty shirt from his body and undid his belt, all the while fighting to keep from throwing up as the gore was revealed fully. There was a deep gash across his abdomen, where a sharp piece of metal must have sliced him. She surmised that Jean had pulled the shrapnel from himself in the field to continue on. Some of his intestine leaked out from the wound and blood oozed steadily. "I'm here to make sure you don't die on me."

"No. I don't matter. Fight for France, not me."

Ares got his cup and grabbed a bottle from the first aid kit. He poured a heaping dose of laudanum in the coffee and offered it to Jean. "Here, drink this. It will help with the pain."

Jean sipped the fluid and then chuckled, "The last of our coffee."

Then he closed his eyes and sighed.

Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

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## Chapter Five

Ares instructed Jackson and Jones to place Jean-Luis outside the bunker and cover him in a shallow grave. They really couldn't afford to do much more. At least, Belle would be able to find his remains once she returned and properly bury him later. It was more than could be said for the other casualties that would happen that day.

"Lieutenant Ares, here's Marshall's dog-tag." Jones handed him the small remnant of the man's existence. Such a tiny piece of metal, the representation a life lost.

In that moment after ages of being so involved in war, he gazed up at Belle and wondered if it was worth the fight. Was the life of a human worth so much? Belle sat by herself in the woods just within eyesight, grieving for her brother, and he stood holding the dog-tag of one of his men, the only piece left to return home to his family. Was this all worth the pain and suffering?

Why hadn't he ever seen this before? War was a game, a human pastime for him. He took enjoyment in the fight and never thought beyond that. In all his days, he shot his rifle or swung his sword, and he hadn't taken account of the death and pain until now.

He'd known death was part of the battle and had always accepted it. But this was the first time he'd felt a glimmer of pain—brought on by the tears of a sister weeping for her brother, and the lone dog-tag with a name of a man indented into cold metal.

He stepped over to Belle, careful not to alarm her at his approach. "I'm sorry, Belle. He was a brave man."

"The best of men. He fought for his country. And his son will always remember him for his courage."

Ares sat at her side upon a fallen log. "He had a son?"

"He's two and lives in New York City. Jean-Luis sent his wife and his son away to the United States so they'd be safe. They got out only a day before the Nazis took over."

"Will you go to the States once this is over to be with them?"

She shook her head. "I just don't know. I don't know what will happen now."

When the tears began to fall, he took her into his arms. "Shh, now, sweetheart. Jean-Luis was brave, and he wouldn't want you to grieve over him. He risked his life to free France. He led my men here even while he was dying, just so they'd be safe and be able to continue on to their next objective."

"I didn't even think of that," she sniffled.

He tilted her face up to his, and he realised her pain-stricken face was too much to bear. Why did he feel such emotions for this woman?

Was love creeping into his heart after all this time? Could the god of war truly see the more tender nature of sharing one's heart?

"Never worry, Belle. I'll always be here when you need me. Always. Never doubt your worth or what will become of you. I will take care of you." Then he leaned in and kissed her tenderly on salty lips.

Softly, he kissed her, easing away her fears as well as her pain with his love. Yes, his love. He loved this woman.

Strangely enough, he liked the feeling.

"Lieutenant, we need to get going," Jones said, breaking the moment of tenderness amid the toils of war and misery. "The 82nd will need some help in these winds. I don't know about you, but when we dropped in here, I had a hard time staying on course for the drop zone."

"We were really surprised the invasion was going to proceed tonight," Belle added, wiping her tears with her hand.

"I think Eisenhower didn't want to wait any longer." He stood up and helped Belle stand. "It would be easier if we had a jeep or truck. We could get there faster."

"Don't know of any near here. Gasoline is rationed to the Germans only. We get around by walking or bicycles."

"Then we'll walk."

\* \* \* \*

Belle gripped her rifle, comforted by its cool metal. She felt numb. Jean-Luis had been her only living relative, and now, he was gone. Jacques and Elise appeared at the bunker shortly before she was to leave with Ares, Corporals Jones and Jackson, towards Sainte-Mère-Église. They'd stay behind to help the Americans and British to proceed inland with the invasion.

As they walked through the woods, they kept quiet, listening for Germans on patrol. It would be a long walk in the dark, and they had no idea what sort of obstacles would be thrown their way.

She was comforted by Ares, his commanding presence calming her nerves and reassuring her in silence. His kisses were less fevered, less passionate, but were filled with more meaning. In a matter of hours, so much had happened, and she was unsure what to feel. Sadness or pride over Jean-Luis or happiness over Ares?

After about an hour of walking, Ares stopped suddenly at the edge of the woods. He ducked within the darkness, and they all crouched to the ground in silence. Off in the distance, in a clearing at a small farmhouse, the Germans searched the buildings for occupants.

"That is an abandoned farm. The owners were killed ... executed."

"Why?" asked Corporal Jackson in a low voice.

"Collaborators." She remembered the day the news had come of the old couple who had owned this dairy farm. The Germans had discovered their basement of homemade explosives that the *Résistance* used for saboteur missions. They were shot in the head while they watched the Germans take most of their cows for the starving soldiers.

The group sat quietly watching the soldiers about the abandoned house. Once they were sure no one was there and nothing of value remained, they moved on.

"Since the Jerrys searched it already, maybe we can use it and get some rest for an hour. I know I could use a few minutes," Jones suggested to the small band.

"Yeah, we can stay here. I'll keep guard while you all get some rest," Ares agreed. When Jones began to go, Ares caught his arm. "Wait, could be mined."

"No, it's not," Belle said, pointing to a cow grazing nearby. They raced across the field to the little house. All the windows were shattered and the siding was falling off. The Germans had left behind little of the building. It stood as an eerie sentinel to the desolate times that had befallen this country.

Belle helped secure the area, assured no patrol lingered nearby before they all got some rest. She lay atop a woollen blanket in the barren room that was once a living room, staring at the open door. Ares stood there watching, protecting them. She longed to go to him, fall into his arms and forget the horrors of the night. But she knew within her heart, there was more to come.

Closing her eyes, she let sleep overtake her troubled mind into a numbing unconsciousness.

\* \* \* \*

Moments later, Ares lay down next to her, his body heat a welcome comfort compared to the hard floor. His hand sought her shirt and slipped under the fabric to cup one breast.

"Jones and Jackson are scrounging up something to eat for us."

She moaned. Her body came alive at his touch and the sound of his voice. "Too bad they'll be back soon."

"I told them to take their time. And to knock before coming in," he whispered in her ear, kissing her earlobe.

She turned her head and met his lips. She was hot, hungry for his loving. She needed to feel the heat, to experience the

joy of being alive. She wanted to lose a few moments within his arms.

"Ares, I wish you'd..."

"Belle, sweetheart, I need to make love to you. *Now.*"

"Oh, *oui, mon chere. Si vous plait...*" Her plea was engulfed by his mouth, eager to taste her, and she arched up to meet his desires.

He peeled off her blouse and skirt. With only her boots on, she surrendered to his masterful touch. He took off his clothes in rapid movements, anxious to bare himself to her. Her hands mapped his body, each rippling muscle and pert nipple, there for her enjoyment.

How she loved this man.

When skin covered skin, she thought she'd shatter immediately. Such a pleasure to have him loving her. She was in heaven, no matter where she was in reality. Whether it was the godly bed with the thick silk coverlet or the barren farmhouse, she didn't care. All that mattered was his body intimately connected with hers.

She wanted more, quicker. "I need," she panted as he flipped her over to straddle his hips.

"Show me..." he whispered as his hands gripped her thighs. "Ride me."

She slid onto his cock and breathed a sigh. He filled her so fully, his size a perfect fit into her sheath. "This feels wonderful," she moaned as she moved her hips, taking him deeper within.

"Sweetheart, you know how to fuck me ... by Zeus, you feel like I've entered a key into the gates of paradise." He

bucked beneath her, urging her to move fast. Then, he placed a thumb at her crotch, searching for her clit, pressing her further into ecstasy.

"You ... oh ... don't ... have ... to ... oh yes ... do ... that," she panted as she rode his erection, plunging him further to the centre of her core. He needn't touch her nubbin to send her higher. The head of his penis tapped at the mouth of her cervix with each penetration.

"I want to give you pleasure," he said in husky voice.

"You do," she whimpered. "Ares, I've ... never felt so wonderful."

He thrust up into her, and she screamed, climax just on the horizon, barely out of reach. "You ... were ... meant ... for ... me," he said, panting between his words with each push.

Belle balanced on her knees and slammed down on his cock, making him toss his head back in apparent ecstasy. She paused in her thrusts, prolonging her orgasm and wiggled her ass, moving him side to side within her.

"Oh, fuck," he cried. "You're torturing me, sweetheart."

She giggled as she slowed her movements, relishing his length and width inserted into her body. She reached behind her and fingered his balls. "That's the point. Want to come, *mon chere*?"

"Yes!"

"Tell me you love me," she said as she resumed her rhythmic ride upon his penis.

"I love you, sweetheart. You know that by now."

"And I love you too, Ares."

They came together, a mutual joining based in love born from the misery of war. She screamed as her body rode the spasms of rapture, sensations only this man could create within her body.

Belle arched her back, drawing out her own orgasm as Ares pumped his semen into her, and she relished the streaming hot liquid. It was a moment she'd never forget, passion and love amid sadness and despair.

It made the entire experience more bearable. And as her body calmed, she lay upon him, and he held her tenderly.

"Sweet Belle, I do love you," he whispered. "I understand now. I had to let you return here to live out your destiny. I understand, sweetheart."

"I know you didn't want to, but thank you for understanding."

"Anything for my Belle."

\* \* \* \*

Once Jones and Jackson returned with a meagre meal of bread and cheese, given to them by a neighbour farmer, they all ate then continued on.

The darkness of the night began to dissipate as they walked. Along the way, they met several stragglers from the 82nd Airborne. Jones was right. The winds had made dropping into the area treacherous. Many of the men were miles off course. As the Germans flooded some of the area around the town, the soldiers told of tales of others drowning, weighed down by their own uniforms, packed with a M1 rifle,

a knife, hacksaw blades, and so on. The added weight pulled them under to a watery grave.

One of the soldiers they met held a higher interest for Ares than normal. A black man, handsome and powerful in build, stood behind the reporting soldiers. His helmet was marked with the Red Cross logo, a medic. But this was no ordinary medic. This one was special.

"We fell only a few feet from the bogs. We stood helpless as the others disappeared into the water," one private reported to Ares. "I suspect we're scattered all over the place."

"How many of you are there?"

"Four, sir."

"Great, we have about eleven with us. We're going to take the town no matter what. Come along. Every man will be needed." Ares had fifteen cold and tired men to secure a town. How could they beat such overwhelming odds?

Later, Ares made his way to the medic. "Tell me, Herm, why did you decide to join the army? Wanted to see the world?"

To anyone else, this may have sounded like a jibe against the man, but the medic smiled and said, "Did you think our father would only let *you* be a part of this historic day?"

"Herm, you really are a sight for sore eyes." Ares embraced Hermes, god of medicine. "You're going to be needed today."

"Already got a workout." Hermes glanced up at Belle who walked up next to him. "And the sun is just about to rise."

That was a loaded statement, as they all knew once dawn arrived, so would begin the Allied landings on the beaches.

Ares put a protective arm about Belle's shoulders. "Let's get going."

"I assume you know one another," she said to Ares as the three trudged through the swampy area.

"You could say that," Ares replied. "He's my brother."

\* \* \* \*

They walked in companionable silence. It wasn't hard for her to realise who this man was—Hermes, a brother of Ares, another god. Somehow it fit into the scheme of things.

In an hour, they started across a field towards the outskirts of the town. There they met with other members of the 82nd, talking of brutal fighting in the town hours before. Paratroopers had dropped into the village, and the Germans shot them before they even got to the ground. Tales of horrors, men without a chance to fight, were passed along. Instead of discouraging the entire unit of stragglers they led, the news seemed to ignite an anger that drove them all further.

By the morning light, they arrived in Sainte-Mère-Église. The town was mostly in the control of the Americans, with some resistance from the remaining Germans. They had fought fiercely, but in the end, the determination of the Allies had won the fight.

"It was a slaughter, sir. Men falling from the sky, and the Germans opened fire on them before they landed."

Ares appeared horrified at the spectacle before him. Belle was struck speechless. The scene was mind numbing. There hanging were the bodies of some of the ill-fated men that dropped into the town.

"Cut them down," murmured Ares. "Get those bodies down. No man should be left on display like that."

"Yes sir, we are working on it."

She saw Ares was angry, so she placed a gentle hand upon his arm. "They'll get them down."

What was this change in Ares? Did he care about the killing? After so many wars where he'd seen death, was it getting to him now? And why? Was it because he was experiencing love?

Suddenly, a sniper fired on the group. The men scattered and sought for cover. Ares pulled her to the open doorway of a church located in the town square. Before he could thrust his body behind her as he shoved her inside, a fire struck her back.

He landed on top of her on the church floor, and the burning seared through her body, starting in her lower back on the right side. She screamed in pain as he lifted off of her.

"Fuck, you've been shot."

"*Par Dieu*, it hurts," she cried.

He turned her over and groaned.

"What is it? Is it bad?"

"You'll be fine, sweetheart. Hermes will take care of you."

Glancing up to his face, she saw his concern etched there, yet she couldn't say anything other than to cry.

She was too dazed to comprehend his words. Pain coloured her thoughts.

"Hermes, get in here!" Ares called out towards the door.

"Oh shit," the medic-god uttered as he appeared at her side. She wasn't even sure when or how he got there. He eased her onto her left side and pulled up her blouse. The small movement was torture to her body.

"Help her." Ares sounded strained.

"Ares..." Hermes sighed.

"Look you two, no secrets. Just tell me." She'd been through hell and back already. She could take the news ... she hoped.

"Belle, I'll do what I can. Looks like you got hit near your kidney."

"I can live with one," she tried to joke. *Laughing hurt.*

"Yeah, you can, but, your blood ... the kidney is a major blood-oriented organ." He swiped something over the wound, sending her climbing the wall to escape.

"Belle, hold still," Ares commanded.

"I would if he didn't burn me with that fucking stuff."

"I gotta use antiseptic. You could get an infection."

"I could get dead, too."

"This isn't funny," Ares said angrily.

"Who's laughing?" she asked, looking up to his face. "Ares, I just want you to know—"

"Oh, hell no. You're not going to start telling me your secrets. You're not going to die."

"Ares, the bullet nicked an artery," Hermes whispered. "I can't do much more for her other than apply pressure."

"Ares, I love you," she continued without thought, speaking from her heart. She felt the cold seeping through her, replacing the burning pain with icy numbness. "I loved you since the moment I saw you. Thank you for showing me love for the first time in my life."

"Sweetheart, don't talk like this. No, Hermes is going to help you."

"I just need to rest now. I'm tired."

"Belle, you listen to me. You can't die. I've waited too long for a woman to ... to love. You heard me, I love you, too. Damn it, I refuse to let you die."

"You don't have any say in the matter," a strange voice said.

"Hades, you can't take her. I won't allow it." Ares crouched by her side holding her hand. She was comforted that he felt as if he'd have to fight for her life. But what could he possibly do to avoid her fate?

"Ares, my nephew, always the hot-head. I'm sorry, but her life is to end here in battle. There is nothing you can do to help her other than be with her when she dies."

Hades was a powerful-looking man, draped in dark blue robes trimmed in gold. He looked completely out of place in this time and place. His dark eyes examined her briefly before returning to Ares.

"I'm here to take her to the Elysian Fields," he said.

"And I'm here to see Ares finds love," added a female voice.

"Dite," uttered Ares.

She lifted a golden goblet, the contents emitting a red glow. "Ares, my love, you deserve to have your heart's desire. And I'm here to help."

"Aphrodite, do you think tampering in the lives of humans will help her?" asked Hermes.

"It is the will of Zeus," she announced with a smile.

The image of the pretty blonde with the goblet waved before Belle's eyes. She was having a hard time focusing.

"If Zeus wants to see this girl saved," Hades began, "then I see no reason to take her to her awaiting brother."

Aphrodite handed Ares the goblet. "Make her immortal. Feed her the elixir of the ambrosia flower."

He took the cup and brought it to Belle's lips. Hermes lifted her upper body to help her drink.

Before her lips touched the cup, she heard Ares whisper. "Belle, drink this. Become my immortal lover, my warrior lover for all eternity. I can't survive without love—without you."

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## Chapter Seven

Belle stretched out upon the hard cot. She couldn't remember who'd laid her down in one, but she suspected Ares had.

"Wake up, sweetheart. We have a full day ahead of us."

She opened her eyes to gaze into the sea green eyes of her lover. Her war god. "Awful cheerful, aren't you?" she asked as she sat up slowly.

"Here, have a cup of coffee, hot this time." He handed her a tin cup, steaming with fresh coffee.

"Where are we anyway?" She glanced around and didn't recognise the room. It looked like a priest's bedchamber.

"The *padre* gave us use of his bedroom for your recovery. He saw how tired you were and wanted to help. The people of this town are so happy that we are here."

"Tired? But wasn't I..." She started to say shot, but she felt her side. It was smooth and perfect. What happened?

He sat next to her with his own cup. "You know, coffee is one of those simple pleasures I enjoy. It is a real treat to get some."

"Weakness for coffee, eh?"

"Yeah, I love it. I do prefer the stronger roast you have here in France. We'll have to take some home to my place once we leave."

"Leave? Ares, what happened? What *happened* to me?"

He looked into her eyes and explained, "I was going to lose you. Hades was even here to take you on your trip."

"To where?"

"Well, I believe you call it Heaven. We call it the Elysian Fields. Same thing, different names."

"You mean I died?"

"Not exactly. You were about to die. If you had, your recovery would've been more difficult."

She stroked the skin of her lower right side. "And how did I recover?"

"Aphrodite ... she helped."

"Aphrodite? This is all sounding quite fantastic."

"Well, I can't help it. They are my family and friends, the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus. What was most surprising is that my father actually was behind your recovery. He ordered Dionysus to provide 'Dite with the ambrosia elixir to help you heal."

She sat and tried to absorb all of this wild information.

He took another sip of his coffee. "Ambrosia is sweet, but coffee tastes a lot better to me. A man's drink. The taste is robust, but then I like the high I get after I drink it, especially when it is strong like this."

"Ares, will you be serious here. What happened to me?"

"I told you. You drank ambrosia. Now, you are an immortal."

*Immortal?* "You mean like a goddess?"

"Well, no. Not a goddess. Goddesses are born, not made. You are an immortal, different. You don't have any special powers like a god or goddess, but you can never be injured where your life will be in danger ... and you'll never age, nor will you ever die."

She covered her face with her hands. How could this be real?

"It's all real, sweetheart. I couldn't lose you." He paused, then sipped his coffee and added in a sombre voice, "I'd go insane without you, Belle." He turned to face her, pushing her hands from her face. "You're my precious love. I wasn't going to risk separation from you. I hope you understand."

"I love you, Ares."

He set down his cup and held her face between his hands. "I love you so much. You make me want to be a better god because of it. I thought war was a game played with the humans. Now I see it is so much more." He paused and leaned in to her lips and whispered, "I love you. Love me forever, Belle. I need you for always."

"Yes, always. I want to be with you always."

He kissed her tenderly. He senses reeled as his lips caressed hers in a sweet joining of love.

A knock on the door broke their kiss.

"Come in," Ares said straightening up, holding Belle by his side.

"Ares, I think I'm going to leave you here. The troops will be coming through in a day or so. I'm needed at the beaches." Hermes looked troubled.

"Bad?"

"It's ... slaughter. My services would best be served where the fighting is the heaviest right now. The town here has a few German snipers to take care of still, but it is relatively quiet. The villagers are helping feed and care for the wounded."

Ares stood. "Herm, thank you. I couldn't..."

"No need, brother. She's a good influence on you. Maybe the humans can see some peace someday in the future."

"I have no influence over the human wars, you know that."

"Well, maybe if the god of war learns to love, the humans can too." Hermes offered his hand. "Later, Ares. I'll be seeing you, I'm sure."

"Good luck, Herm."

And before her eyes, the handsome medic disappeared.

She shook her head. Did she just see that?

"I think I better check in on the landings. Since we're not at my chamber with my reflection pool, I'll have to make one." He picked up the coffee cup. "A shame to waste such lovely brew, but I want to see." He splashed the liquid onto the floor and passed his hand over it.

There in the coffee came images of the landing crafts edging to shore. Men were scooping out water with their helmets to keep their crafts afloat. The hatch doors opened and soldiers piled out, some drowning in the waters, while others walked over the bodies to get ashore. Pandemonium.

"Oh dear God," she whispered, watching the tragedy unfold from the comfort of her cot.

Men struggled to the beach to be shot at by strong defences set up by the Germans. Rommel's Wall—the obstacle built to keep an Allied invasion at bay—didn't work. The Germans didn't count on one thing driving each man who landed on the beach—determination. Belle saw this strong driving force in all her dealings with the Allied troops, British

and American. The sheer unflinching courage these people exhibited left her in awe.

Bullets and mines, strategically placed concrete *tetrahedras*—obstacles built to rip the bottoms off landing crafts—nothing could keep the Allies from invading.

"It's a blood-bath, but they will make it. I know it," Ares commented.

"It's horrid." She was aghast at the vicious fighting taking place on the shores of her country. "But, we are all thankful to see such determination. We've lived through such atrocities under that creature in Berlin."

"I assure you, he'll fall. And all will pay for carrying out his plots."

She closed her eyes, unable to continue to watch the death. "What are we to do now?"

"We'll stay and keep the town under control. My orders were to wait for the American troops then continue on with them."

"What about me?"

"You're coming with us." He stood before her and spread a towel over the spilt coffee. "You're French Resistance. We need you."

"I'm proud to fight for freedom. Thank you for including me."

He stopped and turned to her. Getting down on one knee, he took one of her hands in his. "But I'd like to do something before the unit gets here to take us off for more fighting." He paused, seemingly trying to find the right words. Then he

said, "I'm a god, not a man, but I know how much it would mean to you."

"What?" A knot in her stomach curled tightly in anticipation.

"Would you let the *padre* here marry us?"

"Oh, Ares, yes!"

They embraced, sealing a future of love and devotion with a kiss.

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## Epilogue

*Normandy, June 6, 2004*

Belle and Ares stood upon the shores of Normandy, the beach better known as Utah sixty years earlier. So different now.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Ares asked as he pulled her close to his side.

"Hard to believe it was sixty years ago."

"It was. Time has little meaning when we stay at home, away from human existence."

She cast her gaze slowly along the shoreline, absent from the horrors that had taken place which changed the course of the war. Now, the beaches at Normandy were sacred ground, and memorials stood as silent sentinels to the thousands of men who'd lost their lives in the fight.

"I figured you both would be here." Hermes said as he walked up next to them.

"Yeah, we needed to come back to the place that brought us together. We visited Sainte-Mère-Église earlier today. The padre was nice enough to renew our vows for us while we were there." She was happy the priest didn't seem too concerned for paperwork. It was a romantic thing to do, Ares' idea. Nothing official was signed, just the vows were spoken.

Only this time, Zeus, Hera and Aphrodite had shown up— invisible witnesses. When Belle and Ares had eventually returned to Mount Olympus and he'd introduced her as his

wife, they'd complained that they'd missed the ceremony. This time, they didn't.

"You guys want to get a cup of coffee?" Hermes asked after they stood silent for several long moments.

"Oh yes, I have been dying for one of those French specialty coffees," Ares said. "I miss it."

"When we ran out of it at home, you didn't want to go and get more," Belle said with a laugh.

"I believe I was enjoying my lovely wife at the time."

"Oh, you guys make me ill. Come on, let's go get some coffee and pay our tribute to the heroes of D-Day."

"I'd like to visit Jean-Luis first," she broke in.

"Sure, let's go," Ares agreed.

He took her into his arms, and she flew upon the winds under his magic to the cemetery where her brother was now buried.

"You guys go on. I will see you in a few minutes." She looked solemn, and they each nodded, allowing her some privacy.

Few minutes later, she was alone. She sat in the grass and pulled her legs beneath her.

"Jean-Luis, I miss you. But, I know you are happy in Heaven. I love you, and I wish I could see you again."

"You can, Mirabelle," a voice said from behind her.

She turned and was amazed. Hades stood with a young and handsome Jean-Luis at his side.

"Jean!" she cried, tears springing to her eyes.

She got up and approached. Before she embraced him, she glanced at Hades, and he nodded his approval.

She hugged her brother. "Oh Jean-Luis, I miss you."

"I miss you, too. Hades let me come to see you. Many of the spirits are longing and restless today."

"I couldn't help but give a few moments of joy to you, Belle. Ares is a changed god. I thank you for that."

"Thank you." She sobbed with joy.

She was able to spend an hour with the spirit of her brother, before he needed to return to his paradise, and Belle was comforted.

\* \* \* \*

That evening as they lay in their bed at Mount Olympus, Belle held her husband close.

"Ares, I love you so much. Thank you for talking with Hades to let me see Jean-Luis again."

"I thought you'd like that. I knew you missed him."

"Today meant a lot to me, thank you." She leaned over his chest and kissed one of his nipples. "Hades said you were a changed god because of me."

"Yeah, well, I'd rather be home fucking my beautiful wife than fighting in a war. Go figure."

"I rather think of sex between us as making love. You know, make love, not war," she said with a laugh. She passed her tongue over his nipple again, and he groaned.

"You keep doing that, there will not be any making love in this bed tonight, because I am going to fuck that pretty little pussy, nice and proper."

"Promises, promises."

"A challenge?"

"Take it as you want."

"Oh you..." He flipped her onto her stomach and licked the indentation of her spine, slow and teasing. "Think I'm going to fuck you, sweetheart?"

"Mmm, maybe."

Then he let his hand fly and spanked her once, soundly upon her buttocks. She jumped, and he chuckled. "That was for misbehaving just now."

"But Mr. War-god, I'm a good wife. I like having my husband talk dirty to me."

He lay on top of her, his weight blessedly pushing her down into the soft mattress. Oh, such a glorious body he had, hard and muscled.

"Sweetheart, I'll do whatever turns you on. But right now, I have to fuck you ... make love to you." His last words were laced with emotion.

He eased off her back, and she moaned, but when he opened her legs from behind and positioned her hips upward, she ached in anticipation.

When he pushed his cock through her slick folds, she whimpered in delight. He was perfectly proportioned, and with one swift thrust, he filled her.

"Oh Ares..."

"Belle, honey, you feel so ... right."

He held her hips secure as he eased in then out, slow and sure. She enjoyed the sensation of each inch sliding along her wet walls. It was more than heavenly, it was blissfully spectacular.

With leisurely thrusts he made love to her, and she climbed up the mountain of pleasure with him guiding her along the way.

"Damn, sweetheart," he moaned.

"Oh, I can feel you growing,"

"I'm almost there," he panted, picking up the pace, unable to resist the building passions.

"Love me, Ares," she cried to him as he plunged deeper into her core.

"Coming sweetheart, I'm coming ... I love you." He spilled his hot essence into her body, and she milked him of each drop as she tumbled over the edge with him.

And when she lay in the arms of her Ares, her warrior lover, she breathed a sigh and whispered before sleep overtook her, "I love you. For always and forever."

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## **About the Author**

Marianne LaCroix started writing as a child in elementary school. Her first book was a story about a Christmas underwater featuring an eel, a whale and an octopus which she read to the first grade class to a memorable round of applause. She grew up in New Jersey in a small town located between Philadelphia and Atlantic City where she received her Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Glassboro State (aka Rowan University). Shortly afterwards, she married her "sexy Dutchman" and moved to Southwest Georgia. There she went back to school for nursing. After working several years in her local hospital in the cardiac step down unit and then a nursing home, she quit to be an at home mom.

When she was pregnant, Mari revisited her earlier passion for writing. Always a voracious reader, she decided to write romances she'd like to read. She has written several short stories, novellas and novels and has received numerous recognitions for her writing such as two Romantic Times BOOKclub Top Picks, a Paranormal Excellence Award for Romantic Literature (PEARL) Honourable Mention, and a Cupid and Psyche Award (CAPA). She is active in Romance Writers of America and is the founder of Florida Panhandle Romance Writers (FPHRW) located in Tallahassee, Florida. Mari loves reading romance, surfing the web, hanging out with her family and gossiping on the phone with friends. She loves attending writer conferences and reader conventions to meet her favourite authors and obtain cherished autographed

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copies of their books. A self described "bookaholic", her book collection numbers in the hundreds—and continues to grow steadily much to her husband's dismay.

Mari writes from her Georgia home where she lives with her husband, their twin daughters, two dogs, one cat, a cockatiel, and two hamsters.

Email: [mariannelacroix@gmail.com](mailto:mariannelacroix@gmail.com)

Marianne loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at [www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com).

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Nectar of the Gods  
by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

## **OH MY GOD**

Ashlyn Chase

\* \* \* \*



\* \* \* \*

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to my husband. He read it, laughed out loud in all the right parts and when he reached the end, said, 'It's so dirty. I love it!' And he's not one to blow sunshine up my skirt.

## Trademarks Acknowledgement

*The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:*

Kleneex: Kimberly-Clark Corporation

Etch a sketch: Ohio Art Company

Styrofoam: Dow Chemical Company

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## Chapter One

"Hello, everyone. I can't remember my name, but I think I'm an alcoholic."

The room fell silent. A few titters began in the back, then the chuckles spread and before I knew it, the whole room was guffawing.

"You came to the right place, Mister!" yelled a listener from the back of the room.

I felt my cheeks heating. They must be turning red. Well, fine, at least they'd match my eyes.

The gorgeous young women who'd taken me to this AA meeting slapped their luscious thighs and laughed out loud with the rest of them. If it wasn't for their sex appeal, I'd have stood up and walked out. How humiliating!

I pictured their creamy skin under their jeans. The brunette with big brown eyes would have a bikini tan. The other, an auburn redhead with long, spiral curls, would probably be a sunscreen wearer, but I loved fair complexions, too. In fact, I enjoyed pretty much everything about women. It's odd how I knew that about myself but little else since the amnesia.

I elbowed the pretty brunette on my right. "Hey, I came here to get help and everybody's laughing at me."

The young woman, Brandy she said her name was, patted me on the knee and said with a southern drawl, "It's all right, honey. We understand. We're laughin' with you."

"But I'm not laughing."

"Well you should, darlin'. When you're feelin' better, you'll be tellin' your story to the world, and you'll be laughin' too."

The meeting resumed but with my hangover, I couldn't concentrate on what the speakers said. Yet, despite my pounding headache and roiling stomach, I could concentrate on Brandy and Mandy's thighs.

I sensed a passionate nature in both of the women.

Mandy, the redhead, seemed like the quiet type. Like a swan though, she had all kinds of energy underneath the surface.

Brandy liked to touch. I loved touchers. Every chance she got she put a hand on my arm or my leg. Now if I can just get her to zero in on the space between them. My jeans grew tighter as I imagined it.

Mandy wagged her top leg continuously, and I could barely keep my eyes off her shapely ankle, graced by a rhinestone anklet. The afternoon light refracted sparkles from it as if fairy dust were being sprinkled all around our legs and feet. Her t-shirt spoke volumes in glitzy rhinestones too. They spelled out 'Half Naughty Half Nice. Which half do you want?' over her ample breasts. I wanted both halves in my mouth, thank you.

You've gotta love New Orleans. Short skirts, brilliant colours, and lots of glitz were the preferred attire in the French Quarter, especially at Carnival time. That must have been why I was here. Somehow, I just knew I never missed a good party.

Had I lived here for years? Maybe I was just a tourist. Why oh why hadn't I had some kind of ID on me when I fell off that balcony and onto my head last night at Mardi Gras?

The girls, Brandy and Mandy, said I had been leaning over the balcony trying to throw them some beads when they'd flashed their tits at me. They said I must have been pretty drunk because I'd almost fallen off the balcony when a flat-chested girl flashed, but the two of them showing their voluptuous gifts in unison must have been too much. I'd tumbled over the wrought iron railing and landed, *bam*, right on my head.

Fortunately, for me, they'd felt guilty and driven me to the hospital when I'd come to. They'd stayed until the emergency room had kicked me out, then they'd brought me here.

I couldn't wait until the meeting ended. I wanted to take the two of them to a private place to make out. Who was I kidding? I wanted to screw them silly. Maybe Armstrong Park ... Now how did I remember the name of a park in New Orleans, but I couldn't come up with my own name? Oh, man, I needed a drink.

Shit. Today was Ash Wednesday. Nine out of every ten people in the meeting hall had soot on their foreheads. The girls wanted to give up liquor for Lent. They said they did it every year and thought it would be a good idea if I did, too. Maybe they were right.

Maybe I was a Catholic. Everyone else seemed to be. And since I didn't know about the other bad habits I had, I'd have to give up alcohol, although I sensed I may have lots of bad habits.

Oh, thank Zeus. The meeting was almost over. We just needed to stand in a circle and hold hands. I could do that.

Mandy's hands were warm and dry. Brandy's were hot and sweaty, and she'd been flirting with me. Oh, yeah, she was ready to roll. Suddenly, everyone began to recite the Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father, who art on Mount Olymp..." *Hey*, they had a different version. Oh, well, I'd just listen to theirs and maybe next time I could fake it...

\* \* \* \*

While walking arm in arm with my willing women, my arm 'accidentally' brushed against their big, bouncy breasts. Little things began to come back to me. Nothing important, mind you, like my friggin' name.

Yet, I had flashes of what looked like it might be my everyday life. Scenes of debauchery and excess. Wine, women and song. Damn, it looked like fun. I must have been living the good life in N'awlins, as Brandy called it. But was my life really as good as it looked? I didn't get much out of the meeting, but it seemed as if alcohol had destroyed the lives of dozens of people.

Yet, the girls had mentioned that the key to sobriety was replacing an old bad habit with a healthy new one. I'm so glad we all agreed that sex is one of the healthiest habits out there. It's natural, it's fun, it's good exercise, and regular sexual release keeps that nasty frustration from building up. Hell, if only everybody was too busy fucking to get all pissed off, there'd be no more wars.

Brandy took us to her apartment. We wedged our bodies into her tiny elevator, and my zipper strained against the building lust in my cock. I really couldn't contain myself much longer. As soon as the doors were closed, I attacked Brandy, pushing her against the wall and kissing her hard. Meanwhile, my left hand found Mandy's boob so I grabbed and kneaded it. Mandy groaned in pleasure as my thumb found the large pebble among the small rhinestones, and I rubbed her nipple. How fortunate they went braless.

Brandy's breathing grew fast and shallow. I could tell their hearts were beating faster, too. Oh, yeah, I looked forward to a really good time.

It was all we could do to get into the privacy of Brandy's place before we exploded into orgasmic pleasure right there in the hallway. Her hands were shaking while trying to open the door with her key. Oh, dear Zeus. I couldn't wait any longer.

"Open the damn door!" On my words, the door flew open and all three of us tumbled inside.

"Wow, that was weird," Brandy said. "I hadn't even turned the key yet."

I ripped open my shirt without taking the time to unbutton it. Buttons flew everywhere. "Where's your bedroom?" I panted.

"In there!" Brandy pointed and both girls pulled their t-shirts off over their pretty heads as they bounced into the bedroom behind me. All four puckering nipples begged for my attention.

Oh Lord in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come and so would I, just as soon as—

Whoa. What if I couldn't hold off long enough to satisfy both of them? I wanted my own release, of course, but I had to see the ecstasy on their faces, too.

What was I worried about? I could sense my studliness.

We all wriggled out of our jeans at the same time, and I stole a glance at their gorgeous backsides as they whipped off their thongs. When they turned towards me, they gaped at my enormous erection. I raised my eyebrows at their completely bare pussies. When had girls begun shaving their entire pubic areas? Hey, I wasn't complaining. No more little curly hairs in my mouth? That worked for me.

I couldn't help noticing Mandy—her bright, eager smile and taut, round ass up in the air as she jumped onto bed. Oh, man. She was all woman. Not at all the shy creature she had seemed. Her rhinestone anklet sparkled in the low light.

"Aren't you going to take off that jewellery, Mandy, dear? I don't want it scraping against my back while we're doing it."

"I never take it off. Is that a problem?"

I shook my head. I'd just have to avoid the damn thing. I wasn't about to give up my romp with the glorious redhead.

Meanwhile, Brandy's aggressive nature hinted at a bit of testosterone and that excited the hell out of me, too. She grabbed my cock, stroked it and said, "I can't wait to fuck this monster. I want to be first."

"I've never seen one so big," Mandy said, breathlessly. "But if Brandy's first, then it may be a little less, um, full by the time you get to me, right?"

"Don't worry my lovelies. I'll have plenty for you both. Meanwhile, Mandy, you can play with it while I kiss and fondle your anxious friend."

"Oh, God, please hurry," Brandy cried.

I grinned. '*Oh, God.*' Something about that particular exclamation pleased me. Her legs were already spread wide. I dove on top of Brandy and raised myself to a kneeling position, so Mandy could scoot underneath, face up, and suck my cock. One quick kiss and I went straight to Brandy's boobs. I devoured the right one while balancing on my right elbow. My free hand travelled to her pussy, and I teased the wet folds of her labia while she writhed and moaned.

Meanwhile, Mandy had found my balls and licked them energetically. Oh, Mama! I savoured the electric shudders coursing through me.

I sensed Mandy's tentativeness about taking my huge cock in her mouth. Fine. She'd love its length and thickness as soon as I sunk it inside of her. Somehow I knew a woman would appreciate a good stretch while I connected with her G-spot. In my flashes of memory, it seemed as if I had done a lot of fucking.

Brandy moaned, and as soon as I shifted my attention to her other breast, she clutched my hair. Thank Zeus it's shorter than it appeared in some of my flashbacks. I must have cut it for just this reason. Her moans and arches increased as I suckled harder.

By then she had begun pulling my hair, and I was through playing. Her nether regions were completely soaked. Now, I'd give her what she'd come for. Or what she *would* come for

any second. She began bucking and screaming the minute I rubbed my wet fingers over her clitoris. I pictured fistfuls of my hair being yanked out so I told her to remove her fingers, and I shimmied down to suck and lick her clit.

"Yes, yes!" she cried as her body vibrated. In no time at all she bucked, screamed and convulsed. Meanwhile, Mandy had adjusted and poked her finger in my ass while she licked my dick.

Oh, these girls were great. I'd have to reward each of them with the best orgasms they'd ever have in their lives. And I'd have plenty, myself, by the time the night was through.

Brandy pushed at me, and in a weak voice she begged, "No more. Oh, God, please, I can't take any more."

That's all she needed to say. I rose up and balanced on my knees as I gave her a big sloppy smile, my mouth covered with her juices. "I think you might like to rest a bit while I give Mandy equal treatment."

She nodded, a grateful look in her eyes.

"Mandy, honey, you did a remarkable job on my balls. Once Brandy recovers, maybe she'll suck my cock for me. I want to be hard as a spike when I screw her."

Brandy smiled and nodded enthusiastically. Apparently, she couldn't talk yet. She breathed as if practicing Lamaze.

I told Mandy to show me her beautiful ass, and she kneeled in front of me. Oh, dear Zeus, I loved her in that position. I fondled her soft bottom first, then cupped and squeezed her beautiful, natural tits while I rubbed my cock up and down her ass crack. Brandy said she was ready to go

down on me, so I flipped over and told Mandy to sit on my face while I licked her to heaven. She complied happily.

Brandy hardened my erection to cast iron with her slow, steady rhythm. "Oh ... I love that, Brandy. Keep it up."

"Pun intended?" Mandy asked.

Ha! Cute *and* bright. Oh, yes. I'd get her off as if she had been launched by NASA.

I parted her pussy lips with my tongue and buried it inside her cunt, listening to her groan as I fucked her with my long tongue.

Meanwhile, Brandy had increased the speed and suction, so I had to take some deep breaths through my nose and hope I wouldn't hyperventilate. I moved my mouth to cover Mandy's button. As I licked and sucked her, she came, and came, and came in earth shattering cries. My word, but the quiet one could scream! My mouth dripped with her liquids down both sides of my face. At last, when she quieted, she pulled herself away and collapsed, facing the foot of the bed.

"Oh, finally!" Brandy seemed mighty excited. "Where do you want me?"

"I want you on top, Brandy baby."

She straddled me and hovered over my cock. Her anxious eyes and deep breath betrayed her trepidation about the fit. At last, she sunk down on it, and we both moaned in bliss. Mandy struggled up onto one elbow and watched me fuck her friend with fascinated interest.

Brandy gurgled and moaned and threw her head back. We mated in a savage rhythm, the brave girl bouncing up and down on top of my engorged erection. For some reason, I felt

able to control my cock's movements even though I was ready to shatter. I made sure it touched the sweet spot inside her cavern, and we both went crazy.

She bucked, as if riding a wild stallion, which in a way, she was.

"Oh God! Oh God!" she cried. I allowed myself to orgasm after Brandy had crashed over the edge. I pulled out and shot into space, releasing my copious cum.

Brandy tumbled off and lay on the other side of me in a limp heap and I wondered if she had passed out. Maybe she had. Well, at least she was still breathing. She wheezed like an asthmatic.

"Mandy, my sweet, lick your friend's honey off my cock, and as soon as we're all revved up, I'll take you doggy style."

"Ugh. Lick off Brandy's cum? That's kind of disgusting. I'd rather not."

"Oh. I guess it never occurred to me that it might be distasteful since I have both of your fluids all over my face..."

"How about if I wipe you off with my hand?" She winked.

"Sure, baby. That'll work too."

She worked me up into a lather with a fantastic hand job. Soon, I was ready to go again and anxious to bury my big cock in her little cunt. I grabbed her chin and shapely warm body and pulled her towards my mouth. Electricity simmered between us as we shared a deep, passionate, French kiss. Our tongues were like toys, and we played with each other. One hiding and the other seeking. We played with our bodies too. I kneaded and squeezed her tits, and she pulled and

squeezed my penis. A delightful suction had built up in the fusion of our mouths.

Kissing Mandy beat the hell out of kissing Brandy. My tongue just couldn't stop teasing the inside of her mouth. She seemed to take pleasure in kissing me back, darting her tongue over and past my lips, mating, swirling, sucking...

Who knew that a simple kiss could make me so hot?

Maybe she just knew how to lay one on. I could get used to this. At last, we managed to pry ourselves apart, already panting. Both of us on fire, we needed completion more than oxygen and were going to fuck savagely. She positioned herself on her hands and knees in front of me.

Dear Zeus, I wanted to fuck this little filly more than I'd ever wanted anything in my life ... I think. I had no idea what I might have wanted in the past, but I sure as hell wanted this now. I was in danger of ramming my rod right into her.

I couldn't help noticing she trembled, though.

"Mandy, sweet angel. I know you're a little afraid of my enormity, but don't worry. We'll fit just fine. I'll be gentle. You'll see."

She visibly relaxed and turned her head to smile at me. "Okay. I'll tell you if it hurts." Concern suddenly sobered her expression. "You'll stop, won't you? If it hurts, I mean?"

I stroked her soft butt cheeks and said, "Of course, I will, darling." Damn, I wanted to fuck her so badly, I'd have said anything. So fine, innocent and willing. I had to have this one even if I had to fold my member in half.

I tested her wetness. She was well lubed and ready.

I entered her slowly. She groaned but in a welcoming way. Oh, but her passage hugged my cock. So tight and so desirable. I let out a long moan and managed to pull back as gently as I entered.

Brandy stirred and opened her eyes just as I found my rhythm with Mandy. Oh good. Now she could watch. I reached around and played with Mandy's clit, and she growled in a thoroughly sexy way through her teeth. Soon she was arching her back and moaning louder and louder.

My own sexual pleasure built to a lofty peak. Mandy gasped, panted and yelped into her bliss. She quivered all over and began to spasm just as I reached my climax. I ejaculated inside of her. My finger kept up the frantic stimulation on her clit.

She was convulsing and screaming. Shuddering and screaming. Clenching and screaming. She climaxed so ferociously I felt like cheering, 'Go, Mandy, go'!

Or should that be 'Come, Mandy, come'? Either way, she gasped and screamed in a more prolonged orgasm than I thought possible. Dear Zeus. I hoped it wouldn't kill her.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God!" she cried.

Poor thing would probably have laryngitis after this. At last, she fell onto the pillow she had been clutching with a whimper. Brandy's eyes were as big as camera lenses, and she blinked, as if taking pictures.

Mandy relaxed there, limp and damp. I ran my hand over my favourite ass in the world, or at least in the room, and asked if she was all right. She giggled.

In a weak rasp, she replied, "Thank you—whatever your name is."

I chuckled. "Why don't you call me 'God'? It seems you both like to use that name with me anyway."

Brandy's shock passed once her friend appeared to have survived the experience. "Ha, we might call you that in bed but not in public."

"Who says we're going to be together in public?" I quipped.

Brandy looked hurt. "Me. Us. Aren't we going to hang out together? What about AA?"

"I don't need it. I'll be fine on my own. Besides, I'd like to get out there and see if anyone recognises me."

This tart wasn't quite getting the picture. I had planned to love 'em and leave 'em. I mean, I sensed that's what I usually did.

In my flashbacks, I saw myself fucking hundreds of women at orgies, in alleys, under tables. If women weren't available, men would do, but I'd seen no repeats in my flashbacks yet.

Still I wouldn't mind making love to that minx, Mandy, again. There's nothing like being appreciated for your talents. She had given me a loud and enthusiastic standing 'O'.

Brandy slowly rose off the bed. Her eyes flashed fire and her nostrils flared. "How dare you?" she yelled. "You used us. Now you're just going to get dressed and go?"

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## Chapter Two

"Well, no. I'd planned on staying the night. I could pleasure you both for a few more hours before I have to leave."

"Oh yeah?" Brandy leaned forward and jammed her hands on her hips. "I don't think so, Mister. It's bad enough you don't want to associate with us after screwing us in front of each other, which we let you do out of the goodness of our hearts and future memories, but to come right out and admit it was a one night stand?" Her voice screeched into a high pitched crescendo.

I propped myself on my elbow and puzzled over her curious reaction.

"So, you're telling me that I shouldn't be honest about further involvement? I should make you believe I'll be back to pleasure you whenever you like. Be your booty call? Maybe even lie and say, 'I'll call you' when, clearly, I don't know if I will or not?"

Brandy's face reddened, and she looked like she might explode when Mandy intervened.

"Brandy, relax. He doesn't owe us anything. It's not like we had an understanding or a commitment or anything."

"So you're fine with this?" she screamed. "You don't mind letting a *pig* fuck your brains out knowing the whole time it's just to get his rocks off then disappear?"

"Well, we knew what would take place. We went into it voluntarily. And we didn't ask for more than sex, did we?"

"Who asks for a commitment before they screw?"

Brandy made absolutely no sense to me whatsoever. Fortunately, Mandy seemed to have her head on straight.

"Well, to be honest, Brand, lots of people do."

"But that never works. Men don't stay interested unless you give 'em a little somethin' somethin'. Now he's gone and made us into sluts!"

Mandy shook her head. It seemed useless to argue, so I reluctantly hauled my contented body from the bed and picked up my clothes. Mandy did the same. Brandy stormed off, letting Mandy and I get dressed.

We stole a glance at each other while wiping up with some Kleenex from the nightstand and Mandy said, "I'm sorry about that. She and I have never done this before. I guess we should have talked about it first."

"It's not your fault. You were great. You shouldn't apologise."

We struggled into our tight jeans with semi-sticky legs. After she pulled up her zipper, she asked, "So, do you know who you are, yet? Where you live and stuff?"

"No. I keep having these flashbacks but nothing helpful. I mean, they're very erotic images and that's cool, but I still don't have any idea what my name is or where I might be staying around here."

"He's lying," Brandy yelled from another room. "He knows exactly who he is. He's a pig who pretends to have amnesia so he can get girls to feel sorry for him and take him home. Then he fucks them two at a time! I can't believe I put on a

sex show for my best friend! At least, you *were* my friend, Mandy."

"Brandy, don't do this. He screwed us like that because we wanted him to."

Fortunately, I heard the shower start running, and we could talk without being overheard.

"I should probably get out of here. You can do what you want, but I'd advise you to leave, too. I'll bet that girl could scratch your eyes out just for telling the truth and making sense."

"You're right." To my sorrow, Mandy pulled on her glittery t-shirt covering her beautiful bust.

As we left the apartment, I let her step in front of me and followed her down the narrow hallway to the elevator. Hubba, hubba. Her round, little tush swayed back and forth while my mouth watered, again. Was Brandy right? Am I a pig? I hope not because if I am, I think I enjoy being that way. Still, Mandy didn't seem to have a problem with it.

"So, do you have plans?" I found myself asking her. "Anywhere you have to be tonight?"

"Not really. I just thought I'd go home and get some sleep. I have to work tomorrow."

"Not until tomorrow? Well, that's good. There's plenty of time if you want to ... um, hang out some more?"

She smiled at me—not the usual polite smile. It denoted a deep understanding of exactly what I meant and delight in my asking. We exited to the street, and her blue eyes sparkled and glowed in the light of the gas lamps lining the sidewalk.

"I could..."

"Great!" I shoved her up against the brick building, thrust my anxious hands over her tits and kissed her hard. She returned the kiss, but only for a moment before she pushed me away.

"I—I think we need a couple of ground rules, first," she said, looking nervous.

"Like what?" I held my breath and prayed she didn't want to turn into a *nice* girl all of a sudden.

"I have kind of an issue with you. First, I want you to know I just had the best sex of my life."

I nodded. "Okay, that doesn't sound so bad." *What the hell?* Were all women impossible to please?

"It's just that..." She slipped her arms around my neck and pulled herself close. Her nipples brushed against my chest, and I caught my breath. "It's just that this threesome with my best friend was an experiment. I liked it and could handle it—once. I figured we would have one wild night for our memories in our old age. But I can't get into the idea of sex in front of other people on a regular basis."

"Oh, sure, I understand. But don't you find that a little exhilarating? The idea of someone watching you fuck, er, make love?"

She smiled and looked at the sidewalk. "Sort of, but I was a little embarrassed, too."

"You didn't seem to mind watching as I gave your friend her satisfaction."

She rubbed my biceps as she talked. Her expression appeared serious but neutral. Maybe she's a research scientist or something?

"No, I didn't. I was curious. I'm glad she went first, though. I was a little nervous about your size. I enjoyed watching, and she was completely okay with having me watch. At least, I thought so at the time."

Oh shit. I was hard as a rock again.

"I like to know what to expect," she continued. "I think all women do. Maybe that's why Brandy got so mad because she expected the wrong thing."

"I love how honest you are. And I'm going to be completely honest with you, angel." I cosied up to her ear and whispered, "That was the best sex of my life, too."

She grinned, and as she kissed me, I congratulated myself for allaying her fears so successfully. How did I know if that was the best sex I had ever had? Don't get me wrong, it was absolutely fantastic. I loved it. But, if I went by what I knew for sure about my life, I'd have to say it was the only sex I'd ever had. Who could tell what I was remembering? Maybe I was just watching reruns of 3-D sex shows in my brain. But it felt so real. Maybe I was a porn star?

When I thought about it, I had to admit that some of those flashbacks were pretty strange. People in togas wearing olive branches around their heads? It must have been a costume party. Some party, though. I'd had two or three lovely ladies all over me at once, biting, licking and fucking me senseless.

Mandy's pink complexion grew pinker, and she gazed up into my eyes. "Would you like to come home with me? We could have a nice time, just the two of us. Don't you think?"  
Think? With all the blood rushing out of my brain?  
"Of course we could. You do mean 'have sex', don't you?"  
"Absolutely."  
"Thanks, I'd love to."

\* \* \* \*

Mandy's place was nice. She lived in the Garden District in one of those grand homes with white columns. Of course, she lived in an apartment on the third floor over a nosy landlady and there was no elevator, but what the hell? We had spent most of the trolley ride making out in the back so we practically floated up the stairs. That girl could kiss. Maybe she couldn't put my cock in her mouth yet, but I'd be patient and teach her how. Soon, she'd be sliding her full lips up and down my shaft like a sex machine.

Mandy and I undressed each other in her kitchen. We had stopped to get a drink. We only had fruit juice, I swear. No alcohol. I meant what I had said about giving up booze for the forty days of Lent.

I unzipped and yanked down her jeans while she was reaching into the cabinet for glasses. I had to work the jeans over her rhinestone anklet so it didn't get caught and break. She seemed to think it was special, and I wondered who had given it to her.

She giggled, slapped the glasses on the counter and whirled around. First, she liberated me of my button-less

shirt, then while she sucked my nipples, she unzipped my jeans and worked them down to my knees. I bent over to finish taking them off. As I stood up, I grabbed her pretty t-shirt and whipped it over her head.

Then I shoved her up against the fridge and cupped her ass as I kissed her senseless. Those little magnet things were falling off the fridge all over the floor. My fingers wandered into her thong and pulled the fabric aside while I fingered her already wet pussy. We weren't even horizontal and we were already rounding third base.

She grabbed my cock and used her magic hand to make the valiant soldier stand ramrod straight. Oh, dear Zeus, I couldn't wait to ram my rod right into her anxious, hot cunt.

I broke the kiss to suck her lush, succulent breasts while I worked the thong down until she pulled one high-heeled sandal out of it. Oh, man. She was quivering and moaning already. I had to bury my cock in her, soon.

I grabbed her soft, round bottom, lifted her and pressed her ass against the refrigerator door and without protest, she wrapped her legs around me. Her cunt was wet, open and inviting me in. This time I wasn't quite as gentle. My cock found her hole like it was a North Pole magnet and there was a South Pole version behind her on the refrigerator door saying, 'Take me. Take me now!' We were pulled together with what could only be called compelling force.

She gasped as I plunged then let her breath out on a sigh.

"Are you all right, my sweet?"

"Oh, yes. Do me, please," she said.

"I want to hear you say it right."

She opened her eyes and looked at me in obvious bewilderment. "What?"

"As long as I understand exactly what you want, Mandy. Do you want me to fuck you?"

I pulled out slowly and sunk back in even more slowly. "I want to hear you say, 'Fuck me. Fuck me, darling, fuck me.'"

She moaned as I slid in to the hilt. Then she leaned back and closed her eyes, squinting hard. "Dear, God. Fuck me. Do it!"

"All right, yes. I certainly will."

I took her with long slow strokes until she was continuously moaning and groaning with sexual pleasure. Then I upped the speed and power of my thrusts, hitting her clit harder each time. When I sensed she was close, I really went for broke. Soon she was vibrating in my arms and screaming out my great, new nickname.

"Oh, God! Dear God! Oh, oh, oh..." Her body shook hard, and it was all I could do to keep her from knocking me off balance. Then I came with great jerks and spurts. At least, I finished before we both fell on the hard, linoleum floor.

When I stopped laughing, I asked, "Thirsty now?"

She looked through heavily lidded eyes where fire still smouldered. "More than ever. You got anything left for me to drink?"

\* \* \* \*

I woke up the next day underneath Mandy's red, satin sheet and had a hard time finding my way out. I smiled as I remembered why I was upside down and under the covers.

That girl was full of surprises. As it turned out, I didn't need to teach her a thing.

I heard the shower running and remembered she had to work. Bummer. Then I wondered if I had a job somewhere, and I was AWOL. Had anyone missed me yet? What did I do for a living? Salesman? I seemed able to sell Mandy on just about anything I wanted to do.

Work was something I had to look into, but I wasn't all that anxious to find any. I was enjoying myself. If I found out I had responsibilities, especially if they were pure drudgery—well, I just wouldn't think about that yet. But if my memory didn't return, I would have to get a job. I didn't want to mooch off anyone for too long.

Ah, the shower stopped. Should I walk in and surprise her? As I was getting to my feet, I realised that I could easily wear out my welcome if not my hostess. Besides, it was really time to hit the road. We'd had a good time, but I needed to show my face around town and see if anyone recognised it. I'd find that balcony in the French Quarter but late at night, after the parties started.

Mandy popped her towel-wrapped head into the bedroom. In a long, pink robe with rhinestones around the collar and cuffs and a freshly washed face with no makeup, she looked even more innocent. But I knew better.

"Oh, you're up. I'll throw together some breakfast. You must be starving."

I grinned and said, "Yeah. I worked up quite an appetite last night. Have you got a side of beef or a roast pig on hand?"

She giggled in that cute way she had, then said, "I'll find something," and disappeared. I assumed to the kitchen. I went to the bathroom to wash up and dress. Hmm. My clothes were beginning to smell a bit ripe. I needed to wash them, but without a laundry, I improvised. I climbed into the claw-footed bathtub with my jeans and jockey shorts and washed everything in strawberry scented soap. My shirt buttons were gone, so I tossed the shirt in the trash and bathed my armpits. Then I drained the tub, pulled the shower curtain around me and rinsed off in the warm spray. Getting into wet clothes wasn't the easiest thing I've ever done.

I had wrung my clothes out, but still left little puddles trailing behind me on the wood floor as I made my way to the kitchen. I'd just have to dry out in the sun.

"Good morning, beautiful," I said. Mandy was taking corn bread out of the oven. It smelled delicious, and my mouth watered like I hadn't eaten for days. In actuality, I hadn't eaten anything since a donut at the AA meeting. Hmm. Free food. Maybe I could go to another meeting or two.

"I don't usually eat at home, but I had this in the fridge. I hope it's enough." There was butter, cream cheese, jelly and peanut butter on the table. I piled a bit of everything on a couple of generous slices of hot cornbread and crammed big bites into my mouth before they crumbled.

Her azure eyes grew wide in amusement, but she didn't try to teach me manners, thank goodness. I appreciated her easy-going style. Mandy embodied the meaning of *Big Easy*.

"So, what are you going to do today?" she asked.

"Dunno." That was all I could mumble around the mouthful.

"I have a few dollars you can have."

I held up my hand and shook my head. She ignored my silent protest and stuffed some one-dollar bills into my jeans pocket. The contact of her fingers through the wet fabric on my thigh sent an electrical signal to my cock. It poked up its head hopefully. Then she found a few quarters and placed them on the table.

"You'll need money for the trolley." She had an uncertain expression on her face and gentled her voice. "Both ways, if you want to come back."

*Come back?* I hadn't even thought about coming back. Wasn't it time to say 'goodbye' and move on? I took some extra time to think about that while I chewed.

She shrugged. "I mean, you don't have to or anything. I just thought, you know, if you don't have any luck finding out who you are and still don't have a place to stay..."

I finally swallowed and nodded. "Thanks. That's nice of you. I'll, uh, see what happens."

She smiled, nodded and looked at her plate. She had buttered her cornbread but added some jelly to it as she spoke. "It was great. Last night, I mean."

"Yeah. It was for me, too." I had the feeling I was supposed to follow up with something like a promise to call or a plan to get together again. I used a diversion.

"So, where do you work, Mandy?"

"At the culinary school in the Warehouse District. It's a nice place. People treat me well, and I eat for free. I get out by four-thirty, usually."

"Sounds good."

"It's boring. I work in the office."

"Oh. Well, I can't thank you enough for your hospitality. And the trolley fare."

She stood. "Do you want a t-shirt? I have a couple of large ones."

"Sure. Do you have the pink one that says, 'I want to be Barbie. The bitch has everything?'"

She giggled, then her expression turned sad. "I'm going to miss your sense of humour. You're a lot of fun."

With that, she hurried to her bedroom. I felt odd. I wasn't sure what was coming over me. I hadn't experienced this feeling before. At least, I didn't think I had. Damn, it was inconvenient not to know much about myself. I hoped more than ever I'd run into someone who knew me.

Mandy returned with a plain black t-shirt. Size large. It was a snug fit and really stretched out over my chest, but she assured me it made me look hot so I accepted it gratefully. Now the walk to the door and the kiss goodbye. There was that feeling again. Ugh. I didn't like it. Whatever it was, it was unpleasant.

I hoped the discomfort would leave when I did, so I planned to give her a quick peck on the cheek and be on my way. I held her chin between my index finger and thumb for a moment and looked into her eyes. That did it. Her eyes were

shimmering, turquoise blue, like the gulf beyond the muddy Mississippi. This woman was different. A breath of fresh air.

She did her best to put on a weak smile. Crap. She was feeling the same thing. I had to get out of there.

"See ya. Thanks for everything" I said. I stuck out my hand, and she put hers in mine accepting an awkward handshake instead of a kiss. Again, she gave me a sad smile but didn't protest.

Dear Zeus, that was it. The feeling was sadness. I hated that feeling! Somehow, I knew that it had to be avoided it at all costs. Now, I understood why. It hurt. Almost physically right in my chest. I opened the door and charged down the stairs two at a time.

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### Chapter Three

The trolley let me off on Canal Street. I hoped to run into someone I knew in the French Quarter and put this identity issue to rest. At this hour of the morning, Bourbon Street would be fairly quiet. I'd wait until later to visit the balcony I'd plummeted from. Tourists still milled about, and the cafes were full. Maybe I'd find some of the same people I'd partied with Tuesday night. They couldn't all still be sleeping it off, right?

How much money did I have? Not a lot. Three dollars. The trolley had cost a dollar and twenty-five cents. That left me with less than two bucks for lunch if I wanted to save enough to get back to Mandy's place for the night.

Damn. What a decision. Eat? Sleep in comfort later? Become a purse-snatcher? I thought the last one through. Although they'd give me food and a place to sleep if I got caught, prison sex wasn't what I wanted. I didn't want to settle for ugly men in showers when there were so many pretty women in bars.

I bought a pretzel. It's amazing how long a person can make a pretzel last if they're not sure when their next meal might be. I found myself thinking about starving children in other parts of the world. As soon as I had the ability to do so, I'd write a check to alleviate world hunger. Unfortunately, at the moment, I didn't know what name to sign at the bottom.

Uh, oh. Sadness alert! Had to distract myself somehow. I wandered aimlessly and tried to ignore swirls of seagulls

eyeing my pretzel. With my head hung low, I bumped into a man who was looking up at the birds. He stopped, studied my face, and his expression turned from annoyance to surprise. "Hey, don't I know you?" he said.

"Yeah, yeah..." I was faking it, hoping he'd come up with the connection if I let him. "You look familiar to me, too. How long has it been?"

"Must be thirty years," he said. "You haven't changed at all."

Thirty years? Who was he kidding? I'd seen myself in a mirror. I looked no more than thirty years old now. Did he remember me from my baby carriage?

He frowned. "No. It couldn't be. You look just like someone I knew in college though. My mistake." Then he smiled and looked like he was drifting off into another, happier time. "He was quite the party animal. I wonder what ever happened to good old Dennis?" He shook his head as if clearing the picture from his etch a sketch brain. "Sorry."

"That's okay, man," I said, although I was hugely disappointed.

College. That was a thought. Maybe I went to school here? I stopped by a store that was selling local maps and studied one carefully hoping the name of some school would ring a bell. Nothing. Nada. Zip.

\* \* \* \*

I wasted the afternoon walking around a college campus, a music school, and two bookstores. Apparently, I wasn't much

for higher learning. The kids on campus looked like—well, kids. I was easily older than most by several years.

Even Mandy was older than college undergrads. I wondered how old she was? I had never asked. I wondered if she had gone to college? And I wondered if I should spend my last buck seventy-five on food or trolley fare.

So far, no one had acted like they recognised me, except for the one gentleman who told me I looked like some kid from thirty years ago named Dennis.

My legs were in good shape, but I had walked all over the friggin' city trying to hang onto that trolley fare. I had to wonder why.

My frustrated efforts were beginning to wear on me. I seemed like such a social guy. Where were all my friends? So far, I had made one friend and one enemy and I had screwed them both and moved on. I had to go back to the old city at night despite a bit of apprehension. I was sure that's where I'd find the friends I must have.

What if I didn't have any friends? None at all? Was that why I was holding onto the little money I had and listening to my stomach growl in hunger? I had a sinking feeling there was more to it.

Something about the way my mind kept returning to Mandy bothered me. I was having another feeling I couldn't identify. I kept thinking of her eyes. Her brave refusal to give in to fruitless complaining. Her gifts of kindness, money, even her body. To me—Mr. whoever-you-are. Talk about unconditional!

Okay, it was decision time. Another pretzel or back to Mandy's for a light snack and lots of fucking for dessert? I decided to eat, then that rotten sadness came over me again. As I brooded, I passed a small side street that smelled so good, I had to investigate.

\* \* \* \*

What luck! I burped and rubbed my contented abdomen after having discovered a dumpster behind a restaurant and cooking school. The students must be getting good grades. I'd had some delicious red beans and rice. There were even leftovers that someone must have forgotten to take with them. They were nicely packaged in a Styrofoam container.

Yes, this was the feeling I liked most of all. Belly content. Money in pocket. Woman waiting for fun in bed. Ah, life was good again.

Then I rounded the corner and ran right into Brandy.

She was walking with a guy who looked a bit like her, including some big, man boobs. He towered over me and easily outweighed me by fifty pounds.

Her large eyes rounded, and she pointed at me. "That's him!"

I tried to take a nonchalant approach. "Hey, Brandy. Nice to see you again. I'd love to stay and talk, but..."

Big bruiser interrupted me. "My little sister tells me you took advantage of her and her friend. You're gonna pay for that, Mister."

"Pay? Wouldn't that make her a..."

Bam!

When I came to, Brandy and her 'goon' were gone. So was my money. Crap. Sadness crept in and wedged itself between the throbs of physical pain in my body and left eye. I was pretty sure that would leave a mark.

Knowledge of my identity had not returned. I was hoping that whatever had been shaken loose might have been knocked back into place. But that hadn't happened.

Once I regained my orientation, I noticed dusk was fast approaching. Realising that the disfigurement I had received from Brandy's brother might interfere with my swift identification angered me, but I had to try anyway.

I rose slowly to my feet and staggered, at first. Someone was coming the other way. I braced myself against the brick building and waited for him to pass. Instead, he slowed down as he came closer. A smile formed on his pudgy face, and he put out his hand.

"Hey there, I know you."

My eyebrows shot up. "You know me?"

"Well, I've seen you. You were at the AA meeting. There's another one tonight. Let me take you there."

"No. Thanks, man. Really. It's just that I have other plans."

"What could be more important than your sobriety?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe finding out who I am? Where I live? If I have a job and a family?"

"Still can't remember?"

"No, I can't. But I'm doing fine. Thanks for the offer."

I started to walk away in long, quick strides, but he caught up and walked beside me.

"I hate to say it, but you don't look fine. In fact, you don't look good at all. Let me help."

I kept going. "I know I look like a mess, but I haven't had a drop of liquor since that meeting, honest."

"Look. You've been beaten up, you have garbage stains all over your t-shirt, you're homeless, and if you haven't started drinking again yet, that's great, but you probably will."

"You forgot the part about I have no money. Would you have a couple of bucks you could spare?"

The stranger put a hand on my arm, thus stopping my march. He looked at me with sad eyes and said, "I can't do that. You'll spend it on booze. You can come home with me, though. I'm sure my wife would love to give you a hot, home-cooked meal, and I might find you some clean clothes. Then you can sleep on my couch for the night. We can go to AA tomorrow morning. How does that sound?"

\* \* \* \*

I woke up the next morning to the smell of bacon and eggs. Oh, but I was a slave to my stomach. Mrs. L, I believe her name was Marie, got up and prepared a big breakfast for Mr. L and me. His name was Roland L. An odd last name, I thought.

Meanwhile he thought it would be a good idea for me to take a name. Any name. I picked the only name that came to mind.

"Eat up, Dennis. The meeting serves donuts, but you'll need some of Marie's good nutrition if you're going to resist the urge to drink."

"Thanks, I'm starving. Resisting alcohol won't be hard, though. I have a strong constitution."

"We all do, son. Still, you can afford a few pounds." He patted his rounded belly and laughed. "You've got a long way to go before you look like me."

Thank Zeus for that.

He gifted me with a black leather jacket that he had been keeping for posterity. He said he'd never be able to zip it again and thought I might as well get some use out of it.

As soon as I had eaten and attended another meeting to make this nice guy feel good, I'd be on my way. I wondered why I decided it was important to do this for him, but I didn't have an answer. It just felt like the right thing to do.

Roland lived within walking distance of the meeting, and he thought it would be good for our health to get a little exercise. I just hoped I didn't take up jogging and eating trail mix. I did feel a whole lot better though. A shower, clean clothes, a warm jacket and a good breakfast had done wonders for my mood—until I thought of Mandy.

She had probably hoped to see me on her doorstep when she got home last evening. I could picture the disappointment on her pretty face. Tears may have even rolled down those lightly freckled cheeks of hers. I fantasised about wiping a tear from her peach-soft skin and kissing her cheek. Then letting my tongue slide down her neck and—

Someone came up behind me and spoke in a loud male voice thereby interrupting my magnificent daydream.

"Hey Mister. Be careful of the guy you're with, especially if you have any daughters!"

Damn. It was Brandy's brother again.

"Leave me alone!" I yelled. Suddenly as if on my command, he turned and fled. That seemed like odd behaviour for him.

Roland looked at me with raised eyebrows. "Want to talk about it?"

"No!"

"Suit yourself." Roland stuck his hands in his pockets and kept strolling.

For some reason, I felt rotten yelling at him like that. I could yell at Brandy and her goon of a brother, but Roland was another matter.

"I'm sorry, Roland. I shouldn't have taken my frustration out on you. He deserved it, but you're my—my..."

"Sponsor," he interjected.

"Oh." He looked over and gave me a knowing smile.

Yeah, I guess he had sponsored me last night. His wife stuffed me full of crawfish *etoufette*. Roland washed my jeans and t-shirt and found a coat that used to be his, but now it's mine. How cool was that?

We arrived at the meeting, and Roland began introducing me to people. Since we were early, I chowed down on donuts and coffee and kind of enjoyed my new, er, friends. I had all but forgotten that I might meet an old acquaintance when I felt a hard slap on my back.

"Big D! I don't believe it! What the heck are you doin' here?"

I whirled around and saw a big, bald guy. My age, probably. He was built like a bouncer.

"You know me?"

The big guy laughed. Then he scrutinised my face and must have realised I was serious. "You're kiddin' right?"

"No, I'm not. I've been having some, uh, problems with my memory lately. If you know me, please tell me what you know."

He narrowed his eyes and hissed through his teeth. "You're the reason I'm here, asshole."

Roland put a hand on the guy's shoulder. "George, let's keep it constructive. You're both here for the same thing. Recovery."

Bouncer boy took a deep breath and hung his head for a moment. Then he looked me in the eye and said, "Look, I'm sorry if I offended you, but do you really want to know the truth about yourself? I'd better warn you, you might not like what you hear."

This caught me off guard. I finally found someone who knew me, and instead of telling me what a great guy I was, he called me an asshole.

I looked to Roland, and he put his other hand on my shoulder creating a bridge between us. "We've all done things in the past that we're not proud of. I know how ashamed I was when I finally remembered everything I'd done. Marie had already thrown me out of the big bed, and I was about to lose my place on the couch too. I put that poor girl through hell."

Mandy popped into my mind.

"It's possible that our friend is blocking things he's not ready to handle yet, George. Why don't you tell him basics,

like his name and where he lives if you know? Things like that."

George shrugged. "We called him 'Big D.' I don't know where he came from or where he went at the end of the day—or the beginning of the next day, more accurately."

"So, you don't know me well. Maybe I'm a nice guy, and you caught me on a bad day."

"Bad day? Honest to God, I've never seen anyone able to drink so much, eat so much, or screw so many women during the same night in my life."

"Big D, huh? Is that all you can tell me about my name?"

"That's it. The women nicknamed you. I'm pretty sure it was because..."

I coughed. "That's okay. I think I can guess." Ambivalence was coursing through me and forcing me into a swirl of emotions.

"Is there anyone who knows me and likes me? Maybe even cares about me?"

He shrugged and shook his head. "I don't know. I don't think so."

Another flashback popped into my brain, and I saw more depraved activity. A naked man and woman in chains and anyone wanting a turn at them taking one. They didn't look like they were enjoying being fucked constantly. Some guys did both of them.

"You used to get a kick out of setting up competitions to see who could consume the largest amount of wine. You gave the winner any woman he wanted and watched to see if he

could fuck her to completion before passing out." I heard George, and somehow I knew he was telling me the truth.

Another memory emerged. I was cheering on those with big appetites for pleasure and enjoyed watching them make fools of themselves afterward. I think I was the biggest fool of all.

"Uh, Roland, if you don't mind, buddy. I'm not feeling too good. I really need to go."

"If you ask me, Dennis, you really need to stay."

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## Chapter Four

After the meeting, my old drinking buddy, George, and Roland and I went to a restaurant for lunch. I was surprised to find another guy who knew me there. The proprietor. He was a wiry little man with a hyperactive disposition and a French accent. To my delight, he seemed happy to see me and welcomed me with enthusiasm.

I was hoping for more information and maybe even a free lunch. This guy seemed to think I was the coolest.

"Big D, sit here at my best table. I'll bring a nice bottle of wine, and we can talk."

I sensed Roland and George stiffen, so I held up my hand to stop him. "No, thanks. No wine this morning, my friend."

He stared at me while I sat down and got comfortable.

"You look different, Big D. *Je ne c'est pas que...*"

"I feel fine. But I'll let you in on a little secret."

The guy leaned towards me, and I whispered. "I don't know who you are."

He snapped upright. I quickly added, "Please don't be offended. I don't know who I am either. I have amnesia."

He looked to my companions, and they nodded, confirming it. Once he recovered from his shock, he said, "*Mon Deux*, now a couple of things make perfect sense. I'm Andre. We have often shared some wine, some laughs, and some women whenever you're in town."

He glanced at my companions, perhaps expecting revulsion. He got none, so he continued. "I saw you Tuesday,

but only briefly. You stopped by the restaurant to tell me where the best party was. You always arranged the best parties. I arrived there after a late dinner, but you weren't there."

"Yeah, according to witnesses, I fell off the balcony and onto my head. They took me to the hospital and when the x-rays showed that my brains weren't spilling out, they let me go. The ER was pretty busy that night, and I didn't have insurance. At least none that I knew of."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I wish you had called me. I would have been glad to help."

"Do you know anything about me? I mean, my real name? My address?" I was so hopeful. He seemed like a good friend.

"No. I am sorry. We met at a party, and you came to see me here once in a while. I don't know your name except that you're called Big D. The women came up with it. I think it stands for—"

"Yes, that much I know." I was becoming irritated. Why didn't anyone know my real name? Was I living a double life? Did I have a wife and kids somewhere? Geez, I hoped not.

"You know, now that I think about it, there was a guy looking for his brother that night, and the description he gave could have fit you. It didn't occur to me until now."

At last! Some sort of clue. "Really? I have a brother?"

"It might have been your brother. He was steaming mad. He said your father had sent him, and he knew you were around here somewhere."

"I have a father, too?" This was exciting news. Of course, I was hoping that once they knew I broke curfew due to

amnesia they would forgive me. "So, how do I find him? Did he leave an address?"

"No, but he did say he'd be back."

"Okay, that's good news." I turned to Roland and said, "Listen, there's something I need to do before I get dragged home by an irate brother."

"What is it?" he asked.

"I need to see a girl. She's working in the warehouse district until four-thirty. Is there any way I can get a ride to the culinary school?" I knew better than to ask for trolley fare.

"I know where it is. I'm sorry. I don't have a car since I lost my license."

George said, "I'd help you out, but I have to get to work, and I take the trolley in the other direction."

Andre shrugged. "I can't leave the place for long, but I should be able to take you over and drop you out front. The parking situation is terrible over there, but if I don't have to stop..."

"No need to stop. If you'll slow down close to the sidewalk, I'll jump out and be grateful."

He laughed and retrieved his coat. Roland stood when I did and offered me his hand. I clasped it, and he pulled me into a man hug, slapping me on the back a couple of times.

"Take care of yourself. I hope to see you again, but if I don't, just remember that AA works if you work it. In other words, go to as many meetings as possible once you get home."

I nodded and told him I appreciated all he had done for me. And I did. I wasn't an asshole.

\* \* \* \*

Andre stopped in front of the culinary school. As soon as I jogged to the sidewalk, he waved and drove off. I ran up the steps and followed signs to the office. It was only three o'clock, so I might have to wait for her to finish her workday, but that didn't mean I couldn't fuck her in some secluded closet. It had been two days, and I was salivating at the thought of stuffing my full-to-bursting cock inside my willing partner. My penis was diamond hard just picturing her in the doggy position.

I found the office and threw open the door. She had been bending over a low filing cabinet, and her sweet ass was staring me right in the face.

She stood and whirled around. When she saw me, she broke into a wicked grin.

"I've been thinking about you."

I leapt over the desk and swept her into my arms. "I've been thinking about you, too. Where can we go to fuck? I can't wait until you get home."

She giggled and said, "Just close the door. My boss is out for the afternoon, and I'm not expecting anybody."

I leapt over the desk again, closed the door and pulled off the t-shirt she gave me. "Let me see your bare ass bent over this desk." My voice was raspy, and her eyes glowed with white-hot sparks. She turned on the radio and did a slow strip for me. I thought I was going to die.

First she unbuttoned her white, silk blouse. Her luscious tits were held prisoner in a white, lace bra. Oh, but it pushed them up high and made her cleavage so succulent. I couldn't complain. Next, she unzipped the back of her black, pencil skirt and let it slide to the floor. She wore a thong and stockings, not pantyhose. She was about to roll down the lace tops, but I was going to lose it if I didn't bury myself in her, soon.

"Leave them on." I breathed heavily as I fumbled with my jeans, struggling out of them as fast as I could.

She giggled and bent over the desk. She spread her legs and pushed her bottom up in the air. My manhood was throbbing. I positioned myself right behind her and shoved my cock in. I was home. Ahhh...

I fucked her hard, and she moaned even harder. I didn't think the radio would drown out her screams when she came, so I pulled out and flipped her over on her back. "When you climax, I'm going to put my mouth over yours, and you can scream into it all you like." I yanked her down over the edge of the desk, so I could bury my shaft in her cunt again and hold the soft globes of her ass in my hands at the same time.

Oh, God, I loved fucking her where we could get caught. I loved fucking her in private, too. Oh, I should just admit it. I loved fucking her. She didn't know it yet, but if I got what I wanted, I'd be fucking her silly for years to come.

She shuddered and her moans were becoming loud, or should I say, louder. I clamped my mouth over hers, and she let go. She convulsed like an epileptic and exhaled a scream into my mouth. Then she took in a deep breath through her

nose and did it again as she continued to shake and spasm. It was a good thing I knew how loud this lusty girl could yell and kept my mouth sealed over hers because she kept coming and screaming.

I wondered if all women were capable of this kind of complete and utter abandon to their sexual gratification. She certainly rode hers to the very end. At last, I could let up on her mouth. She gasped and panted but was grinning from ear to ear.

She wrapped her limp legs around me, and I felt the scratch of that stupid anklet. How did she get stockings on if she never removed it? She must take it off sometimes. Why was it so damned important? Another emotion overwhelmed me. It was as uncomfortable as sadness. It had to go. Who gave that anklet to her, and why is that person so damn special? Ah, jealousy. That ankle jewellery had to go, too.

"Get those rhinestones out of my back."

She straightened her legs, and I grabbed her by the feet and kept fucking. I glared at the cheap jewellery, and it broke falling to the floor.

"Oh! My anklet!"

"Can't fix it now," I said, as I drove in and out of her at a furious pace. She lay back and panted, gripping the sides of the desk. At last, I came in an earth-shattering orgasm. If she thought I was going to sacrifice my satisfaction she was wrong. She seemed to understand how badly I needed this and didn't try to stop me or complain.

She milked the last drops out of me by clenching my penis with her pussy muscles, hard. When I could breathe again, I asked her a surprising question.

"Ah, Mandy?"

"Yes?" she said, still panting.

"Will you be my girlfriend?"

\* \* \* \*

Sneaking out a little before four, we bounded down the steps holding hands. Out on the sidewalk stood a handsome man. His arms were crossed, and he frowned when he spotted me. I was about to walk right by when he reached out and grabbed my sleeve.

"Where do you think you're going?" he demanded.

What the...? Could this be anklet guy? "Home with my girlfriend, pal. Get your grubby hands off my jacket."

He stood stock-still and looked me up and down but didn't let go of my leather jacket.

"What's your problem, pal?"

He tipped up his chin and stared down his long, straight nose at me. "I'm not your 'pal'."

Some sort of recognition or familiarity occurred. He was right. Whatever we were to each other, we weren't friends. I sensed a long and thorny relationship, something intense and antagonistic. This might be the brother who was searching for me.

"Do I know you?" I asked.

One side of his mouth curled up in a smirk. "Then it's true. You really don't know who you are."

"That's correct. All I know is that some people call me Big D, and another guy thought my name was Dennis. So what's your vote?"

"Dennis is pretty close. In fact, you've been using that name in English speaking countries for a while."

"Really? So, where am I from, and who the fuck are you?"

"I'm your half-brother, Apollo. Your name is Dionysus. We live on Mount Olympus."

I gawked at him and couldn't believe the line of bull he was feeding me. He must have thought the fall left me mentally retarded not amnesic.

"Get lost."

"Listen, it was really amusing to see you sitting at AA meetings, and I even enjoyed it when you were mugged and eating out of garbage cans, but after that, we had to step in."

"Who put you up to this?"

"Our father sent me."

"Yeah, sure, and his name is probably Zeus, right?"

"It is."

At that, I burst out laughing. Poor Mandy stood there mute the whole time, but she looked a little nervous. This guy was obviously nuts and making her uncomfortable.

"Come on, Mandy. Let's go home." I put a protective arm around her shoulder. I wouldn't want to let anything happen to her.

The guy chuckled. "*You* have a girlfriend. A woman you're living with?"

"What of it?" He was really annoying me now. Why was it so hard to believe I had a girlfriend? I was an attractive man.

"I guess I'll have to be more specific about who you are. You're a god."

"Look, hero worship is nice and all, but..."

He burst out laughing. I was past the point of aggravation and all the way to pissed off.

When he finally stopped laughing he said, "I'm not worshipping your sorry ass. You have cult followers for that, but I'm certainly not one of them. In fact, you're letting them down right now. You're supposed to take over for me in Delphi for the winter months while I vacation in the North. I guess you thought you'd sneak out for the big party, then you fell on your head. Now why doesn't that surprise me?"

Mandy's hand trembled in mine.

Fuming, I yelled, "Just shut up. You're a sick bastard who heard the story of my amnesia and thought you'd play some mind games with me. I don't know who you are, but I know I don't like you. Now get the hell out of here."

I guided Mandy away from him until he called out, "I'm going to tell dad you said that!"

At that point, we just broke into a flat run.

\* \* \* \*

Mandy and I spent the following weeks together. She had to be right about the substitution thing because I never missed drinking when we were having sex. So we had a lot of it. Every morning before she went to work, I'd haul her ass back to bed and screw her doggie style. That was our favourite position. I wanted her to think about me all morning.

Sometimes I'd meet her at work for lunch, and we'd have sex there. The janitor's closet was so small I had to fuck her standing up, but we found a nice position we called the double helix.

If we missed our lunch date, we'd both be horny as hell. After work, she'd hurry home and I'd attack her the minute she walked in the door, either dragging her to the bedroom or down on the rug. Often, we'd fornicate on the couch.

We named some of our other favourite positions. Let's see, there was the 'Betty rocker', the 'hamstring sandwich', the 'Harvey wallbanger', the 'table dance', the 'yoga instructor', the 'tug boat', and the 'jaws of life'.

Once she didn't get a chance to close the door. I grabbed her, lowered her to the kitchen floor and fucked her brains out in the 'greasy spoon' position. The landlady always gave me a wave and a wink after that. She must have spied on us.

Of course, I'm a guy so I'm not emphasising the love part, but you should know we were absolutely crazy about each other. She enjoyed my sense of humour, even my stupid lack of memory and practical jokes. She said she had laughed more in six weeks with me than she had in her whole life.

I couldn't believe how much she cared about making me happy. She'd bring home edible underwear or whip up a batch of flavoured massage oil. Man, could she rub!

My adventurous tiger would try absolutely anything I wanted to do. We made love in public bathrooms, in parking garages, even in the back of the trolley once. She treated me like the man I wanted to be. Hers, forever.

When we had made it through the forty days of Lent with no alcohol, we decided to celebrate with a big party. She and Brandy had repaired their friendship, especially after Mandy told her that I was making her deliriously happy and that I hadn't screwed anyone but her all that time. I also planned to pop the question that night. I had just landed a good job with a party planner and could afford to pull my weight. She was an angel for putting up with my dependency on her for as long as she did.

The damndest thing happened when I went to look at rings though. I knew I couldn't afford any but decided to look anyway—just to torture myself, I guess. I saw the most beautiful diamonds, glittering brightly and just knew Mandy had to have one, if not several. She had never fixed or replaced her anklet. I wanted to give her one with real diamonds to one-up whomever had come before me. I cursed the prices under my breath and had to leave with nothing.

As I walked away from the store, depressed and wishing like hell I could have found something affordable, I looked down and lying there right in front of me, I found a brilliant diamond ring on the sidewalk. It was loaded with smaller diamonds surrounding the big one in the centre. It reminded me of grabbing her breast and finding her big erect nipple among the smaller stones on many of her shirts.

This ring sparkled more brilliantly than any jewellery in the store. I grabbed it and stuck it in my pocket. I walked a few more paces, and something caught my eye in the gutter. Damned if it wasn't a diamond anklet. Okay, I was no fool. I grabbed that, too.

Our party was scheduled for the following night, and it would be great, but I wanted to surprise her with the anklet first while we were alone. She'd probably wonder if I stole it, but I'd tell her the truth. We always told each other the truth. The only reason I didn't know who had given her the anklet was because of our 'Don't ask, don't tell policy'. Specifically, that meant if we weren't prepared to hear the truth whatever it might be, we shouldn't ask the question.

As soon as I got home, I made dinner. I had been doing the cooking and insisting she eat more than one meal at the school. I prepared a rolled roast with stuffing and cut it into thick pinwheels. I froze a few for later and planned to place her anklet in a pinwheel shape on her empty plate. I'd serve myself first so she could see what we were having, and then I'd serve her diamonds.

She walked through the door, and I threw the roast in the preheated oven a moment before she grabbed my ass. That was all the encouragement I needed.

I practically ripped off her clothes and had her lean over the sink. She teetered, and then stabilised nicely once her forearms were flat against the bottom of the porcelain surface for balance. With her cute ass in the air, she was perfect for banging in the 'bobbing for apples' position. I took a deep breath and appreciated the view as I whipped my jeans off. I was already bare from the waist up, knowing that as soon as she got home all I had to do was yank off my pants, and I'd be fucking her.

I tested her wetness. Oh, yeah. She was moist for me. I positioned my steely cock against her slick cunt and

penetrated. Once I had her impaled on my penis, I reached around and grabbed her tits, massaging and squeezing them as they hovered over the sink. She was already breathing heavy, and the moaning started as soon as I pinched her hard nipples and rolled them between my fingers.

"Sorry about the total lack of foreplay, darling, but I'll make up for that later."

"Don't apologise. Feels good," she breathed.

I knew she loved a good reach-around so I found her clit and rubbed. Her moans sounded like a wolf in heat. "That's it, baby. I'm going to play with your clit until you have as many orgasms as you can before the roast is done."

"I want to," she squeaked. "But the sink might not stay comfortable for lengthy lovemaking."

"Fucking, honey. Say 'fucking.' It feels good to say it and makes us both hot as hell."

She giggled.

I could see I was going to have to help out this sweet southern girl. "I'm fucking you. We're fucking. Say it."

"You say it!"

She was the perfect woman. A lady in public and my own personal, hot, horny honey in private. But she still had a hard time with the dirty talk.

"I'll conjugate it," I said. "I fuck, you fuck, we fuck, they fuck. I fucked, you fucked, we fucked, they fucked—"

"We all got fucked!" she cried out.

Sure enough, she shook with each spasm then let out her signature screams alternating with hardy giggles.

As soon as she had taken a few gasps of breath, I held on tight and picked her up, still speared on my cock. I moved her to the kitchen table and fucked her some more. I was starting to feel my own climax building. "I wish I could hold off until you've had a dozen orgasms, but that isn't going to happen, babe."

"That's okay. I probably wouldn't live through it."

"We'll come together," I said. I found her nub and teased it until we were both on the verge. She started her long, lusty scream, and as her pussy clenched, delightful vibrations wracked my body. I jerked and grunted and crashed over the edge with her.

When I finally pulled out, I collapsed on the linoleum. She moved as if melting off the table onto the floor beside me. We both panted for a while before she spoke.

"Okay, I said something for you. Now, will you say something for me?"

"Sure, what is it?"

"I love you."

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## Chapter Five

Getting up, I reached for my jeans and bought a moment to think. Of course, I loved her, and I'm sure I would have said it at some point, but, damn ... Wouldn't it be more effective if I said it on my own and not because I was *asked* to? While I was hopping into my jeans, I stole a glance at her face. Not good. She was beginning to frown and a faint shimmer of tears seemed to be forming.

"Baby, don't do that." I reached over and put a finger under her chin. She tried to hide behind closed eyes, but a tear leaked out of the corner. "Hey, come on, now. You wouldn't want me to say it just because you asked me to, right?" At which point, she burst into tears.

I had never seen her cry like that. She sounded heartbroken. *What did I say?*

"What is it, babe? What's making you cry?"

"You," she yelled and ran into the bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

Now I knew why men don't understand women. I thought Mandy must be different. We had never had any misunderstandings at all. Was it that time of the month?

Wait a minute! She hadn't had a ... Uh oh.

I ran to the bedroom door and stopped myself a second before I barged in. *Be sensitive*, I told myself and knocked.

"Mandy, honey? Can I come in?"

"No!"

I stood there, mute, wondering what to do next. I knocked again. "Please, baby—um, I mean, honey. Darling! We need to talk."

A few moments later, she opened the bedroom door, her beautiful body hidden under a robe. I reached for her, and she recoiled. She walked around the bed and plopped down on it, facing away from me.

"Don't be ashamed, Mandy. This kind of thing happens."

She sniffed. "Well, it's never happened to me before."

Dear Zeus. My heart was aching just witnessing her pain. Time for some serious bling. I still had the anklet in my pocket and extracted it. Walking around to the other side of the bed, I kneeled in front of her and took her hand. She offered no resistance. I turned her hand, palm up and kissed it. Then I lay the diamonds in a spiral right where my lips had been.

She burst into tears again. What the hell was I doing wrong?

A loud sound, as if someone was clearing his throat, startled me.

That nut-bag who had called himself Apollo appeared in the doorway and leaned against the door jam.

"Looks like you've really gone and done it now, little brother."

"What the fuck are you doing here? How did you get in?"

"I'm a god, remember? I'm here to bail out your ass and take you home."

I shot to my feet and even though I was shaking inside, I was prepared to fight off this insane stalker if I had to.

"Look, I don't know what your damage is, but you need to leave before I call the cops."

"You're the one with the damage, little brother." He stood erect with a wide stance, his hands on his hips. "You don't even remember being a god. I thought it might be amusing to watch you struggle along as a mortal for a while, but you've ceased to entertain our father."

Mandy grabbed my arm. Her eyes widened in terror.

"Do something, Dennis!"

I was furious. No one was going to threaten my future wife and child. "Look, buddy. I've had enough of you. Get out of my way before I go right through you."

He didn't budge.

I charged him and as I did, I felt my body stretch and become so heavy I dropped on my hands and knees. Mandy screamed.

It didn't matter. I was going to get this guy out of our apartment regardless of how my body was reacting. Suddenly, I felt a surge of power. I looked down at what I thought were my hands, and they had turned to hooves. I lowered my head and thought I saw horns. So much the better. I chased my half-brother out the door and stopped on the porch. The boards creaked underneath me. I turned enough to see Mandy's horrified expression as she peeked around the corner. Then the porch gave way.

\* \* \* \*

A year later, I sat talking to my father on Mount Olympus. Since my memory had been restored I knew who I was—

Dionysus, god of wine, women and party. And, more importantly, I knew who he was—Zeus, the all-powerful ruler of the world. I had to tread carefully, but he couldn't put me off any longer. This conversation had to happen.

"I've told you the entire story and, yes, I still want to return to my life in New Orleans. I want to marry Mandy and raise our son. I want to make a good life for them either here, or there, it doesn't matter to me. It only matters that we're together."

Zeus would probably try to talk me out of it again. I had to remain firm and refuse to let him sway me.

"You know she's mortal, as your mother was. She will age and die as your mother would have if I hadn't accidentally incinerated her. Oh, I could kick myself for that. The point is, you will not die, even if you want to."

"Yes, I know that. I'll love her until that day and beyond, if only you'll let me. I'd rather anticipate and expect that painful day than go through eternity without ever knowing true love."

Zeus scratched his mighty head. "I don't understand you, boy. You've gotten yourself into plenty of scrapes, and I've had to bail you out a number of times, but this is the first time you ever wanted to take responsibility for your actions. I'm puzzled by the change in you, yet I have to admit, I'm proud."

"I've always been in plenty of trouble, father, that's true. I've caused a great deal of it and I'm not proud of myself—yet. I want to be. I want to do the right thing."

"You sound like Apollo."

"Fuck Apollo. He was the one who ripped me away from her and brought me here against my will. She doesn't even know how much I love her. She doesn't know that I know about our son. I want to take her in my arms and say 'I love you' over and over and show her how much I mean it and how well I can provide for our family. Father, I would die for her," I said, deadly serious.

Zeus took a deep breath and nodded. "Ordinarily, I would have thought that Apollo had finally had an influence on you, but I know he had nothing to do with it. Apparently, the change has been brought about by true love. I swear I never thought I'd see the day. If this Mandy is really as special as that, then marry her and raise my grandson. I give you my blessing."

I jumped in the air and whooped. Finally! He was going to let me go to her at last. As I danced, grapevines grew all over the mountain.

\* \* \* \*

I finally had permission to see Mandy, and I couldn't wait. I only hoped I could convince her to see me. After what had happened between us the last time I was with her, I wasn't exactly sure she'd want to. She probably thought I had used her and taken off just like most gods do.

She might not even realise I'm a god. She may have thought Apollo was the one to change me into a bull. I'd just have to prove it to her, and I knew exactly how I wanted to do that.

Over the past year, I had replayed every moment of our short time together. I realised we'd had enormous passion and fun, yet I'd never held her tenderly, looked deeply into her eyes and said the words she deserved to hear. "I love you." If I'd had any doubts, they were long gone. My father did his best to make me forget her, but I couldn't. Every time I closed my eyes, I'd see her beautiful smile and sparkling blue eyes, her cute freckled nose and her long, red hair all mussed from making love. I'd hear her laughter in my dreams and wake up reaching for her. No other goddess, nymph or mortal held any interest for me. Yup, I was gob-smacked in love all right.

When I'd arrived back on Mount Olympus, I'd punched my brother Apollo and told him never to speak to me again. Of course, that didn't last. But when he did speak, he came with news that made me unspeakably happy. I was a father. My beautiful Mandy and our son were both healthy and doing well. Now I was going to see them, at last.

It broke my heart to think about Mandy struggling as a single parent, trying to make ends meet. I couldn't wait to shower her with all the luxuries she could ever want. A mansion and staff to care for it, a loving nanny—maybe one of the nymphs who raised me. After all they did a great job, right? And, of course, my undivided attention and all the great sex she could handle.

\* \* \* \*

Mandy's house was empty, and I began to panic. Then I remembered someone I could see who would know what

happened to her. I dreaded the confrontation as I arrived at her apartment in the French Quarter.

"You!" Brandy blocked her doorway, arms crossed and legs apart. I don't think she wanted to let me in.

"Please. Brandy, I have to find Mandy. I came as soon as I could. I mean that."

"Yeah, right."

"I did. Look, I know who I am now, and I can help. Just please tell me where my girlfriend and son are. I'll help you, too."

"We're not interested in your 'help'."

"Brandy? Is someone at the door? Did you say you need help?"

I recognised the voice immediately. It was like the most beautiful melody to meet my ears since Pan played his flute.

"No, hon. I've got it."

"Please, Brandy," I implored with my eyes as well as my voice. I didn't want to just brush by her even though I easily could have.

She rolled her eyes and said, "Come in. They're in the bedroom."

"Thank you. I promise you won't be sorry."

I paused at the bedroom door and watched her for a few seconds. She was more beautiful than ever. She had cut her long curls into soft, shoulder-length, auburn waves. Her eyes sparkled in the candlelight as she sang to our son, gently rocking him to sleep. What a wonderful mother she was. I'd be proud to call her the mother of all my offspring.

I wouldn't run away from feelings. Not this time. I was a little peeved at Zeus for making me wait a year to decide what I really wanted, especially when I knew all along.

Okay, she was laying him in his crib and my baby boy was sleeping peacefully. This would be the perfect time. "Mandy?"

She lifted her head and froze, her mouth open in shock. I pulled out the ring I had 'found'. Now I understood that every strong wish I had made during my amnesia had come true because I was a friggin' god the whole time. I held the ring out to her so she could see I was serious.

She moved slowly, as if in a daze, but she arrived at the door. "May I help you?"

"Oh, no. Don't tell you have amnesia, too!"

She snorted. "I should be so lucky."

"May I talk to you? Please? It's very important."

She bit her lower lip and hesitated, then nodded and stepped aside.

I motioned her to sit on the bed. The one we made love on for the first time. She sat and I went down on one knee in front of her.

"Mandy. I love you. I've loved you from the day we met, and I'll love you until the day you die. No. Longer than that. I'll probably love you forever because I'm immortal, but that's beside the point.

"The point is I was taken to Mount Olympus against my will. I was forced to think about us for a year, wishing the whole time I could just get back to you. I didn't realise that night you were taking my words the wrong way. I wanted to say everything in my heart that night, and I messed it up."

She smiled and pulled up the hem of her slacks. "I know," she said. Her diamond anklet sparkled in the candlelight.

This was it. The right moment had arrived. I presented the ring to her again and asked her to marry me. She smiled slowly, but shook her head no.

"No? You're saying 'no'?"

"Yes, I'm saying 'no'. You need to prove yourself, Dennis."

"Dionysus."

"Whatever..."

"So be it." I waved my arm and sent a cascade of diamonds raining from the ceiling. I gathered them and set them at her feet.

She seemed startled at first but blinked and said, "No, you have to do more than that."

Okay. Knowing how much she liked to wear her bling, I waved my arm in a bigger arc and brought down necklaces, tiaras, rings, bracelets, anklets and brooches in every style and size. I caught as many of them as I could and presented her with an armful spilling over. I could see her eyes widen as she stared at the pile of treasure.

"Yeah, that's all very nice, Dionysus, but I need you to prove yourself in other ways."

Geez, she was tough to win over. But I would! "Anything, my sweet. What would you like?"

She straightened her posture and narrowed her eyes. "Well, for one thing, I need a promise and some kind of painful consequence if you break it."

"I'll be pained plenty if I ever hurt you again, especially with a broken promise. But if it helps, you can give me one hard kick in the nuts without repercussions."

She giggled.

I piled the jewels in her lap, and to protect my own, I sat beside her. "Okay, lay it on me, sweetheart. What do you want from me?"

She took a deep breath. Uh oh, it must be a long list.

"I want you to provide a good example for our son to follow. I've read up on you, and I know you're the biggest bad boy on Mount Olympus. What I need you to do, specifically, is to give up all orgies and three-ways until and unless I choose to participate."

"Done."

"There's more."

"I was afraid of that."

One side of her sexy mouth curled into a smile. "Next, I want you to live here, in New Orleans, with me and our son, Brandon, and never leave us again."

"Done. Mandy, I won't leave you. Either of you. I don't think you know how much I love you, but I'll show you every day and every night." I winked, but she didn't seem impressed.

"And no supernatural stuff around the kids," she continued. "They're going to find out, but I don't want them to be scared to death like I was."

"Done. Unless you want it, of course. I could make you immortal so we can be together, always."

"You can?"

"Of course I can. I'm a god."

"Let me think about that for a while." She tipped her head and looked up as if mulling it over.

"I don't want to lose you," I whispered.

"Can you behave yourself forever? I know that's asking a lot."

"I can. I will. For you, I'll do anything."

She smiled. "Okay then. I'm yours. Oh, but there are a couple more things..."

I rolled my eyes. "What else?"

"I want you to get a job."

"I'll get a job working construction. I can help the city."

"Good. And I don't want any Olympians knowing where we are. I don't want them popping in and out, and I especially don't want anyone telling your rotten stepmother, Hera, where to find you."

"She hates me, you know."

"I know." Mandy placed her hand on my thigh. "Can you blame her? Zeus cheated on her with your mom, Semele. I mean, she was just a dumb princess who didn't know any better, but he sure did. Hera can't exactly take it out on him, and your mom had already burned to ashes by the time she found out, so you're all she had left to torture. It seems Hera's got a real nasty, jealous streak."

"Yeah, then she made everyone who tried to protect me either go crazy or die. If it weren't for my dad, I wouldn't be here now."

I stood up and started pacing, all the vicious crap she pulled came flooding back to me. "Did you know that he had

to change me into a goat and hide me on Mount Nysa to be raised by nymphs? If he hadn't done that, she'd have killed me when I was just a child."

Mandy crossed her arms and leaned back against the pillows. She was still covered in brilliant, sparkling bling. "Uh huh, which leads me to believe that nymphs shouldn't be raising children, especially not omnipotent ones. Look at your reputation! You're going to have to go a ways to convince your son that you're only using your power for good. I don't want him raised by one of those 'Do what I say, not what I do' fathers. I can't stand that. You should keep going to AA on occasion. That'll help you keep things in perspective."

"Okay, okay! This is more than one promise, you know. Is there anything else?"

"One more thing."

"Dear Zeus, what is it?" She was relentless! I must have seriously compromised her trust. This beautiful woman who gave her trust to me so innocently only a year ago couldn't do that now, and it wasn't even my fault. "Tell me. I'll give you anything. Do anything. Name it."

"Get rid of this crap all over me." She pointed to the diamonds and jewellery covering her lap.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "I thought you liked a little bling?"

"Yeah, a *little*. I don't need all of this."

I started by sending back the tiaras then hesitated. "How much do you need?"

"Just the anklet."

"But..."

"And the ring." Her smile grew and she extended her left hand.

I placed it on her finger. She grinned, and we hugged, overjoyed. With a sweep of my hand all the other jewellery disappeared, and she jumped into my arms.

"I knew you loved me," she said. "I knew the minute you gave me the anklet. You hated the other one, yet you replaced it because you knew how much it meant to me."

I nuzzled her neck and realised that I still didn't know who had given her the other one. Now that she was wearing my ring, the answer didn't really matter.

"So why was the other one so special?"

"My mother gave it to me. My dad had given it to her when they were dating. She said he gave it to her the night he first told her he loved her. It was just rhinestones, but I always loved looking at it when I was a kid. She gave it to me when he gave her one made with real diamonds."

"Like the one I gave you."

Her mouth dropped open, and she stared at her ankle. "I thought they looked awfully real. I just thought they were making better fake jewellery these days. How did you pay for it?"

"I didn't. I found it in the gutter."

She laughed. "Exactly where I found you!"

"Yup. I'm a diamond in the rough but I'll clean up real nice, sweetheart. I promise. You'll see."

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## **About the Author**

Ashlyn Chase describes herself as an Almond Joy bar. A little nutty, a little flaky, but basically sweet, wanting only to give her readers a scrumptious, satisfying, reading experience.

She worked as a psychiatric nurse for several years and spent a few more years working for the Red Cross. She credits her sense of humour to her former careers since comedy helped preserve whatever was left of her sanity. Ashlyn holds a degree in behavioural sciences and has been trained as a fine artist, registered nurse, hypnotherapist, and interior designer.

Most writers, whether they're aware of it or not, have a 'theme', some sort of thread that runs through all of their books, uniting the whole mishmash into an identifiable signature. Ashlyn's identified theme involves characters who reinvent themselves. It's no wonder since she has reinvented herself numerous times. Finally content with her life, she lives in beautiful New Hampshire with her true-life hero husband and a spoiled brat cat.

Email: [ash@ashlynchase.com](mailto:ash@ashlynchase.com)

Ashlyn loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at [www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com).

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Nectar of the Gods  
by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

## **FATE UNBOUND**

Isabelle Drake

\* \* \* \*



\* \* \* \*

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Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

## **Dedication**

For WL, thanks for it all.

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## Chapter One

"The Fates have been cruel, casting me from Greece." Adrian tossed the chisel from his calloused hand, watching it skid to a stop under the expansive window. Gazing across the private courtyard swimming pool towards the glittering neon lights of Los Angeles, he continued, "Sending me to this modern world, where I am nothing, no one, I—"

"Not even your true father, Zeus himself, can deny The Fates," Linus said to his friend, trying as he had many times over the past several weeks to remind Adrian that he had no control over his predicament.

"Curse The Fates and curse—"

"Don't. Have patience." Linus' tone was sharp but softened as he continued. "You will regret those words later, when you get the acknowledgement you crave."

Running his fingertips over rough edges of marble that would eventually be two lovers, Adrian scoffed. "Patience?"

Linus set down the brown leather chest he'd just carried in. "Let me remind you, *you* sought your future from The Oracle. Besides, you will be getting what you want—if you only follow—"

"The dictates." Adrian's hand stilled where the woman's waist would be. "It's a trick. Commanding me to not seek the touch of any woman, then placing me here, where *she* is nearby."

"And what would you do if you could touch her?" Linus asked. "Seek vengeance?"

Gliding his hand lower, he flattened his palm across the area where the lovers' bodies would merge and pressed hard. There was no room for gentleness when it came to the unfinished business between him and his former lover, Taryn.

He turned away so his friend would not see that cruel truth on his face, but the concealment came too late.

"What good would such an act do? It certainly would not help you achieve what you claim to want. Single-minded revenge does not suit a god—or even a half god. Perhaps the Fates know you better than you know yourself."

Adrian backed away from the mass of half-shaped marble, stepped down from the wooden platform filling the centre of the space he'd made into a studio and turned to gaze across the new series of sketches he'd started that afternoon.

He admired the outline of the naked woman with her full breasts then scowled as his eyes were drawn reluctantly to the unusually large cock of the man poised above her. Had that been *him* only a breath away from Taryn, he would have already been buried in her sweet cunt. In two thrusts, he could have had her writhing, begging and...

*Enough!*

Disgusted that he, a son of the great Zeus, would bother to compare himself to a simple mortal man, he spun and paced across the dust covered floor of the room he hadn't left in days. "What good can come of this isolation? Am I a child that I need to be torn away from the home I love and belong in to learn some ... some ... *lesson?*"

"The isolation is of your own doing. There is nothing in the dictate of the Oracle that keeps you within these walls."

Adrian's answer was quick. "What is the point of leaving?"

His companion's reply was silence, the type of silence one man offers another when he is holding back words better left unsaid. Finally, Linus found something that might offer comfort. "*She* hasn't seen you ... yet. Perhaps you will accomplish what you must, then can return home with your cherished pride intact."

The light sarcasm of Linus's words went unnoticed. Adrian was strutting again, trying to avoid the table by the window where a few rays of moonlight that managed to cut through the skyline skimmed across the drawings. Pages and pages of the sweet Taryn, naked and exposed, submissive yet still in control, demanding that the man mounting her please her before himself.

Linus unlocked the chest and lifted the top. "You could have requested I send her away when she came about the job."

Adrian had reminded himself of that many times but knew provided with the opportunity he would make the same choice again. Taryn was out of his life, but she would never be out of his blood—or heart. The images of them together were not simply a part of his mind, but his soul as well.

Turning away, Linus began putting away the clothing Adrian had insisted he bring over from the small apartment they'd been given upon arriving. "Do not think so little of yourself. She is here too, also torn from home, working as you are. And, most likely, battling with ditactes as well." He paused, catching Adrian's gaze before continuing, "She is

working for *you*. The Fates make no mistakes. There must be a rea—"

"There were not enough men in Greece for her to charm into her bed, that is the reason. She had come here to fuck every man who crosses her path."

"Rumours," Linus muttered, reaching into the chest for another pile of clothing. "Don't listen."

"I have seen her play with her charms with my own eyes. In Greece—and here."

"Here, you have seen what you yourself have asked of her."

"I only told her to go through the motions of sex." Frustration deepened his voice as he thought about both Taryn and his predicament with the Fates. "The job does not require that she enjoy it."

It was Linus's turn to scoff. "If you are thinking a woman like Taryn would allow herself to be mounted and used like some common slave, you *do* have a lesson to learn."

\* \* \* \*

After paying the fee to enter *On the Rocks*, an exclusive Hollywood club her new friend, Kate, had given her an invitation to, Taryn shouldered through the unruly, weekend crowd, sliding easily between two slim brunettes wearing skin tight dresses. The women cast her sharp glances, but accustomed to such hostile looks, she tipped her head away and scanned the masses of the city she'd been sent to be part of. Three weeks in L.A. and, although she'd acclimated herself

to many things, she still balked at the notion that she needed to learn a lesson.

Still, day by day she adjusted. And thanks to the recent employment she'd found, one could even say that she was thriving. She wondered, not for the first time, if her sisters would be delighted to know she had been reduced to using her legendary beauty to earn money instead of using it to seduce every man in her path and arrogantly adding to her ever-growing list of conquests as she did so.

The sense of confidence she enjoyed as a result of being able to care for herself had little effect on her level of frustration. The things she had been required to do since arriving—never would she have been able to predict such degradation.

Moving with the heavy music, Taryn made her way past a crowd of college boys clustered around a television hanging from the wall. Their shouts were barely audible over the thunderous beats blasting from huge speakers surrounding the lighted dance floor. She glanced at the group, but quickly moved on, intent on two things: getting a glass of wine and finding a secluded spot to wait the twenty-five minutes until Kate would arrive.

Thankfully, wine hadn't changed over the centuries, so the man distributing the drinks would be able to provide her with a satisfying carafe.

Except for their odd clothing, the people were similar to those she had left behind. Men drank, shouted and vied for the attention of the women. Women laughed, pretended to

ignore the men, yet at the same time arranged themselves in welcoming pairs or even wandered off alone.

But there were no men she wanted to attract. None of them looked as though they could protect her, very few even looked as though they'd be able to swing a sword higher than she could.

Across the room, a narrow shouldered man in a plaid shirt smiled as he tried to catch her attention. Abruptly, before he might think she had an interest in him, she turned away and worked herself closer to the man serving drinks, only to connect with yet another pair of curious eyes.

Her gaze fell, skimming across a squat man with hands so square and stout he looked as though he ploughed fields from dawn until dusk. Again, knowing that if she gave him even a glimmer of hope she would pay the hefty price, she broke the brief contact by shifting in another direction.

What use did she have for such men? What did they have to offer her?

Nothing.

Before being cast away from home by the Oracle's dictate, she'd cherished her large breasts and glossy blonde hair, thought her taut ass and firm legs made her better than the women around her. But now, after endless submissions to every male who fancied her, and tired of being groped awkwardly and rammed into by men who thought she should thank them for fucking her, she almost wished she possessed an ordinary body.

That was the point though, wasn't it? Her reason for being cast away from her beautiful home and forced to live in this place.

Ever since her arrival, she had followed the Oracle's horrid decree: she must not approach a man and request he make love to her, yet she must submit to all men who made the request of her. After spreading her legs countless times over the past weeks, she was starting to ponder—what would happen if she didn't allow herself to be mounted by all who wish to use her body?

Each forced coupling served as a reminder of what she had thrown away, a man who—

*No.*

Thoughts of him were too difficult.

Painful.

Those memories of his tender touch, strong love-making and vigorous conversation—she would do well to bury them deep inside her heart.

There was no way to know what she had given up by conceitedly rejecting Adrian's confession of love, she only knew what would not happen if she ignored the dictate—she would not return to Greece.

Aside from losing Adrian, she could think of nothing worse than being kept from her beloved home and family. She even longed to see her sisters, though they had been the ones who tricked her into seeking her fate from The Oracle. But she accepted now, they had not known of the cruel dictate and what it would demand of her.

The sexual tension in the overcrowded room was starting to make her think she'd soon be put to the test.

Again.

"I'd remember you if I'd seen you here before."

The man, not much more than a boy really, was swaying as he leaned back, trying to get a look at her ass. Brown hair hung across his face, hiding one of his bright blue eyes. His jaw was pleasantly square, his skin nicely tanned and contrasting well with the casual, soft brown sweater clinging to his lean muscles. Denim pants hung low on his hips, showing off a small slice of his strong midsection.

He certainly wasn't puny, or unattractive, but he wasn't up to Taryn's usual standards either. He had no sword or markings of battle, and his face was fresh with the enthusiasm of youth.

She preferred her men strong and experienced. Vigorous. Capable. In Kate's words-edgy.

But, she reflected ruefully, always getting what she wanted was the problem.

Or had been.

The newcomer set his hand on her waist, gripping it firmly, and leaned in. The bristled shadow of his facial hair brushed across her cheek as he spoke, his hot breath blowing across her neck. "I come here all the time. Want me to show you around?"

She shook her head, easily meeting his gaze because he wasn't more than a few inches taller than she. "I'm meeting someone."

Still holding her waist, he angled back, his gaze darting across the mass of people before coming back to her.

"Another girl?"

*Girl?*

Did she look like an unripe, inexperienced *girl*?

Taryn straightened, looking down her nose at him, but because his attention had dropped to the swells of her breasts, her disdain went unnoticed.

She set her hand on his to pull it away, but he gripped hers tightly and smiled, his vivid gaze coming back to her face. His grin was sweet, his azure eyes glowing brightly under the shaggy locks falling across his forehead.

A mature man would've been subtle and realised the importance of anticipation. This boy's inexperience was well balanced by drunken confidence. "We can wait for her," he replied, stretching to the bar to discard his empty beer bottle, intentionally letting his arm brush across the side of her breast. "Then I'll show you both around." Moving his gaze to the dusting of glitter she had skimmed between her breasts, he added, "This is a big place. You need to know where to go to get what you want."

He seemed harmless enough, but Taryn wanted to end things quickly, before he made the offer she was forbidden to refuse.

She wiggled out of his grasp and took two steps back, seeking some much needed distance between them, but was forced to stop when she bumped into the back of a bar stool. "No. Thank you," she said loudly enough to be heard over the music.

Bolstered by drink, he followed her, advancing until the bulge of his steady cock pressed into her stomach. The thin fabric of her blue dress shifted, exposing more of her right breast.

"Let's stay and wait for her." He grinned, noticing that when he pressed harder into her, her dress slid down, exposing more skin. "I can handle you both," he added, working his way closer, letting her feel the growing strength of his arousal.

Not Kate.

After all she'd been through, to finally meet a woman she could call a friend, Taryn did not want to drag Kate into her irresolvable situation. If she did, the friendship would surely be over, and Taryn would be back to enduring the empty days of loneliness that had plagued her ever since arriving in L.A..

She needed to handle this situation on her own, and the sooner she took control of things the better.

"You don't think I can handle both of you?" he asked, rubbing his bulge against her crotch as he placed his palms, one on each side of her, on the bar.

The unavoidable heat of his body flowed across hers. "I don't think we should wait for her."

Disappointment flickered across his face, but then he grinned as her meaning made its way into his lust drunk brain. "Yeah. I get it. I'll show you around and—and..." He dropped back, took her hand, tugging her through the crowd.

Pausing only long enough to point to a door by the main entrance, he shouted, "You get to the second floor by going

through that door right there." Then he took off, pulling her along.

"There's the coat room," he yelled over his shoulder as he weaved through the crowd. The swirling mass of people thinned as they pressed further into the interior of the pulsing club. At the edge of the crowd, he led her down a mirrored stairway that grew dimmer as they descended the carpeted steps.

At the lower landing, he stumbled, his fight for confidence obvious as his gaze scanned the lights gleaming above each of the doors. The blue bulbs above all the doors—except one—were illuminated.

He weaved, his gaze lingering on the door under the dark orb.

If she broke away now...

"You want to do it, right?" He slid his arm around her, dropping his hand down to curve his strong fingers around her ass as he leaned into her. "I have ... protection. That good for you?"

Men fought down here? "Protection?"

He stumbled as he pressed into her again. "A rubber."

Oh, modern protection. But she didn't need that. The Oracle had assured her she wouldn't conceive a child until she coupled with the man who would be her life-long companion—her future husband.

Could she still back out? He hadn't come right out and—  
"Let's do it."

Too late.

Still holding her hand, he kicked open the door below the dark bulb and yanked her into the room. Music rolled from speakers tucked in the corners and lights flickered, casting a rainbow of pastel smudges to skim across the mirrored walls. The only furnishing in the room was a row of ascending platforms covered with pink carpet. She turned, catching his quick motions as he latched the door and noticing that the wall that bordered the hall was a plate of smoky glass.

A room for sex.

She'd made use of such places before. In Greece, they'd had attendants and luxurious appointments such as scented oils and velvet covered pillows. But in the modern world, seduction and sensuality were replaced by instant gratification.

The youth grinned as he tipped his head towards the smoky glass wall. "It's mirrored on the other side—we can see them, but they can't see us." He lumbered closer to the glass, pointing to a massive man guiding a woman down the hall, their glazed eyes darting from one door to the next.

"Guess they'll have to wait," he said, chuckling as he fixed his attention on the lusty raven-haired woman.

Accepting that she couldn't back out, Taryn slid her gaze across her young companion's body, assessing what kind of lover he might be.

Inexperienced, yes.

But also eager and curious.

Might he surprise her and provide a release for the tension that swirled inside her? It had been so long since she'd known the feel of a real man. Unbearably long.

Perhaps this raw youth was what she needed. Perhaps he would be the one who made up for what had been lacking in each of the new world men who had pounded into her. The first flickers of want lighted in her stomach, and she breathed deeply, arching her back, welcoming the sweet sensation.

Inexperienced as he was, even he noticed the change in her. Stepping forward, he wrapped his hard, lean arms around her shoulders, looked into her eyes, but didn't press his mouth to hers.

Was it absence of knowledge or lack confidence that kept him from proceeding?

But there was an upside to his hesitation. It gave Taryn the opportunity to take control, something she was good at and enjoyed immensely. Thankfully, The Oracle hadn't forbidden her to do *that*.

Lifting her chin to look directly into his light eyes, she parted her lips. "I know what I want, do you?"

He blinked, but to his credit came back quickly. "Yeah."

"Then what are you waiting for?" She swayed forward, arching her back and letting her nipples brush across the soft weave of his sweater. "Are you ... slow?"

"Hell no." He unzipped his pants and shoved his briefs aside, the full shaft of his cock thrust forward, hard, and ready. "Does that look slow to you?"

His enthusiasm was delightful.

"No, I don't suppose so." Lightly caressing the tip of his penis, she licked her lips. "But there's only one way to find out if you have what it takes."

Forcing his tight shaft into her palm, he replied, "I've got it. Whatever you want, just take a look."

"Looks can be deceiving," she replied, holding the inward smile off her face and pretending to consider her options as she circled the smooth head with her fingers.

The youth reached down to grip his rod, stroking the length of his shaft with long, hard motions while she continued her gentle caress of his tip. Panting, he let go and lurched forward, his hips jerking, forcing more of his pulsing heat into her hands.

Obviously, her challenge was affecting him as intended.

Again she held in her grin as she lowered her hand, smiling leisurely as his tight cock bobbed helplessly.

Glad to have the opportunity to show off her magnificent body, she lifted the hem of her dress, gliding the midnight blue silk up and over her head. With a flick of her wrist, she cast the fabric aside. She expected the open-mouth gape of appreciation, but she still relished the power it gave her.

Raising her hands to cup her breasts, she licked her bottom lip with a languid sweep of her tongue. "I guess now's the time to find out whether you're slow or not," she murmured, pivoting on her heels and gliding her hands down her body and across her ass cheeks. When she stepped towards the stack of platforms, she spotted the couple still in the hallway. Apparently, waiting for an available room hadn't been an issue.

The woman's head was angled back, her jet black hair cascading across her bare shoulders while her well-muscled companion pulled her blouse open and buried his face

between her tits, hungrily running his tongue across the tight peaks of her nipples. The man's capable hands blurred as he grabbed at her black skirt. As soon as he had it out of his way, he fumbled with his own pants, releasing his jutting cock quickly, then impaling the woman completely with one long thrust that instantly had her bucking back even as she struggled to stand.

Taryn's increasing enthusiasm for her own situation was matched by a sudden impatience for release. Wiggling her ass, she looked over her shoulder and eyed his throbbing dick. "You said you weren't slow..."

He stumbled forward then dropped his hands to stroke himself again.

So that she could enjoy the tantalising view through the grey glass, she set her palms on the top platform and widened her stance as she offered her bare buttocks.

He came up behind her, the firm tip of his penis probing briefly before he slid into her, holding her ass firmly with both hands as he pumped into her with strong, deep strokes.

"Yeah," he murmured hotly into her ear, "I like to watch, too."

Taryn kept her eyes open, the lustful couple in the hall filling her vision as the youth behind her worked past his awkwardness and found his rhythm. Each time he pulled back, she braced herself, welcoming the strong pounding of his thick rod.

Beyond the glass, the breasts of the woman bounced with each thrust of her lover. The man did the best he could to lick the dark tips, but she kept squirming and wiggling as he

drove into her. Soon, she was gasping for breath and clawing at his back. A satisfied grin split across his face as she threw her head back and gave herself over to what must have been a vicious climax.

*Lucky woman.*

Hungry for a similar release, Taryn spread her legs a step wider, swinging back each time he swung forward.

He responded by squeezing her ass cheeks, pushing deeper. "You're a hot fuck, aren't you?"

"I don't care what you think. I only care what you do. Shut up and—"

The stranger's release came suddenly, he finished quickly. Seconds after the last burst of liquid heat, he was backing away, leaving Taryn's cunt hot and aching.

Frustration and impatience wrapped around her, an unwelcome cloak of irritation.

Was there no man in this wretched place who knew how to satisfy a woman?

She could bring pleasure to herself, but watching the young stranger adjust his clothing, somehow deflated the excitement that had only seconds ago been building inside her. Suddenly, the bother of massaging her own clit didn't seem worth the effort.

Disregarding the man's presence, she strode over to capture her dress and slide it over her head. The cool fabric skimmed over her, delicately caressing and offering the comfort she'd not needed after interludes with strangers before coming to L.A. It seemed that need for reassurance increased with each required tryst.

Why should this one be so?

Was it something to do with the men?

She spun on her heels. He was ducking out the door.

It wasn't. She cared not if she ever saw him—or any of the others—again.

After running her fingers through her hair, and adjusting the neckline of her dress, Taryn exited the room, hurried up the mirrored stairway and headed back to the bar.

Kate was a welcome sight, and she embraced the tall redhead, offering her a genuine smile.

"Hey," Kate shouted over the music. "Want something to drink?"

"Please," she replied, "Wine. Anything red."

Kate laughed, "Rough night already?"

She couldn't answer that without revealing the whole unfortunate situation, so she simply shook her head.

"Tell you what," the other woman ordered the drinks then came back to Taryn, "After he brings the wine, we'll go upstairs."

\* \* \* \*

As soon as they were settled into a quiet love seat, Kate held up the cell phone that constantly interrupted her life.

"Dish. Tell me what's got you all ruffled, quick, before they call me back into work."

"It's nothing."

"Oh please. We haven't been friends that long, but even I can see you're out of it."

Taryn rolled the wine glass stem between her fingers, not finding words for the unfamiliar mix of emotions tormenting her heart. It wasn't that she'd never had sex with a stranger, she'd certainly done that enough times, probably more than any other woman she knew, but...

"Honestly," she caught Kate's gaze, "I don't know what's bugging me."

"Guy trouble?"

"Hardly. I don't have *a guy*." The only man she longed for was centuries away and had been out of reach even before she'd been sent away.

Kate laughed, her green eyes flickering the in dim light. "That's the problem then."

Taryn rolled her eyes but smiled.

"Have you seen the new coffee shop hottie? He might be just the thing you need, somebody to take your mind off things for a night or two."

The coffee shop across the street from the downtown apartment building they both lived in was well known for employing sexy baristas, but another impious, young thing was definitely not what she needed. Or wanted.

Taryn took a sip of the wine, thoughtful but appreciating Kate's sincerity. Before arriving in the modern city she had spent her nights seeking new sources of gratification, but now that she had arrived in a city notorious for providing every possible source of pleasure, she wanted none of it.

"Enough about me," she murmured after swallowing. "What's new with you?"

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"Alright, I get it. But one of these days I'm going to get you to open up and tell me at least something about you and your past. You can't keep it a secret forever, you know."

Taryn shook her head, grinning outwardly, while inside her heart ached.

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## Chapter Two

Monday morning, the annoying plague of emotions that had been clinging to Taryn ever since her encounter with that overgrown boy kept her moving, restlessly wandering from one task to the next. She almost welcomed the constant movement, sitting still only provided an opportunity for her to dwell on her own ridiculous melancholy. She left her apartment early, heading across the street to indulge in one of the few joys of the modern world: coffee.

As usual, the shop across the street was crowded, and she slipped into line without giving the wait another thought. The conversations blended together, creating a low buzz, while the sights and smells which were becoming more familiar with each passing day tried to offer solace to her restless heart.

"Hey, you're up early. I thought you didn't have to be at that mysterious job you can't tell me about until later."

Kate. Sliding through the crowd, a travel mug in one well manicured hand, cell phone in the other.

At the sight of her friend, a smile curved Taryn's mouth. "I couldn't sleep."

"Judging from that expression on your face, you haven't looked behind the counter."

"No, really, I don't need—" Taryn's protest was left hanging in the air as a pair of familiar shoulders shifted into her view. Dressed in a loose white shirt, he could be a man from her homeland.

Kate leaned in to whisper, "That blond hair, those green eyes ... yum. He's good enough to eat. I know he doesn't look all that smart, but who cares, I bet..."

Her friend rambled on about the guy behind the counter, but the man Taryn was looking at was the one speaking to the barista. The sway of his expressive arms, the way his head dipped side to side as he talked...

Then, he turned, and she relaxed.

Of course. It was the man who'd hired her for the modelling job, the sculptor's assistant. Wondering what type of man worked for an artist so eccentric he insisted on remaining behind a screen while his models posed, Taryn watched his fluid movements. When he pointed to a man standing near the door, Taryn automatically followed the gesture with her gaze.

Then swayed at the sight before her.

Electricity shot up her spine, igniting pulses of shock that nearly stopped the flow of her blood.

It could not be.

*Adrian?*

Impossible.

The clothing of the man was modern, but that barely restrained power, that something different that sets one man apart from the others...

The gods must be playing tricks on her, it wasn't possible.

She pulled her gaze away from him and glanced at the assistant. Could he be a man from Greece as well?

Upon her second look at the man by the door, she was certain of the truth.

Adrian.

And she had been posing before him. Now he was right there, all she had to do was—

Waves of shock rolled through her, giving life to frustration and regret. Even if the dictate hadn't forbidden her from approaching Adrian, the memory of her own mocking words would have held her back.

"He's a hot one, huh?"

"Yeah, he sure is." But Taryn wasn't talking about the sweet thing behind the counter.

\* \* \* \*

"Let me get this straight. You're going to pay me to pose naked with some chick while you draw pictures of us. Have I got it?"

"Yes." Adrian gave Cutter, the man from the coffee shop, another head to toe assessment. Linus had selected well, he was perfect—physically—however, his personality left much to be desired. "I need one male and one female model to pose together. My client specifically requested a series of sensual statues for his garden, so the poses will be sexual in nature. I suspect you will be a good match for the female model I've been using, as long as you will be able to ... perform."

"You want me to *do it*?"

Adrian resisted the urge to knock the man out. One swing would have him out for hours. But then he'd have to send Linus onto the streets again, looking for another physically perfect male to pose with Taryn. "Intercourse is not required.

I only need you to follow the directions my assistant, Linus, gives."

"What happened to the last model dude?"

"The flu. I can't wait for him to get well, the client wants the work completed immediately. For a wedding."

"He wants fuck statues for a wedding?"

"What he wants the work for is not my concern."

The man shoved his hands into his pockets, pulling his pants further down on his hips. "What does the model chick look like?"

"Is that an issue?" Adrian moved back to the table covered with drawings. "Are you agreeing to the work?" he asked, without looking up.

"For the money you're offering, I'd fuck—"

"You only need to *pose*. As requested." He caught the man's attention with a sharp glance. "Is that clear?"

"Sure, yeah man. I got it." He shrugged. "This morning, at the coffee shop, that dude said something about an audition?"

"That's right. I simply need to be certain of your physical qualities before I can offer you employment."

"Well, you let me see the cash, I'll strip."

Adrian lifted the lid of the wooden chest on the corner of his desk, pulled out several bills and held them out.

Once the man stuffed the bills into his wallet, he kicked off his sandals and wasted no time peeling off the skin-tight, black T-shirt and low-riding, faded jeans.

"Good enough?" the man asked, setting his hands on his bare waist and taking in Adrian's quirked eyebrows.

"No underclothes?"

Shifting then running his hands through his shaggy sun-bleached locks, he grinned. "Waste of time."

He had a lithe, lean body, most likely capable of being strong, yet flexible. No doubt attributes he made use of frequently. Adrian refused to be one to assure the man of his physical perfection, so he offered as little as possible. "My assistant knows what type of man my client seeks. You are such a man."

"Yeah, the dude also said you wanted me to start today."

"Correct. The female model is already in the studio."

"That's the room at the end of the hall, right? We work for two hours, right? I've got someplace to go after that."

"Yes. Two hours today and each day after that until the statues are finished." Adrian paused, hating that he had to reveal even the smallest piece of his personal anguish to this stranger, swallowed and forced himself to add, "There is something you need to know."

"Yeah?"

"The woman you are to pose with, she is to know nothing of my identity. Should you reveal it—"

"Whatever dude." The man smirked. "You pay, I'll stay—and keep my mouth shut. No problem."

"I will remain behind the screen. My assistant, Linus, will be available should you, or the woman, require anything. He will receive instructions from me then will pass them on to you and the woman."

"Any questions?"

"Nope. I got it." Without bothering to conceal himself, the man swept up his clothing and sauntered towards the

doorway. "Hey," he said, pausing before moving out into the hall. "I got a question."

Adrian looked up from the tools he'd been gathering.

"Okay if I swim in that pool?"

Annoyance was not sufficient reason to deny the request. "The pool is mine. Yes, you may use of it as long as you are discrete."

"Sweet," he replied. "With that funky tile, fruit trees, and other decorative crap, it looks like the set from some 1950's porn flick."

The swift envy for the other man's sexual freedom did not catch Adrian by surprise. He'd become accustomed to the constant hunger, the endless ache for release. The days of drawing Taryn's most intimate curves had left him with such a restless longing that not even Linus, a true athlete, could keep up with him on his midnight runs.

His loins ached for her lush body, yet his heart would never accept a woman unless she was completely loyal and true. A woman for him alone. And Taryn had made it clear to him—in her own words—that when she could have any man, any time she desired, she would never settle for only one man. She would never settle for him.

\* \* \* \*

The gentle reggae beat coming from the straw covered concession stand, drowned out the rustle of the men approaching Taryn until they were nearly upon her. She lifted herself onto her elbows, peeking over the top of her wide sunglasses. Two men in park uniforms, one tall blond, one

dark, wide-shouldered and powerful, sauntered up, taking their time to reach the secluded spot on the beach where she had stretched out.

The well-built man hung back, inhaling deeply on a cigarette, his chocolate gaze drifting from the hot-pink triangle top she'd cast aside to her almost naked body. The blond dropped to his knees, scattering grains of sand onto Taryn's calves which stuck to the sleek coconut-scented oil she'd spread across her skin only moments ago.

"This late in the day, the topless section of the beach is over that way," he said flatly, tipping his head to the side and holding up the palm-sized staff ID hanging around his neck. "This area is closed."

Taryn continued to look over the top of her sunglasses, noticing the unwavering line of his mouth and the steady way he avoided looking at her glistening breasts.

After spending two hours posing naked with that new model, Kate's barista hottie Cutter, while Adrian sketched them had left her body thrumming and heated, so hungry for sex that she felt sure everyone around her must feel the same way.

Anxious and unsatisfied.

Ready.

Yet this man looked as though he was completely unaware of his cock. Taryn shifted her hips, swinging away from them both, digging her bright coral toenails into the sand and making a show of ignoring them.

The other man moved into her line of vision, his deep brown skin glowing in the sunlight, dreadlocks skimming his wide shoulders. "You waiting for someone, some guy who—"

"This section of the beach is closed," the blond cut in, his sharp tone making it obvious he took his job of maintaining park order seriously.

"I understand," she replied lightly, not wanting to gather her things and move to the crowded public area, dotted with horny men. "I'll stay out of sight."

"But you're not going to move?" the blond barked.

Taryn smoothed the edges of her tanning mat, the picture of gentle innocence as she looked past him to catch the gaze of the man whom she hoped to convince to ignore her rule breaking. "I like it here."

The dark man's eyes flickered as one corner of his mouth lifted. "I'm starting to like it here, too," he replied, mistaking her pleading gaze for lust.

"Henri..." the blond scooted back, resting his ass on his heels. "I'll take care of this, if you don't mind."

The dark man took one last drag of his cigarette, tossed the butt into the wind, then ducked under the wild branches blocking Taryn from the rest of the beach. "I do mind."

The man at her feet scowled, "Really, the last time—" He dropped his words when he noticed the splayed feet and swelled chest of his co-worker.

For the first time since the two had arrived, Taryn was truly intrigued. Relishing the sparks of conflict heating the air, she rolled back, letting her nipples peak upward and welcoming the tense display unfolding before her.

The blond jerked his gaze away from Henri to finally take a real look at her well-rounded breasts and smooth stomach before staring hard at the tight juncture between her legs, an area barely covered by a scrap of pink. Gaze lingering on her thighs, he rose and backed away. "I don't think—"

"That's your problem man," Henri crossed over, pushing the other man away with a movement so easy it could have been a lazy stretch, "All you do is *think*. Me, I know thinking just gets in the way."

He took another step forward, ran his tongue across his full lips and spoke to Taryn. "Spread your legs, baby. I'm going to make you beg for sweet mercy."

She had never been one to let others push her around, and she wasn't about to start now, simply because the insufferable Fates sought to keep her squirming within their grip. She could show them that their punishments had no effect upon her. Regardless of the man who slid into her, she was the mistress of her own body.

So, as she had with the boy at the club, she welcomed the chance for release.

"Is he going to watch?" she asked, sliding her gaze to the sulking blond and making it clear their coupling required he leave.

Henri glanced over his shoulder as he began fumbling with the tan web belt strapped around his uniform shorts. "This section of the beach is closed." His words were accompanied by a deep laugh. "So, if you don't mind," he yanked down his zipper, "I'll take things from here."

"Whatever man," the other man replied, stepping quickly as he fell away. "But this one is all you. Don't expect me to help you if..."

The last of his words were stolen by the wind and music as he marched towards the masses stretched across the designated topless section of the beach.

Taryn might have felt pity for him, but she had the feeling he wouldn't have wanted to watch even if he'd been invited. Some men just don't know how to be men, she mused, tugging on the ties of her suit bottom. Sex had always been Taryn's chosen method for running from conflict, and it could serve her well again.

One little pull on each bow and the suit came free, but she didn't lift her hips to remove it, instead she curved her arms above her head, silently letting him know it was time to get to work impressing her. Completely relaxed under the midday sun, she eased her knees apart, stretched her arms farther above her head, arching her back until her ribcage was off the ground.

Still smiling, he wasted no time dropping his shorts and black boxer briefs, exposing a pulsing cock so stiff it jutted firmly away from his body. "See," he murmured, gliding his palm along the underside of his thick rod, "No lies here baby. Just a big hot dick ready for your tight pussy."

Leaving on his park ranger shirt, he knelt between her legs and touched the thin piece of material lying across her mound. "Do you taste as sweet as you look?" he asked, stroking the tight curls covering her nether lips.

"Please us both and find out."

"Want me to lick your little cunt?"

She nodded, feeling her blood quicken and her centre swirl with liquid heat.

"Say it baby, I'll do it. And whatever else you want."

His request was more playful plea than command, so she spoke, giving him the words he wanted, then lowered one hand to spread her lips for him. "Lick my clit, and if I like it, I'll let you put your dick in me."

Chuckling as he knelt lower, he slid his warm tongue out and licked her nub, slow and steady. The quick, gentle rhythm fulfilled his promise.

Mere seconds later, Taryn was squirming against vivid images and heated memories of Adrian.

*Don't think of him.*

But with each hungry lick, the strong hold she'd always had on her emotions frayed until the edges of her control came completely undone. Fighting the memory of the last time Adrian touched her, Taryn spread her legs and pressed against the stranger's ravenous mouth, encouraging him to take more. Perhaps if she gave away enough of herself, there would be nothing left inside her to ache for Adrian.

Instead of following her unspoken request, the man lifted his hot mouth from her swollen, dripping pussy. "Easy there, I'm just getting you wet, so we can both enjoy the ride."

But she barely heard him. She was too far into her memories, wishing it was Adrian. If it were him licking her instead, she would pull away then position her mouth on his deft rod, sucking and stroking until the pleasure she offered washed away her dreadful, final words.

Struggling against the wretched emotions, Taryn dropped her head back and spread her legs. "Hurry up," she said, trying to sound strong and in control, but even to herself, she sounded dazed. "What are you wait—"

With one strong forward motion, he filled her to the hilt, then drew completely back, positioning his smooth tip at her opening. He chuckled, loving the way she stroked his male ego by wiggling beneath him, silently begging for more. Satisfied that she was aching for his stroke, he rammed his rod in with a hard-pounding rhythm that shook her whole body.

But Taryn wanted still more. His punishing thrusts weren't nearly enough to shatter her thoughts of Adrian.

It was then that she realised—she could be fucked but a hundred men, a thousand different ways, and it would never be enough. Not until it was Adrian pounding into her, making her his. Claiming her ... branding her...

*Don't think of him ... take what you can get...*

Taryn lifted her legs, wrapping them around the man's well-muscled back, and matched him thrust for thrust, urgently bringing on the first curls of climax. The waves of fire spread quickly, swallowing her whole, pulling her deep into painful pleasure. On the heels of her second orgasm, his hot juices spilled out, he moaned and impaled her three final times.

"Damn," he groaned, once his breathing slowed enough to speak. "You are one fine piece of ass."

He chuckled, reaching out to pinch her left nipple. "But I'm not even goin' to bother asking for your digits." He fell back

on his haunches, grabbing his shorts and briefs, then rising to tug them on, his motions efficient yet relaxed. He took a last look at her naked body, still glistening from his sex. "I can always tell when a woman's got another man on her mind." He winked and strolled off, leaving Taryn imprisoned by the wild longing for which there was only one release.

\* \* \* \*

Kate set down her bottled water, unhooked her halter-style bikini top, tossed it onto the sand and flopped on the beach mat she'd unrolled. "You're sure you don't want that hottie barista for yourself?"

Taryn swept her hair from her eyes and squinted over at her friend. Not even twenty minutes had past since the dark man had pounded into her, and still she was hot and wet, ready for sex, restless. But restless for only one man. "I'm sure." Offering a slanted smile, she added, "Really. He's all yours."

"Okay ... if you say so. But you kind of had a look in your eyes, if you know what I mean."

*Adrian.*

*So near ... but out of reach.*

*Forever.*

"He reminded me of someone, that's all."

"Lucky you." Kate chuckled lightly. "But since you're sure..."

The electricity in the other woman's tone struck a cord in Taryn. She took a closer look at the other woman's flushed face. "You already did it, didn't you?"

"This morning around eleven, I went back to get a coffee on my break, he was just getting off work, so we went out to his car..." Kate giggled. "We only had time to do it once because he had to go to some interview for a modelling job working with a sculptor."

As she lamented having only fucked him once, Kate shook her head and pouted as though she were a child who'd missed out on her favourite game. The laughter that drifted out of Taryn was so natural, so welcome, she embraced it completely, relishing one of the many light-hearted moments she experienced with her new companion. The experience of having a female friend was still so new, at times like this, the pleasure she experienced caught her unaware.

Kate lifted her palms, interrupting Taryn's mirth, "His personality is ... well, maybe you'll get to talk to him and see what I mean ... but that *body*." She rolled her eyes, "And his dick," she flipped onto her back, slipping her hair away from her shoulders, purring as she stretched her long legs.

Kate continued on, describing the strong thick curve of Cutter's thighs and how his ass flexed when he walked. Of course Taryn didn't need the descriptive detail to imagine each bend of him. She had been lying beneath him for two hours that afternoon, acting the part of a wanton desirous of his touch.

Although she agreed that his physique held a great deal of appeal, knowing Adrian stood on the other side of that screen...

*Why?*

What possible reason could there be for their paths to cross?

Other than to throw her own foolishnesses and vanity in her face while the gods laughed, she could think of nothing.

*Why didn't Adrian make himself known?*

Did he enjoy watching her degrade herself by using her body to put money in her purse instead of using it to possess whomever she desired?

Several minutes later, Kate's tryst account ended as she finished with, "He left me a voicemail, asking me to meet him at some pool over by that old warehouse tonight."

But Taryn wasn't listening any longer. Kate's vivid description had stirred her imagination. Instead of visualising Kate and Cutter, her mind was filled with images of her and Adrian. Visions of their past mingled with her ever present desire. He could take her any way he wanted, and she would be willing.

If only she could go to him, explain. Show him how she longed for him. But to violate the dictate...

Pictures of her beautiful home flashed through her mind.

Her mother. Her father.

Her sisters—even though they had tricked her and sent her to The Oracle to shame her, she'd had plenty of time to think and realise they'd had their reasons for deceiving her.

Yet worse than remembering her beautiful homeland and beloved family was recalling her own arrogant declaration to Adrian that she could have all the men she wanted, why should she settle for only him?

He too had had a declaration. He would never again come to her.

One of the things she most admired about him was that Adrian was a man of his word. So even though he was in L.A., he would not seek her out, of that she was certain.

"So you think it's okay to accept a fuck date via voicemail?"

Dodging frustration, Taryn snapped out of her musings, turned to Kate, and inwardly questioning her own worthiness to advise another, responded, "You don't need my approval."

Kate laughed. "I know. You just tell me if you want the details tonight, right after I finish with him, or in the morning over coffee."

"Tomorrow will be soon enough."

Kate lifted an eyebrow, grinning. "I've been daydreaming about round two all morning," she murmured, smoothing her palms across her flat stomach, her nipples dark and warm under the late afternoon heat of the California sun. Softly, she began planning her evening exploits, and again, her words faded into the back of Taryn's mind.

Adrian.

Her first lover, the one man who had treated her sweetly without demanding she give in to his every request. She'd been too arrogant to appreciate his honesty, his true devotion. She'd only cared about the power she had over men, the way she could make all the other women so fierce with jealousy they despised her as much as they longed to possess her flawless beauty.

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If only she could have him one last time, maybe he would forgive her for the way she had treated him, taunting him with the many men whom she'd taken freely to her bed.

Her stomach tightened with awareness. The shape of what the Fates had in mind for her was gradually beginning to form in her mind. She was getting what she deserved, she knew, but that didn't stop her from considering ways to change the course of events and get what she wanted.

Or at least seek a way to ease the constant ache.

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### Chapter Three

Slightly after midnight, Taryn paused beneath the blinking crosswalk, waiting for the typical late night stream of restless city traffic to thin. The windows of Adrian's studio were dark, as she expected. It would be hours before he returned from his usual midnight run.

She wasn't going to him—she only sought solitude in his space, so her actions didn't go against the dictate.

Not all of her freedoms had been taken, only one.

But there was more to life than freedom and pride. There was respect. Love.

And humility. Qualities she was only now beginning to appreciate.

If only she had understood sooner. Things could have been so much different.

Hurrying away from the kerb, as if by walking quickly she could leave her regrets behind, she crossed the street.

The courtyard gate swung on silent hinges, willingly granting her access to Adrian's world. She passed the pool then moved through the narrow hallway that led to his studio. Once reaching it, she stalled, listening to the silence and breathing Adrian's heady scent. Her body responded, her muscles tensing with an expectation that would not be fulfilled.

Neon light and moonbeams streaked across the walls. The floors, the table, the tools—everything was covered with a

thin layer of dust from the marble slab Adrian had been shaping, preparing for his visionary touch.

Stepping further into the expansive room, she caught a glimpse of a jumbled stack of large paper sheets.

She scattered the pages across the drawing table. The first was a rough outline of her arched body, with Cutter standing behind, cupping her breasts and sliding his knee between her thighs. In the next, she was lying on her side, twisted, exposing the deep clef of her hips. Cutter knelt beside her, his stiff rod jutting forward, anxious to drive deep.

She flipped through the rest. Lying, sitting, standing, she and Cutter in nearly every sexual pose possible for one man and one woman. The positions were sensual, but there was no passion in their eyes.

Coupling without love.

The motions of sex, the constant search for pleasure, only to be let down again and again. That was the life awaiting her, the one The Fates had designed.

Resentment swelled in her throat, making her fall away from the images swimming before her.

Wasn't there another mortal they could amuse themselves with? Was she so horrible she deserved this eternal punishment?

Enough with the self pity, she scolded herself, turning her back on the drawings that could have been of her and any one of many other men. Adrian would never want her again, but that didn't quell her longing for him. Somehow, she would find satisfaction in being near him without touching him or even seeing his face.

Leaving the drawings behind, she stepped to the window, taking in the beauty of the moon and ignoring the ever-present smog and garish lights. Directly in front of her, the water of the pool glimmered, calm and refreshing.

From their time together, Taryn knew Adrian often ran all night. As though pushing himself to the limit would earn him the respect of the gods, as though he had something to prove. With him away, there was nothing to prevent her from washing away her regrets. Should he return, she would simply slip out unnoticed.

She crossed to the dressing divider positioned across from the mesh screen Adrian stood behind while sketching. After shedding her dress and setting her sandals beside the chair, she slipped into the red silk dressing robe she kept at the studio for the few breaks they were given. The smooth fabric hugged her arms and skimmed across her nipples, making them tighten and peak as she walked across the room.

The soft crack of the wooden platform beneath her feet ended when she stopped in front of the huge slab of marble that would eventually be shaped into her likeness. There were no flickers of pride skimming through her heart, only shame that she had squandered her gift of beauty, something she should have saved for the one man who would commit himself to her forever.

Hopefully, she would never see the creation of herself that would mock her and remind her of her own folly.

Outside, Taryn paused by the edge of the pool, turning slightly to let the light night breeze skim across her skin.

Adrian.

Deep in the shadows, a thick white towel the only thing between the night air and his glorious taut skin, he leaned against the corner of the building with his gaze fixed above the fence, staring out at the haze of neon.

No doubt he had seen her yet was choosing to hide himself.

Taryn stumbled back, her gaze still upon him. The curve of his sculpted, bare chest pressed into the palm fronds, giving her enough glimpses of his body to send her blood racing.

His face was turned from her, his expression plain. He was unaware that she had seen him.

If she did approach him, what words would he have for her?

She winced.

Only what she deserved.

What words would she have for him?

That she longed for him with a fierce passion that frightened her so openly her own fears had sent her chasing every man she could conquer, even going as far as stealing other women's men, just to prove she could?

That she had been submitting to nameless men for months, allowing them to use her and toss her aside the way she had done to others countless times?

And most disturbing, was that she loved him still and realised now that she always would.

After all the moons of holding in lies, would she even be capable of speaking these truths?

Anger flickered in her chest and took hold. First, the rage was directed at The Fates for their cruelty, but quickly she

accepted that she had done this to herself. The Fates had merely arranged for her to see the ugly side of her beauty.

No matter how sexually satisfying, mindless matings would never fulfil her and make her whole the way Adrian had at one time.

Before she had been a fool and thrown it all away.

For pride.

Vanity.

Before she understood that one could not be truly whole alone.

She stepped forward and lowered her foot, swirling her toes in the water.

If they were together again, would Adrian take her quickly? Pounding his hot, hard cock deep into her pussy with a fast, steady rhythm?

Or slowly? Stroking her nether lips gently until she begged for release...

She gritted her teeth against the frustration pounding through her veins, trying to stop wanting, but she was a mere human and incapable to supreme acts of strength.

*Step out Adrian, come to me...*

The breeze blew, flattening her red silk robe across her tight nipples. She turned slightly, angling herself towards Adrian and letting the night wind pull the fabric over her shoulders and lower, revealing the rounded swell of her right breast.

No man had ever been unaffected by her legendary beauty—but Adrian wasn't merely any man. He wasn't like any other man she had ever known. Or ever would know.

She descended the first step, watching the liquid motion of the water as it rippled like elusive waves of pleasure. Lapping gently, it rolled over the aqua tiled edge, making it glisten.

Other than the gentle splash and the constant hum of cars, silence pressed in. He had seen and chosen to remain apart.

For the first time, Taryn knew desperation, and it frightened her—the unfamiliar swirling tension in the pit of her stomach, the heaviness in her heart as though beating was too much effort.

Instinctively, she realised she was desperate the way a woman is when everything she wants has slipped through her fingers.

There had to be a way she and Adrian could—

She wouldn't give up, because to do so ... would be...

Unthinkable.

Unbearable.

She wasn't permitted to approach Adrian, but she could use what the gods had blessed her with to lure him. Perhaps he would come to her again.

It was a tiny possibility, the smallest chance she could change her destiny. There was nothing to lose but her pride. More and more she realised pride came at too high a cost.

Arching back, she loosened the thin sash looped around her waist and descended. The water rippled, sending tiny waves across the glassy surface. The edges of her robe twisted and spun, then pulled apart to expose her flushed, bare skin when she strode forward, crossing to the corner of the pool where Adrian hid.

She halted, a short distance from the edge, cupped her heavy breasts. Lost in her own lonely desire for the man she once called her lover, she closed her eyes. Using her fingertips, she caressed the soft underside, then lifting higher, pinched her nipples. Delicious fire flickered between her legs, but she didn't want to be alone. She wanted him.

Ached for him.

*If only my hands were yours.*

*I'd do whatever you wanted.*

"The chick I was supposed to meet here got called in to work, but you'll work for a replacement."

Taryn knew the voice didn't belong to Adrian, just as she knew she'd soon be yielding to another unfulfilling fuck.

How many more would there be?

The earlier flames of anger ignited, burning away all rational thoughts, leaving her with only raw, painful emotions. Sensations she wanted to deny.

Before peeling the soaking robe from her damp, naked body, she glanced towards Adrian, still in the shadows. The Fates had stolen her free will, because of them she would become part a torrid tableau, putting in action the very words she had thrown in Adrian's face. Now he would know that the very worst of what he thought of her was true.

"Come on over, babe," the man said, reaching down between his legs to lift his erection above the surface of the water. "I'm going to put this in you and make you beg for mercy."

*No choice.*

She slid forward, her breasts bouncing as she moved straight into the arms of yet another man.

The moon had rolled over the clouds, shadowing the man's face, but his movements echoed in her mind.

Cutter.

For a heartbeat, she faltered before frustration and dread and finally resignation propelled her forward.

Adrian sucked in sharp breath, grinding his teeth as the model cupped Taryn's lush breasts. A true son of Zeus would not be forced to stand by and watch the woman he desired be taken by another man. Yet there he was, hiding in the shadows like some slave spying on his master. His shaft was tight and painfully ready, he dropped the towel to squeeze his engorged flesh.

Shame and desire engulfed him, a painfully heavy combination.

Curse The Oracle.

Adrian had never been one to stand back, waiting for what he wanted to come to him. His entire life could pass by, and he could still be begging for the acknowledgement that he was a god's son, a man worthy of a woman like Taryn. Without the recognition as a true son of Zeus, he had nothing more than himself.

That had not been enough before, it would not be enough now.

Despite his inner rage, Adrian could not wrench his gaze away, nor could he still the jerking motions of his hand as his fingers squeezed his desperate cock. After pushing her up against the side of the pool, Cutter leaned down, whispering

in Taryn's ear. She tipped her head back, smiling, but the warm, throaty laugh that rumbled out of her chest didn't ring true.

Adrian angled forward, focusing on the curve of her mouth. A stranger wouldn't know, but he did. Her smile was forced, awkward. Yet she made no move to push the man away.

He dropped his hand, looked closer, questioning.  
Why would she accept a partner she didn't desire?  
The Fates.

He wasn't the only one whose life they toyed with.

Taryn loved her homeland. There she'd had everything she desired. She never would have left willingly.

Adrian's gaze drifted away from the pool. Taryn was proud, and wouldn't want him peering at her from the shadows while she wrestled with her private dilemma, whatever it was. Besides, there was nothing he could do for her. She had made it clear that their lives were to take separate paths.

After waiting until they had both turned from him, Adrian crossed along the edge of the pool and passed through the gate.

Even though the man was doing his best to capture all of her attention, the swing of the gate caught Taryn's eye.

Adrian had left.

In the moments since she'd approached the barista, her anger had faded, now she understood why Adrian had not come forward. Their lives were no longer intertwined as they had been back in Greece, she wasn't part of two. She was one.

For now—and for all eternity.

She also understood that without Adrian it didn't matter where she was. Here or in her beloved homeland.

"Hey, what the hell," Cutter sputtered when Taryn shoved him away. "I thought you wanted it."

Striding through the water to retrieve her robe, she replied, "I changed my mind."

*And there's no going back.*

Not on this decision.

\* \* \* \*

"The Fates are done toying with me, but that is all." Taryn pushed away from her sister to stand at the open balcony door, the salty evening air of her beloved homeland misting her cheek and sending tendrils of hair scattering. The familiar beauty did little to alleviate the tension that had clung to her night and day, ever since she had been brought home weeks ago. She looked back, a bittersweet smile pulling on her lips. "I'm back, but it was all for nothing, don't you see?"

She sister glided forward, a babbling baby resting on her hip. "But you said—"

"I know what I said, but what benefit is learning friendship, humility, and what it is to be in love when your life is so empty there is no opportunity to put those lessons to use?"

Taryn took a step forward, the soles of her bare feet welcoming the cool outdoor tiles. On the horizon the last rays of the sun were pulling away, bringing on another stretch of lonely, empty hours. "I am home, but alone and—"

"You will have no trouble finding male companionship."

Casting a glance at her sister who was cooing to the sweet faced little one gazing up at her with adoring eyes, Taryn moved forward, still talking. "Not any man will do. I didn't know love, but now, even though I have not again known the embrace of his arms, the taste of his mouth, I know love. I know—"

"You know what you want?"

*Adrian.*

Taryn's heart soared as he swung himself over the balcony railing, but then truth pressed in and the smile fell from her mouth.

He grinned at her distress, reaching out, pulling her away from the centre of the balcony and tucking them behind a cluster of potted fig trees. "Surprised?"

"You—you are—"

"Back home." He lifted her chin and kissed her lightly on the lips.

Still reeling from shock, Taryn blinked, just barely catching the sight of her sister slipping inside and closing the door.

"I arrived home yesterday. Where I am to stay," he said, filling in her silence, his gaze drifting towards the setting sun. "Unless, of course, I make another visit to the Oracle."

"You went to the Oracle, as well? What did you seek?"

"Something I thought had value."

She lifted an eyebrow, silently questioning, urging him to continue.

"It matters not. I am who I am. I do not need the acknowledgment of others to tell me my worth." He shifted his gaze from the sunset to her, his eyes still glowing. "I have

squandered enough hours chasing the wrong things. Letting my very human impatience and self-doubt control me."

Taryn did not quite understand his response, but she did comprehend that he too had moved beyond something in his past. "What—"

"I am here now, Taryn. To have you."

His words took her breath away. "You still want me? After what I have done? And said? But at the pool, I was with Cutter—"

"You did not desire him, I know. I heard it in your laugh, saw it in the way you moved towards him."

"You are correct. I did not." Taryn flattened her palms across the tightly woven linen of his tunic, her fingertips tracing the curves of his powerful chest. It was too soon to say more of their turbulent past, yet for the first time since she had pushed Adrian out of her life, she knew that she could again be his.

"Is it a dictate that you have for me?" Taryn asked hopefully.

"Absolutely," he replied with a taunting smile, backing her against a wall that had been warmed by the lingering rays of the sun. "You must submit to me, each and every time I request it. And you will do so until your body begs only for mine. Is fully mine."

Taryn laughed, the sound drifting away when Adrian shoved aside the folds of fine wool covering her, gathering it easily in one hand. His cock was quickly freed and just as quickly thrust between her legs, impaling her. She gasped for

air, clinging to her lover as the thrust of his adroit shaft demanded her full obedience.

"You may expect many such sudden couplings," he murmured in her ear, pumping so solidly into her that her bare ass cheeks grazed the rough wall. "I expect no arguments, only acquiescence."

"Would you have me totally tame?" she taunted, panting as a splendid wave of pleasure tore through her. "Defying the gods and their creation that is me?"

"I am no longer concerned with what the gods think," he replied, groaning as his body tensed for release. "You were created for me, and I intend to have you."

Taryn struggled to speak, the tendrils of ecstasy had wrapped her tightly, but because the words mattered, she forced them from her throat, "Yes, take me, Adrian. My love is only yours—now, tomorrow and always."

"As is mine, I—I—"

But Adrian could speak no more as his own climax took possession of him. His thrusts became impossibly hard and fast, filling her completely. Perfectly. Angling against her, he pounded into her pussy, using his cock to shatter the pain of their past and bind them together eternally.

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## **About the Author**

Thrill-seeking risk takers, heroes with the dark past, sexy locales, untamed women! Isabelle Drake writes stories featuring men and women who aren't afraid to go after what they want. An avid traveller, she'll go just about anywhere—at least once—to meet people and get story ideas.

Email: [isabelle@isabelledrake.com](mailto:isabelle@isabelledrake.com)

Isabelle loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at [www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com).

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Nectar of the Gods  
by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

## **APOLLO'S CHOICE**

Sascha Illyvich

\* \* \* \*



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## **Dedication**

To Michele, my wonderful editor at Total-E-Bound for putting up with my timeframe during all the other projects I had going on, and for believing in this story! Marie LaCroix, for submitting this to our wonderful new publisher and helping me rework the story! Thank you both, as well as my other book mates! Here's to a hell of a lot of sales, eh?

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## Chapter One

Apollo looked at his temple. Marble stone columns stood tall with a slight influence from Thrace architecture. He knew it was odd to mix cultures, but a party was a party. And Mother Nature shared her bounty with multiple species, right?

The mere splendour of his temple was a sight to behold. Ornate purple cloths hung on the walls, framing exquisite tapestries woven with the finest of silks. Gold adorned everything from goblets to his throne. A fountain stood in the middle of an open space. The statue of Apollo playing his lyre while surrounded by beautiful women reminded him of his love of music and sex. Many of his followers had worshipped at this temple, drinking from this very fountain. Hell, last night's party with Dionysus had ended with an orgy of him and six beautiful women who'd had a little too much of the fountain's gifts.

What a wonderful way to forget an affair that had gone awry.

Now, he lay across a chair, legs thrown over the sides with a drink in hand. His blond hair fell over his face, hiding his eyes and the smile he still wore from last night.

Sighing, he remembered this one buxom redhead who had offered herself completely to him. He took her in every imaginable position, let her do anything to him she wanted. They'd both come several times and still, after several hours, he wasn't satisfied. She, of course, was out cold. Tired, being human and all.

Being the fertility god as well as god of wine had certain advantages. "Who wants to be god of war when we can drink and fuck for eternity?" Apollo laughed aloud.

He'd decided to send a message to his followers that another festival was to be held in his honour this evening. Zeus and the other gods be damned, but Apollo was really becoming accustomed to having the masses worship him. Apollo was the god of Nature, of wine. The two were related. From nature came grapes. From grapes came wine. From wine came indulgence.

He scoffed at the mere thought that Zeus had even the kindest thought for one of his sons, let alone one who actually served a purpose. It seemed that both humans and gods alike shared the problem of discarding unwanted children.

Those weren't the worries of Apollo though. His biggest concern was trying to figure out just how many women he could fuck in one night. It didn't matter to him who, as long as fun was had by all.

Hell, he even wondered if some of the other gods would show themselves tonight. To see Hera drunk and dancing could be a total mess, or it could be great fun. He was betting on the latter.

He knew his little redhead would be present tonight. She'd been so intoxicated from his love and wine that he sent her home with Hermes, the messenger god, just to make sure she arrived home safely.

He yawned. A nap was in order. Even the gods had to rest from time to time.

\* \* \* \*

Stretching, Apollo opened his eyes to see shadows standing around him. A fist slammed into his jaw and another against his ribs. His head spun.

Coughing, he tried to sit up but was conked in the head a second time by something large and heavy. Instantly his world became blackness as his body fell to the ground.

When he awoke, he was tied to a table. His body ached, mostly his jaw and the place in his ribs where he'd been assaulted.

"What is the meaning of this? Who dares think they can ensnare a god?"

"I do," A female voice boomed. "And it's my right as Queen of the gods."

Great. Hera. That bitch needed a drink and some serious dick.

Her eyes narrowed, lips pursed. Her hair flowed straight down past large breasts all the way to full hips. The white robe she wore was more ornate than standard fare on Olympus. "You're here for my pleasure, Apollo."

Make that a double on both accounts

"By the gods, what do you think you are doing? I have a party to host tonight."

"Silence." Her command irritated him. Looking around, he saw no one else present. Things didn't look good.

"Is this about the invite? Because I meant to send one to you personally, but I got sidetracked last night by, uhhh, business."

"Yeah, I'll bet. You are neglecting your godly duties as of late. It worries me."

He smirked. "Why? I'm not out for your job. Who cares?"

"The other gods have seen what you are capable of and how you bring followers into your temple when even the local laws forbid worship of you. It frightens them. Frankly, I could see you rebelling against Mount Olympus as Ares did." Hera set a hand on her hip.

Apollo frowned. "What the hell did Ares do?"

"The little pipsqueak tested my will, and I sent him away, just as I intend to do to you. Let's pretend it's my gift to you for bringing the human's attention to the fact we still exist."

Apollo frowned harder. Then his eyes widened. "Why send me away? That serves no point. Share in my light. Come to my party tonight Beautiful Hera." The words were almost choked out. Apollo struggled against leather bonds that only dug into his wrists more as he moved. He was bound so tight that circulation would have been cut off a long time ago if he was a human.

Hera exhaled. "I can feel your disdain from here. It displeases me." Her frown frightened him. When Hera was mad, everyone on Mount Olympus knew it. Her tirades were legendary.

"Come on, Hera. You are the Eternal Goddess. Wife of Zeus, you can have anything you want. Come to my party tonight and partake in the carnal pleasures offered to you. You are getting carnal pleasures from Zeus, right?"

Even he couldn't help the childish grin that crept across his face.

Hera scowled. "Insolent fool." Raising a hand to the sky, she called forth a bolt of lightning.

Heat seared his body, scrambling his mind. Every nerve was on a fire so hot it could melt iron. His parched throat begged for cool water to calm the fires, but none came. Another bolt struck him, and he smelled burnt flesh.

"I have no desire to see you join with your brother Dionysus to partake in his parties, gather your powers together and overthrow me. Both of you are trouble, but I will deal with him later. You," she glared at him, "will be forever banished from Mount Olympus and sent somewhere to never bother me again." Her yell was more a raspy growl, grating over his nerves.

"But—" Another bolt struck him, and his world died before his eyes.

\* \* \* \*

Consciousness crept into Apollo's head with the weight of a marble column behind it.

"Dude, wake up. I know you drank a lot last night, but you went home with two hot blondes. You've gotta tell us what happened man."

Apollo's head hurt. The sound of another male voice echoed loudly in his head. A foot was tapping against his leg.

"Man, are you all right? Did you party a little too hard?" The male laughed.

"What happened? Where," he opened his eyes and saw himself in a large concrete box with an opening at one end. Above his head hung a large metal panel, suspended by two

more metal rods. Standing before him was a lanky young man with long hair. His skin was the colour of olives. He was dressed totally differently than anything Apollo had ever seen. He must be rich enough to afford pants, even if they were made of a foreign material. And full covered shoes?

Apollo reached behind his head and scratched a spot on his now thick, dark hair. Startled, he sat up quickly. "What the fuck happened?" His stomach felt like it had dropped. He coughed, tasting something he could only identify as crappy alcohol.

"Last night, man, you hit the booze really hard."

Apollo's head pounded, and pain in his eyes made him close them.

"Where did you and those two chicks go, man? Did you fuck them?"

That sounded like something he'd have done. Thing was, he couldn't remember anything just yet. "I don't know what you're talking about, *dude*. And my name is Apollo, the Greek god of the Sun. I am not *dude* or *man*."

Apollo put one hand on the ground, pushing himself up to his feet. His vision blurred, and his balance was off. A chill went through his body when the wind blew into the room. Slowly, the world came into focus.

The man laughed again. "You're such a prankster, James. Always over the top. I like that, man. Listen, me and the others have to go. We have homework to do before we can come back and practice for this week's gig, but I'll be back later tonight with a bottle of Jack. You down?"

Apollo started to speak, but the stranger clapped his hand on his shoulder, hard. He gripped Apollo and shook him.

"Nurse that hangover, man. We're going back for round two tonight! Hit the bong. It'll clear your mind. See ya."

He walked out of the large concrete box and disappeared.

The thought occurred to Apollo that he wasn't on Mount Olympus anymore.

This could be remedied by flashing himself back home. Closing his eyes, he imagined Mount Olympus, particularly the warm spa in his temple. Opening his eyes, he saw he was still in the same place he'd awoken.

"Something's wrong."

His head throbbed again. Damn headache. When did the gods get headaches?

Wait.

He tried to flash himself back home again.

No luck.

The strange man said he drank an awful lot last night. When the humans drank too much, they became intoxicated. The next morning, however, they often suffered the effects of dehydration, but their loyalty towards him kept them coming back for more.

"Oh fuck all."

The god of wine was hung over.

He groaned at the realisation.

Running out into the open, Apollo saw all sorts of things he didn't recognise. Structures around him that were certainly not the magnificent marble temples of Greece, nor were they like anything he'd seen before. Loud metal machines on

wheels zoomed past him several yards away. The sky was gray. Large puffy white clouds hung above, blocking out the sun's light. Another chill went through him. He gripped his arms, rubbing his hands up and down for warmth.

A breeze blew, ruffling the hair in his eyes. He flopped his bangs about.

In fact, looking at himself, he realised that he was dressed like the other man, in pants and a dark long sleeved shirt that was *definitely* not something any god would wear, let alone mortal.

The other man had called him James.

Just what was going on here?

He needed to hit the bong and think about what had happened, except that Apollo didn't know where the bong was, or why he had to get physical with it.

Hera.

That evil bitch had sent him someplace foreign. That much he remembered. Quickly, he ran back into the house and through the door. Running down a hallway that seemed familiar, he ran into a bathroom and got a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

He was still handsome but very surprised.

He looked nothing like his former self. Shaggy dark hair covered his face, falling to just above his shoulders, making it hard to see unless he parted his hair. Stubble on his face made him look old for a human. The planes of his face were harsh, rugged. He still retained the features of his eyes, that angry softness that gave away only what he wanted people to see, when he wanted them to see it. Which was never.

He stood tall still, retaining much of his Greek features.

"Whew," he breathed a sigh of relief.

A jug of wine was in order to make sense of things.

Snapping his fingers, he waited for the jug to appear before him.

Nothing happened.

"Servants?" he yelled, but nobody came to his aid.

Were there no servants in this house? Apollo didn't see any when he went into the house. In fact, he only saw a fairly clean house, except for a few metal cans and some paper on the floor and clothes carelessly strewn about.

He didn't like being confused.

He walked out of the bathroom and down the hall again.

Turning right into a bedroom, he saw a bed with a large blue comforter, two pillows and a pair of silk woman's panties. Whoever this James person was, he certainly had taste in upper class women.

Stepping into the bedroom, Apollo noticed a desk, an instrument that resembled a lute, but much larger with four strings instead of six. He picked up the instrument and began strumming it. It thrummed in his hands but was out of tune. At least the top string was. Shock registered on his face at the odd, deep sound. Greece had nothing like this. Still, it felt somehow comforting to pick up a musical instrument.

"It's drop D-tuned, silly." A female voice came from the doorway. "You look like you had a rough night, James. So I came by with more condoms and your amp."

"Who are you?"

She stood in the doorway, hips tilted to one side. Her purple hair fell over her eyes. Red, pouty lips stood out against pale skin. She was slender, waifish really. Dressed similar to the strange man who was here earlier, she resembled a vagrant.

She moved her hair out of her face, revealing eyeliner outlining soft gray eyes. "You're a silly man, James. It's me, Mona. Your lead guitarist. I was the one who brought you back here last night."

She stepped into the room, hips swaying seductively.

Apollo started to open his mouth to explain he wasn't James, but thought an extra second longer. Mona wouldn't understand. At least, she didn't look like she would. It wasn't every day that gods were sent away to different places or time periods.

"Where am I?"

Mona stepped closer, stretching her hand out. She touched his forehead. "You're not feverish. Are you feeling okay, James? Bill said you looked like shit this morning but I didn't figure..."

Bill must have been the other man who'd shown up earlier. Apollo enjoyed the touch of her hand against him.

"You're not feverish. But you certainly don't look like yourself today. Better lay off the drinking for a night, wouldn't you say?"

He shook his head. He couldn't remember having so much to drink. Last night was a blur after Hera had shown up.

"Perhaps." Looking into Mona's eyes, he saw himself. Confusion was written all over his face.

"Something's wrong with you, isn't it?"

"You have no idea." It was then that he spied the pendant hanging from her necklace. He recognised it as a symbol for Zeus. She was a follower. That meant she was somewhat trustworthy. Hell, she seemed like a better person than Bill. Besides, his charm wasn't a power that could be stripped, right?

"I'm sure it's nothing big. Just talk to me. Are you nervous about the show? We're opening for Soundgarden in a month. I'm anxious. Kim Thayil is a hero of mine and ooh, Chris Cornell is so damn sexy with his hair cut short like that. He makes me just want to..." She trailed off, looking in a different direction.

"Mona, umm ... I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm not James."

"What? Of course you are. Don't be silly."

"No, I am not. I am Apollo, Greek god of wine."

She laughed, throwing her head back until she realised he wasn't lying. "It's not possible. The ancient Greek gods are all dead."

"How dare you say that of your god, Zeus? He may hear you and inflict severe punishment upon your house."

She laughed. "I've studied Greek mythology, and even the occult religions of the twenty-first century refuse to recognise them as existing anymore. Zeus died eons ago."

His eyes widened at the same time as his jaw nearly hit the floor. "What?"

She put her hands on his shoulders. Forcing him down onto the bed, she looked him dead in the eye. "Well, truth is,

Zeus was more of a myth according to—I know you have a wild sense of humour, James. This is ridiculous."

"But I am Apollo. Mona, you are a worshiper of Zeus. You of all people should know I am the real thing."

It was rumoured that once the masses ceased to believe in their very existence, they would fade out like the Atlantean gods before them.

She shook her head. "Apollo doesn't exist. I don't believe he or any of the Greek gods have existed in centuries."

His pulse quickened. "What could I do to prove to you that I am Apollo?"

Mona studied his face closer. She touched his hair, felt it fall between her skinny fingers. Hair fell back in his face.

"Nope, you've not had a shower in a day or so." She touched his cheek, looking deep into his eyes. Her mouth dropped.

"James isn't in there, is he?"

"No! I'm not James. I'm Apollo!"

She stepped back. "Cool! But I thought you were all dead. Is there a cult around here?"

He shook his head. "I don't even know where here is."

Mona arched a brow. "What happened?"

"I don't know. I was sitting in my temple, planning tonight's party, and Hera poofed me into her chamber. Fucking bitch told me I was growing in power and something had to be done. Next thing I know," his speech slowed, "I was here. And my head hurts."

"You've obviously occupied our lead singer's body. James He—" She stopped.

"What?" The worried look on her face gave him cause for concern.

"James Helios. This is awesome! James was sexy as hell anyway, but now, he's even better. Or, rather, you're the real thing. How cool!"

"No. Not *cool*. I don't belong here. This isn't right. I'm supposed to have a large party tonight where practically all of Greece comes to worship me. There are tons of women planning to be there, plenty of wine to flow freely. You're taking this way too easily."

He stopped. He had no idea how he was going to get back to Greece.

Mona sat down beside him. "I've always wanted my personal god. I've believed in the Greek pantheon since I was a little girl. Mom used to tell me stories of the ancient gods and goddesses." She put her arm around his shoulder. "You do look like hell, even for a god. I suggest you get some sleep, eat something. Come out with us tonight. Relax and we can figure this out in the morning. Do you still have any of your powers?"

"How did you know about those?"

"Silly, I've studied Greek mythology for years. Can you make wine, cause I'm only nineteen."

"I've tried. It seems I have no powers."

"Damn," she snapped her fingers. "Look, just rest. We'll figure this out later. Tonight you're supposed to practice, but I suppose that's off since you probably don't know the words to any of the songs we've written. And I bet you can't even play that bass."

"I can." That was weird. Even weirder was the fact that he picked up the instrument and began strumming it with his hands. Notes came out that seemed to make sense in his head.

"Hmm, you can play bass guitar. Odd for a deity."

He smirked. "I am the god of music. I can play anything and everything very naturally. We can do anything!"

"Then come out with us later tonight. But let's not mention this to anyone just yet." Her cocksure smile was amusing.

He nodded. "I'm not sure what would happen."

Mona smiled. "You'll come out with us?"

"Okay, Mona. I will."

Like he had anything better to do.

\* \* \* \*

Many drinks later that evening, Apollo, aka James Helios, walked outside with Mona, Ted, Bill and Jon, their other band mates. "Let me take a piss outside, you guys."

They laughed heartily and waited outside. Apollo stepped away from them, still shocked from the outcome of the day's events. He'd had at least two bottles of scotch, a beer with the guys, a girly drink with Mona and a kamikaze. His bladder was about to explode. Through his drunken stupor, he realised being human was sort of fun, but having to urinate every five minutes was damn annoying.

Of course, the alcohol also loosened his tongue, which almost caused several slip ups he wasn't sure he could cover. Not that he cared anymore. He was still the god of fertility, stage and wine.

"Too bad Mona can't join you. She's had quite enough tonight, too." Jon, their drummer, was dressed in flannel and jeans and wore his hair long like Apollo.

At least, Apollo hoped he'd discerned Jon's voice. All of the new experiences he'd had this evening were a bit overwhelming.

"Fuck you Jon!" She hiccupped. Grabbing Apollo's hand, she held onto him for dear life, smiling. After all the drinks they'd had together, she'd started talking about random things while the others joked with her about the existence of any deity other than the alcohol in front of them. Apollo determined that she was a good friend to the real James Helios.

Apollo felt his world spin before his eyes, then realised Mona had spun him around with her. She pressed herself against him and shoved them both against the side of a nearby building.

He hit the wall with a thud, nearly losing his stomach. He looked down at Mona, her eyes were large and sad, but the rest of her face was red. "What are you doing, mortal?"

She giggled, her eyes narrowing slightly. Her breasts crushed against his chest, reminding him of his other desire in this world or any for that matter.

His cock stiffened, and his arms slid around her tiny waist. A voice in his head screamed for him to lower his lips to hers while still another from somewhere deep inside him warned him of this. It wasn't right. It wasn't the choice he was supposed to make.

Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

Still, he ignored his inner voices and gave way to his desire. Lowering his mouth to Mona's, he was mere inches, could smell and almost taste the liquor on her breath.

She looked at him, familiar desire in her eyes, but there was something else, too.

"James?" Her voice was weak, trembling.

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## Chapter Two

"James Helios!"

Apollo froze. That voice wasn't Mona's. It came from behind her.

"James Helios, I should have known you'd forget about tonight!"

Apollo looked at Mona.

"Uh oh," both said at the same time.

Apollo looked over Mona's shoulder to see a voluptuous woman with long dark hair standing dressed in jeans and a sweater that hugged her curves. There was something familiar about her aura. At least, he hoped he was feeling her aura from here. Could he still do that?

"Umm..." Just then his stomach felt sick.

Mona spun him around and pulled his hair back with one hand as he leaned against the wall and lost his lunch.

The feeling of throwing up was vile. His lungs and stomach felt as though they were caving in on themselves while the contents of his stomach flowed back the way they came. Wretched sounds he made disgusted him.

Bill and Jon came around the corner, laughing at Apollo. "Busted dude, looks like Tanya will be kicking your ass later for this one."

"And you three, you're all incorrigible! I can't believe I work for you all!" Tanya stormed out of the alleyway and down the street.

"Call us!" Bill retorted.

"Asshole," she shot back.

When Apollo finished, he stood and wiped his mouth. Mona let go of his hair. "Come on, it's time to get you home. I think I just remembered something."

Apollo's head didn't feel so cluttered anymore but still, he held Mona's hand as they walked out of the alleyway. "What did you remember?"

"Tanya's our sound person, and we were supposed to meet her before we went out earlier. Come on, let's get you back home and cleaned up. I suspect this," she hiccupped again, "is your first time ever being drunk?"

She laughed so hard she nearly fell down.

Bill caught her by one arm and hauled her up. "Easy there, Mona. Can't have a repeat performance of last week."

"Shut uuupp!" Mona slurred her words and stumbled back against the wall. Apollo caught her, setting his arm around her.

He'd nearly kissed her earlier. Nearly got to sate another one of his desires. Did that have drawbacks as a human, too? Other than the obvious potential for pregnancy. And considering whom he was, he was certain he was very fertile.

"Shit," he muttered. He'd sort this shit out tomorrow.

\* \* \* \*

His head pounded, and his stomach was upset. Those were the things Apollo woke up to when consciousness flooded his mind. He opened his eyes and found himself sprawled out on top of his bed, one shoe off, his flannel partially hanging off one shoulder and his hair in his eyes. The taste in his mouth

from last night was still there, a foul acrid taste that smelled bad, too.

The door to his left creaked open and Mona appeared, standing in a white t-shirt and long black sweatpants.

"You look like hell." He lifted his head too quickly. "Ouch!"

"You do, too," she laughed and came into the room. Sitting at the edge of the bed, she took his hand in hers. "How do you feel?"

"Like Zeus brought down his temple on me. You?"

"You need some water and food. Something light and to rehydrate your body, and by the end of the day you'll be back to your old self. Well, James' old self anyway."

"But how are we going to get me back to *my* old self? You know, the god with powers and back in Ancient Greece? And get your James Helios back here?"

"Apollo, I haven't the foggiest idea. Do you remember anything from last night?"

"Yeah, some enchanting woman yelled at me." He put his head in his hands. Light hurt his eyes despite being the former god of the sun.

"Here, slip these on." She handed him a pair of dark glasses. "They'll filter out some of the annoying light though people will think you're a bit weird if you wear them indoors."

Apollo slipped on the dark glasses and looked in the mirror.

Mona brushed strands of dark blond hair out of his face so he could see himself better. "What do you think?"

Apollo looked around the room, noticing that brighter lights were being filtered out through the glasses. "I like them."

"They look good on you. Now, about that woman. That was Tanya, she's our sound person. I think we were supposed to meet with her last night before we went out drinking, but I kinda forgot."

"And what does she do?"

"Well, Bill plays drums, Jon's our rhythm guitarist, I'm lead and you're on bass and vocals though I can't see you singing in your present condition."

Inhaling sharply, Apollo scoffed. "In Greece my voice was lyrical and grand! Millions were moved by it when I spoke. After all, I am the god of song as well as light"

"Back down there, pal. I'm not suggesting it wasn't. You're one of my favourite gods, remember? But here, it's a different game. You can't sound grand for a grunge band front man. Tanya's job is to ensure that you don't. She comes over once a week to help us improve our sound as a band. Also, she has a thing for James though she's an odd match for him."

"Why?"

"Because she's rather plain and nerdy. Silent when it comes to personal matters, not very expressive at all."

"I should know her." That thought came blurting out for no reason.

Mona smiled. "You should. She'd like it."

"I might as well enjoy that pastime as long as I'm here. How do we get Tanya here?"

"You call her and apologise for missing our appointment. She's a student so she'll be home in about two hours for lunch before she returns to classes."

Apollo jerked upright. "Me call her? You are asking a god to do a human's work?"

"Last time I checked, you were only god in name. Which one of us couldn't hold his liquor last night?"

Mona had a point, but still. Him, work? That's what servants were for.

"You're a pompous ass. I almost forgot that, Apollo." Mona stuck her tongue out. "Fine I'll call her. But you're going to apologise."

He stiffened. "And just what am I supposed to tell her?"

"I don't know. Use your charms, your highness."

\* \* \* \*

Apollo managed to shave and shower even while his head throbbed. The pain lessened as the day went by thanks to ibuprofen that Mona had given him before she'd left.

Still, what the fuck was he going to do? Stuck in this foreign time period, in a strange body and an even stranger situation, he had come to believe the Fates must be laughing at him by now.

Stepping out of the bathroom, he examined himself in the mirror again. Where had those few cuts on his arms and thighs come from? He didn't remember them yesterday but he wasn't exactly paying attention to minute details then, either.

The image of Tanya from last night was not a good one. Her standing in the alleyway with the moon behind her, giving her an ethereal appearance while her beautiful hair cascaded down over what he was certain were very feminine curves beneath a sweater that hugged her body, that was the good part of the image.

Then turning to the wall to wrench his system out had ruined everything.

Oh well. Where was Semele when he needed her? Oh, right. Down in the underworld.

Damn Father and Hera...

Mona said for him to dress in his torn blue jeans and army green shirt, sneakers and to tie a flannel around his waist. Didn't want to appear suspicious and mental, she told him. "Better to dress normal for James."

He figured these rags were clothes for the time period but hadn't been paying attention. His mind was elsewhere.

That is, until a knock at the door pulled him out of his mental state.

"Tanya." He licked his lips. Her body against his would quench the thirst he'd developed since meeting her last night.

Dressing in a long-sleeved white shirt, khaki trousers and sandals, he took one last look at himself in the mirror. Oh, if the other gods could see him now. He looked utterly ridiculous with his hair hanging around his face the way it was.

Opening the door, he saw her. Radiant, her sad smile tore through his heart and he didn't know why. Her rose tea scent floated over his nose, reminding him that she was certainly

different than any of the other women he'd been with in the last thousand years.

Dressed in a gray t-shirt and clean blue jeans, she stood with a tiny smile on her lips. Her dark hair had been pulled back and set atop her head in a bun. Behind a similar pair of dark glasses, Apollo saw emerald green eyes that swirled with intense emotion. She slung a backpack over one shoulder.

"Tanya, come in." His voice was shaky at best right now. Great. A signal to his groin raced down his spine.

"James." She nodded but didn't move. "Mona called me earlier and left a voicemail. Said you had something you wanted to say."

He stepped back from the door and let her in. "Please," he swept his hand aside in an old world gesture.

She sighed and shrugged her shoulders. Cocking her head to one side, she looked at him, smiled and stepped in. Her expression lightened.

Mona said Tanya was attracted to James. Did James have Apollo's gift of arousal? It didn't matter, James was nowhere in sight.

Apollo spotted his opportunity the moment she set her backpack down beside the door.

"So, what did you want to tell me?" she asked.

He scratched his head. She wasn't going to bow down and fall at his feet like the women of Ancient Greece. She appeared too stubborn for that. "Um, yeah. Come in. Have a seat."

"Are you firing me?"

Apollo's eyebrows shot up. "Firing you?"

"Yeah, letting me go. Not wanting me to be your sound person anymore. Is that what this is about?"

"Tanya no! Quite the contrary. Why would you think that?"

Tanya blushed, colour flushing her pale skin.

Apollo noticed her freckles and thought they were cute.

"It's just," she turned her head to the side. "Never mind. What did you want to talk to me for?"

"No, tell me what you were thinking." When had he found himself caring for another mortal?

"It's just..." She let out a long, slow breath. "Most people don't find me interesting or attractive. I thought with your big show coming up in a month, you'd want ... you know, a better sound person."

Opening for Soundgarden next month. Damn! He didn't know what a Soundgarden was. Mona would have to show him later. But ... "No. Why would that thought occur to you? I was asking you over so I could apologise for last night's behaviour and for not honouring our date."

"Our date?" Now her eyebrows arched.

"Yeah, don't you remember? You agreed to go out with me before I went out with the band. We were going to have a drink or two and um ... talk."

"James I'm afraid I don't remember that at all. But..." She smiled, and it seemed to light up the room. "Did you really mean we should go on a date?"

His eyes travelled up the line of her body, stopping at her breasts. A pendant hanging around her neck caught his attention. It looked familiar.

"Where did you get such a lovely necklace?"

She picked it up between her thumb and forefinger, both digits calling to his mouth and tongue, and shrugged. "I found it on my dresser this morning. I have no idea where it came from. It does look neat though."

"Indeed." He spoke with a nod.

Letting it fall back between her breasts, she wrapped her arms around her shoulders. A visible shiver went through her.

Glancing around, he noticed the house wasn't in the cleanest shape. "I've had a lot going on in the last two days."

"I'll bet." She slid off her sunglasses. "Apologising isn't like you."

"A lot of things aren't like me," he mumbled beneath his breath.

"What?"

"Mona said you're the best sound person she knows and, um, thought I should apologise for missing out on you last night, too. So, I'm sorry?" He shrugged his shoulders and extended his hands, open-palmed, to her.

She breathed a sigh that sounded like relief. "It's okay. I've been busy with finals anyway and the extra study time was useful I guess."

Apollo flipped on the stereo, music came from the speakers. It was rather aggressive, loud and somehow seemed grand yet sad. "Who is this?"

She laughed, "You're kidding?"

"Tell me who this is." Apollo remembered his role. "Um, it's been a long day, and there must have been something in my drinks last night."

"You poor baby. Shouldn't have drank so much." She took his hand in hers, and her touch felt oddly familiar.

Her hands were soft, feminine. She kept her nails short and unpainted. What a shame. She'd be a lovely woman if she took better care of herself, he noted.

"I like this song." She started swaying her hips.

Apollo licked his lips. "Want me to turn it up?"

She nodded. "Yeah. I like Pearl Jam, a lot."

Apollo walked over to the stereo, turning it up.

"Eddy Vedder sure hurt a great deal on this album. I heard his relationship with his father was strained." Her hair swayed in tune with her hips, loose tendrils broke from her ponytail.

Apollo yearned to move those strands of hair behind her ear and kiss her the way he almost had Mona last night.

"Vedder, yeah. This is a great album. I was just kidding about not remembering." He gave a weak smile. He did sort of like the Pearl Jam album. It wasn't his famed lyre or classic Greek lute music. In fact, it had a more manly sound. He wasn't sure if it was him or James Helios who enjoyed the music.

Tanya looked at her watch. "I guess it's about time I get out of your hair. You probably need to finish recovering from your hangover so you can play tonight with the band."

"No, stay." He started for her but stopped himself. This hangover was really cramping his style!

"You sure?"

He nodded, looking her body up and down. "Yes. Very." He swore he saw her smile, but it quickly faded.

"Okay."

The song changed, the guitar sound became muted and cheap sounding until the bass and drums kicked in. The melody was slow, the singer's voice sad.

Tanya took a seat on the faded black leather couch and patted a space beside her. "Come sit next to me. Let's talk." She seemed shy.

Apollo nodded. What was wrong with him that he couldn't take what he wanted? He caught a glimpse of Tanya mouthing lyrics along with the song and decided her mouth was beautiful, more beautiful than the painted faces in his temple.

He should kiss her.

Apollo sat down beside her and threw his arm over the back of the couch. He may not be a Greek god in this time period, but he was still a man who knew how to get what he wanted.

Tanya shifted in her seat.

"You should let your hair down." His voice sounded gruff, almost commanding.

"Oh?" She turned to look at him.

He caught a glimpse of sadness in her pretty emerald green eyes. Leaning forward, he smelled her scent, pearl and vanilla. Thank the gods, he still had some acute senses even in his state being of hung over. "You are quite pretty."

She blushed, heat creeping visibly up her cheeks again. "You really think so?"

"I do indeed. And I know a thing or two about women." He gave her a cocky grin and put one hand on her thigh, feeling the denim beneath his hand. It felt odd, softer than his but

still rough and protective. He'd have to remember to ask Mona more about clothing later.

She crossed her legs but left his hand where it was.

He felt her tremble beneath him. That was not the expected response. "Why so shy, Tanya?"

"You haven't noticed?" She leaned back from him. "You've really never noticed?"

He shook his head.

"I'm not good with people or expressing myself."

"Just act natural. I'm really good at that when I'm not hung over."

She laughed. "You're a natural charmer, James."

There was that problem again. He wasn't James, damn it! "Sort of. I had help of a father who knew his way around women."

Her eyes widened. "So that's why your parents divorced?"

He didn't have a damn clue about James, but the question made him think back on his own parents. Hera killed his mother Semele as Zeus idly stood by. Apollo thought about the fact that women had also literally thrown themselves at Zeus, and Hera only reacted by killing or cursing them. Or cursing him so that women who came to him eventually went mad with ecstasy. Not that such a thing could happen here since he was no longer a god, or so he guessed.

"Did I ask a bad question?" She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Mother was killed." He looked directly at her. "I never speak of it."

"I'm sorry." She looked away.

Apollo took her chin in his hand and forced her to look at him. His eyes reflected in hers.

Terror crossed her eyes for just a moment before their lips met.

She was soft beneath his mouth, pliant. Her eyes closed, and a hand wrapped around the back of his neck. Her fingers tangled up in his loose curls and pulled him to her.

Tanya pulled back from the kiss.

The emptiness he felt from their parting was not something he would stand for. Leaning in again, inhaling her vanilla scent before kissing her, he pressed his lips against hers. His hand wrapped around her tiny waist and pulled her body to his, crushing her breasts against his chest. His body grew hard, and his cock throbbed in his jeans.

Tanya sucked in a breath, opened her mouth and let his tongue slide between her lips. Arching against him, she moaned. Malleable against him, she let him explore.

Her mouth felt like soft velvet, hot and molten as her tongue slid over his. He knew he had her then. His hand crept up her thigh, squeezing lightly.

She squirmed and giggled into the kiss.

Her lips were warm against his, wet. Her tongue darted out over his bottom lip, and her eyes opened just a little, then closed.

Apollo leaned in again and kissed her, this time pressing his mouth softly against hers and wrapping his hand around the back of her head. Her silky strands tangled around his fingers.

She shivered beneath him.

Apollo shifted his weight and changed positions so as to face her with his body.

She pulled back and looked at him.

She appeared to enjoy their kiss, but the moment she caught him studying her, her expression changed and she narrowed her eyes as though all signs of lust were imagined.

He stroked her hand with his fingers. "Why do you do that?"

"Do what?" She sucked in a breath and put her hand to her chest. Pulling out of his arms, she looked down at her feet.

"Try to hide your emotions from the world."

"I don't know," she shrugged. "I never thought about it. I never thought I was important enough for people to notice."

"Well when you're with me, stop it." His head felt better and raising his voice to a stern pitch didn't hurt him the way it had moments ago. Of course, blood was flowing through his body much faster now, though it centred within his throbbing cock.

"I don't know how else to behave." She seemed to shrink back into the couch.

"You should learn quickly that to disappoint me would..." He stopped himself. Catching a glimpse of himself in her eyes again, he realised he must sound like a pompous asshole. Women in this time didn't respond the way they did in Ancient Greece. Plus, he wasn't Apollo, he was James Helios. Bass player and tortured soul.

Seemed he and James had a lot in common.

"You should behave how you feel, Tanya. You should let the world see your pretty smile."

She smiled, tilted her head and shrugged her shoulders. He was sure she'd blush again, and it'd only endear her more to him. Damn it!

What the hell had the Fates let him get into now? The stirrings of lust he was familiar with, but the other emotion swimming around his chest and stomach made him uneasy. Even if he were to remain in this time period, he was a Greek god! Gods never fell in love with mortals.

"Okay."

The stereo changed songs again. Apparently, it was a different album. Apollo hadn't noticed.

Tanya's ponytail became a mess. She reached back to straighten it out, but when she begun wrapping the ponytail holder around her hair, Apollo looked at her.

"No, please leave your hair down. For me?" He tilted his head slightly and smiled.

She dropped her wrists and put her hands in her lap. Then the stereo started playing the next track. "Oh, I love Soundgarden!"

"Me too." It wasn't entirely a lie. The music was catchy but filled with aggression.

Certainly, the grunge sound was growing on him.

"I sure don't mind the change," she sang, her voice was lovely, ethereal but still spoke of as much pain as the Soundgarden vocalist. He could relate to pain.

"Care for some wine?" He might as well entertain in his typical fashion.

"Sure."

A little wine loosened the tongues and inhibitions of women in Ancient Greece. It'd work well here too. Mona was an example of that.

Standing, he walked into the kitchen and rummaged around, looking for a corkscrew. One of the drawers had myriad silverware, nothing like what he had back in his temple. No intricate designs, no special metals. Just stainless steel.

He found the corkscrew, pulled a bottle from the wine rack and brought it into the living room with two glasses he'd pulled off the counter. Opening the bottle, he filled both glasses half full and handed one to Tanya.

"I have to admit, I'm not much of a drinker." She sipped the wine. "But this is good."

He nodded and sat down beside her. Sipping his wine, he decided that ten-year-old merlot was good.

Still, he wanted to kiss her.

Taking a sip of wine, she looked up at him, her expression every bit as confused as his. Kneeling before her, he put one hand on her shoulder. With a slow press of his lips against hers, he leaned forward, inhaling the tannic taste of merlot on her mouth.

She moaned into his mouth and nipped back at his bottom lip.

Cradling her head in his hand, he pulled her forward to plunder her mouth again as sparks ignited between them.

Her eyes widened.

He kept his eyes open, watching her reaction while he kissed her, tongue plunging between her lips.

Her mouth opened for his, her tongue licking her bottom lip. Fingers found their way to his curls and tugged him closer to her. Darting his tongue past her parted lips, he caught hers and suckled on it.

She inhaled sharply, her breath hitching in her throat.

He smelled her arousal, the faint scent of sex and powder that made his cock harder.

Devouring her mouth hungrily, his own body burned for her. Each nerve was primed and ready for her sensual touch. His cock ached, straining against his jeans.

She pulled away from the kiss and threw her arms around his neck.

Apollo leaned forward, brushing his lips across hers gently. He repeated the motion a few more times, each time applying more pressure.

Finally, she leaned into him aggressively, locking her lips to his.

She laughed into the kiss. "You're a tease!"

He wiggled an eyebrow. "I try, my dear."

Tanya leaned into him, her lush lips bending for his mouth. The fact that she surrendered so easily made everything sweeter for him.

Pulling away, he watched her expression change from light and playful to intense arousal.

Apollo noticed her breasts beneath her black shirt, tiny peaks hardened and begged for his touch. A hand snaked around her waist, feeling her supple skin beneath her shirt. His palm caressed the small of her back then slid around to

her front. Grabbing a handful of breast, he squeezed her gently.

She moaned into him, her mouth assaulting his now. Her tongue plundered his mouth, feeling its way around the folds of his lips.

Apollo groaned, standing and pushing himself against her. His solid body moulded against hers, pressing her into the soft leather couch. Straddling her, he felt his erection grow painfully hard.

"Gods, Tanya, I want you."

"Take me," she mouthed against his neck.

That was all he needed to hear. Pulling himself off her, he bent down and picked her up, enjoying the weight of her body in his strong arms. Carrying her to his bedroom, he tossed her carefully on the bed and looked at her hungrily. His mouth watered at the mere sight of her, primed and ready for him.

He smelled her fragrance of pearls, vanilla and bergamot. Such a sweet aroma that threatened to overload his senses if he didn't fuck her immediately.

Restraint, a hard thing for him, gripped him. He had to remain in control and take things slowly with this woman. His heart begged him to slow his pace.

She lay on his bed, giggling.

He shoved up the hem of her shirt, bunching it around her curvy breasts. With one hand, he tore down the zipper and slid off her pants, exposing luscious, naked thighs.

She'd willingly spread herself open for him. The thin material of her black G-string disappeared between pump ass cheeks.

Tanya drew up her legs like a butterfly, the beautiful pair of shaved lips parting like an open, watering mouth.

Apollo drank in the sight of her. Reaching out, he touched the lacy material, tugging it down long slender legs. Bending over her, he lowered his lips to the inside of her thighs, inhaling her fragrant sex.

Her breath caught in her throat. "God, I want you inside me," she begged. Her voice was raw and wicked.

Dipping his head down to taste her, Apollo flicked his tongue over the moist bud of her sex.

She shuddered beneath him, balling her fists at her sides.

Salty sweet, her lips opened for his tongue. Diving deeper, he rolled his tongue around her, eyes watching her response.

She lolled her head from one side to the other, hands now gripping the deep red sheets.

Another taste had her panting, her chest heaving.

Apollo enjoyed the way she reacted to him. "You're mine, aren't you, Tanya?"

"Oh god yes."

None of the women in Greece said those words with as much conviction as she did. He looked over her breasts to see her eyes slammed shut, her ruby red lips parted. She would probably love his cock in her mouth, take it all the way in and tease his head. Oh, the thought hardened him further.

Sliding two fingers inside of her, he felt her muscles clench around him. He swept his tongue around her outer lips, rolling it along her flesh.

Shivers raced visibly through her body. Her hands gripped his head roughly. "Please," she cried, "please."

"Such a beautiful sound, a woman begging for the god of the sun." One final lick up and down her entire slit sent an orgasm racing through her.

He grew painfully hard at the sight of her lying on his bed, sweating, panting.

"Make love to me, James." She arched her back, her breasts bobbing back and forth.

He didn't have to be told twice. Apollo stripped out of his remaining clothes and licked his lips. Crawling up the length of her body, he tangled his fingers in her silken hair. Grinding his hips into hers, he enjoyed the sound of her pleasurable whispers. Every nerve in his body felt more than alive. Hands rushed to the hem of her top, lifting it over her head to expose ample, creamy breasts. Large areoles with pink, puckered nipples stood at attention, begging for his mouth.

"Gods, you're beautiful."

Wrapping her arms around his neck, she pulled his mouth to hers. Her lips parted.

Slipping his tongue inside her mouth, he explored every ridge and softness her mouth had to offer. The taste of her was elegant, creamy and oh so fulfilling.

Warning bells rang loudly inside his head, screaming that sex with a mortal in this time period would probably get him in more trouble than he could handle. But something clicked

in him that recognised something soft inside Tanya. Something she could give him, if he could just figure out what he was missing.

His large chest pressed against hers. Settling his hips into her softness, he reached down with one hand and drove himself deep inside her, both lovers crying out from the pleasure.

Her heat was exquisite and unlike any other woman he'd ever been with in all his years on Olympus.

Tearing himself away from her mouth, he plunged his head to the valley of her breasts, tongue sweeping over her heated skin. Blood was so close to the surface that he swore he could actually see it moving through the veins in her body.

This was the closest he'd ever been to a woman, emotionally, and it was scary. Sex with anyone else had just been a primer but Apollo actually felt as though he could see into her sad little soul. One glance into her emerald green eyes, and he saw just how much her heart ached for a connection like this.

The physical sensation of her body moulded to his made perfect sense in his mind. She was just as damaged internally as he was. But why?

Who would hurt such a beautiful spirit?

A gentle squeeze of lips against his cock brought his mind back to their lovemaking.

Fingernails dug into his spine, raking over his skin. No doubt there would be delicious marks.

Falling into a rhythmic pace with Tanya was easy. Her body flowed in motion with his, hips arching to meet his, hands caressing his rough skin.

Her mouth locked onto his clavicle, licking fire over his already heated skin. Her mouth kissed flames towards his ear, while a hand tugged his hair.

Arching into her, his thrusts quickened.

Her back lifted off the bed.

Sliding a hand beneath her, he held her tightly in his grip, thrusting, panting, and groaning into her soft skin.

Apollo drove himself into her, pounding deeper with each stroke. Her groans became cries that filled his ears and echoed throughout the room. Skin slapping against skin reverberated off the empty walls, music to his ears.

Her fingers dug into his skin, she stopped moving then shuddered beneath him, her orgasm slamming into her with enough force to trigger his.

His cock quivered, his body shook. Closing his eyes tightly, he saw stars flutter, explosions in his head. The coil of tension unwound itself inside of him with each spurt inside Tanya.

"Oh god, James," she sniffled. "Oh my baby, my sweet, pained soul..."

Apollo stiffened but relaxed almost instantly beneath her soothing touch. "What do you know of pain?"

Staring down into her round eyes, he saw the slow stream of tears fall down the sides of her face.

It ripped into his soul.

Tanya sniffled and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. Looking into Apollo's eyes, she offered a smile.

"Seriously, you're not going to tell me what's wrong? I thought women never cried unless the sex was bad. And I am not bad." He settled beside her wearing a smug grin.

She laughed, "It's nothing. I promise. It certainly wasn't you." She winked.

"Then what?" Like he needed to care at this point. The problem was, Apollo had already given a part of himself that he thought had been closed off. The damage was done.

"No, seriously," she sniffled again. "It's okay. Just lay with me."

"Your parents don't know you're here, do they?" *Where did that thought come from?*

She stiffened against him.

Looking down at her, he tousled her hair. "It's okay, I promise I'll not tell them if you won't." He offered her a smile.

She laughed. "My parents are always pushing me to get away from doing sound and this band. They see it as a fad. How silly." She paused. "Do you believe in fate?"

Apollo groaned. "I know them personally. They're bitches."

"What?" She raised an eyebrow.

He slapped himself upside the head and looked upwards, cursing beneath his breath before returning his gaze to her luscious body. "Nothing. What I meant to say was, yeah I kinda do believe in fate. Odd, huh?"

"No," she shook her head in response. "Just some things feel as though plans were made before we're made aware of them." She took her hand in his and pressed her head against his chest.

He stroked her hair, the soft curls tangling in his fingers. She smelled of sweetness, femininity. "Why don't your parents like you here?"

"Oh..." she rolled onto her back and let a hand fall against the mattress with a thud. "They see you as a slacker who'll never amount to anything. It doesn't matter that you're playing a show for one of the biggest bands in music right now."

He rolled his eyes. "Just great. Another set of people judging me. Fuck'em."

She rolled back to her side and pressed a hand into his chest. "I'd rather you fuck me instead."

"Mmm," he lowered his mouth to hers for a soft kiss. "School tomorrow morning?"

Pressing her mouth against his, she nodded.

"Bedtime then." He didn't say another word. Throwing an arm around her naked torso, he pulled her on top of him.

She looked down at him.

Moving damp strands of hair out of her face, he studied her for a moment before giving her a smile.

She smiled back and rested her head on his chest.

With a kiss on her forehead, he stroked her hair and closed his eyes "Goodnight, Tanya. May Morpheus grant you sweet dreams."

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### Chapter Three

Soundgarden's latest single, *Fell on Black Days* certainly struck a chord with Apollo today. He sat, slumped over the desk in front of him, pen in hand. He'd scrawled words on the stack of papers beside him. Since Tanya had left this morning, the desire to create had compelled him to write his own lyrics. The music inspired him to new passion, albeit very angry, but passion nonetheless.

Apollo could not explain where the angry feelings came from. He was pissed off all right, but he knew what usually happened when the Fates interfered, sometimes life was fair, other times it pissed in your face.

This was nothing new.

Still, the anger in him felt new, foreign, which puzzled him. The sex was mind blowing last night. Tanya's body had moved over his gracefully. Her orgasm had played over his senses like music that drove a deeper beat down to his core. Of course the desire to write lyrics only reinforced his current predicament.

The fact that her parents judged this James Helios without so much as getting to know him reminded him of his own pitiful life. Someone was always trying to piss on his parade. Hera's latest misdeed was just another straw on the camel's back that irritated him, made his skin crawl. But Tanya ... she was a breath of fresh air.

The door creaked open. Apollo looked over his shoulder to see Mona, guitar in hand. "I take it you're not—oh what's this?"

Glancing at her, he quickly covered up the piece of paper he'd been writing on. "It's nothing."

"Are those lyrics?" she blurted out.

"No. What do you want?" He stared at her.

Dressed in standard issue grunge flannel, black tee shirt, matching short skirt, fishnets and boots, she looked taller than she was. The guitar completed the look.

"That's like James, dude. Not wanting anyone to see the lyrics until he'd finished and perfected them."

He didn't feel like the almighty god of light much today. It seemed easier to be angry. After Tanya left this morning, anger had flowed freely from his fingers to the paper. He'd come up with ten new sets of lyrics, all in Greek style, of course. He wondered if it was the sex that charged him or the lack of a woman in his bed.

"Have it your way. Anyway, I was up last night and had a chance to write a new riff. I'll crank it out for you later today. How was last night?" The wry grin on her face spoke loudly. She'd make someone a fine bed mate.

"It was ... okay." His hair fell in his eyes, blocking Mona from his line of sight.

"I see bruises, man. Heh." She tapped her neck.

Apollo scowled. "Leave me alone, woman. It is not wise to mess with the Almighty Apollo."

She snickered. "Suit yourself." She turned on one heel, her black guitar spinning around with her. She started towards

the door, strumming an odd chord or two before she reached the door. "Be ready tonight. I can't keep telling the rest of Helios that you are sick. We play with Soundgarden soon."

He sighed. "What of me getting back to Greece?"

"Oh, I almost forgot," she turned around again and reached into her pocket. Pulling out a slip of paper, she unfolded it. "Does this look familiar?"

She handed him the slip of paper. It had a pendant that looked like one he'd seen recently.

He scratched his head, something else the god of wine never did. "If I had an oracle, they could tell me what this means."

"You don't need an oracle, dude. You need to find that symbol. Apparently, in a fit of jealousy, Hera actually caused the demise of Ancient Greece and the death of all the gods. I found an old history book in the city library that just happened to have a little story about Ares' change of character about fifty years before his supposed death."

Ares dies? His jaw dropped. "The God of War cannot be..."

She ran her fingers across her throat in a hanging motion. "Apparently he can."

He slumped back against his chair and dropped his arms. "Shit."

"That's right dude. And unless you figure this out, you're next on the dead gods' list."

"Tanya!"

"Yeah, you'll be stuck here with her. That's a saving grace."

"No, I don't care about being stuck here right now. Tanya wore that pendant last night."

"Then I suggest you pick up the phone and give her a call. Also, I'd pick up that bass and, at least, try to learn a few of our songs. The real James Helios was a slacker, but he got shit done." She poked him in the chest.

"Why should I?" His lip curled upwards in a snarl.

She narrowed her eyes and lowered her chin. "You still need to blend in. This is the nineties, man. People are killing themselves, and nobody seems to know why. Your parents don't talk to you much, so people may get the wrong impression if you stopped playing or acting like James."

The sentiment sounded vaguely familiar. "What's wrong with James?"

"Nothing. He's just a twenty-five year old with no direction, like the rest of our generation. We've been thrust into a world where our parents' old views no longer work. The pressure they kept putting on him to grow up, cut his hair and get a real corporate job caused him problems. And his lame ass step-father ... oh god, I hate that fucker."

By now, Mona was seething.

In, out, he watched her take a deep breath. He needed one himself. It sounded like even now parents hadn't learned how to care for their children.

"Hell, Kurt Cobain's death was partially blamed on his parents' separation when he was six years old, man."

"Who?"

"Oh my fucking god. The man is a god in our time. I'll grab my Nirvana albums later so you can hear him. In fact, James modelled himself after Kurt."

"Why?"

"He liked the honesty of Nirvana's music. You look like a liar to those of us who know you, James."

"I beg your pardon!" He stood and reached to strike her. Nobody talked to him with such disrespect.

Mona didn't move. "You look like a liar to me, Apollo."

"Fuck." Dropping his hand, he turned away, his hair falling back in front of his eyes again. "Did you do that with Tanya last night?"

"What?" He snarled.

"Give her that jaded bullshit side of Apollo, instead of the real you! Damn you," Mona stepped forward and slapped him across the face.

Astounded that she actually hit the almighty god of sun, he touched his cheek, feeling the warmth of her handprint burn his skin.

She looked down at the floor, her hair hiding her expression.

He heard a snuffle. What was it with women who cried these days?

Mona turned to leave.

He reached out to stop her. Catching her wrist, he felt the cuts on her arm. They were fresh. "What is our relationship, Mona?"

Her tears tugged at his heart. "We're—James and I have been best friends since childhood."

Ouch! "I see." His calm tone returned. Best friends? Damn Hera and her selfishness! "Then we'd better figure out a way to get him back and me gone."

Mona took off her guitar and set it down against the couch. "I'm sorry, man. It's been..."

"A rough day?"

The voice behind her was sweet, inquisitive. This didn't look good for Apollo.

His heart had opened up and let Tanya in last night. Well, she'd probably wormed her way in, rather.

"Tanya." Both he and Mona turned around to see her standing in the doorway.

Dressed in a cute red spaghetti strap top that barely covered her midriff, blue jeans and brown Mary Janes, she stood with her head tilted to one side. "Care to tell me what's going on, James?"

She didn't look angry. More like ... confused.

What did he care? He was going to have to leave her soon.

"Oh, ummm, yeah. Tanya, this isn't what it looks like!"

Mona stepped forward. Taking Tanya's hand in hers, she moved a strand of hair out of Tanya's face. "James and I were talking. I wondered what the creep did to convince you to accept his apology. I figured he'd gone off and done another asshole-ish thing." She offered a wry grin.

Tanya smiled. "He hadn't done anything actually." Tanya gave a sheepish grin that hinted at more than she wanted known. "Nothing. I wanted to hear him out." She looked at the floor the moment redness crept up her cheek.

Apollo caught sight of her face. Was she blushing? It looked cute. Sexy.

Mona would rib him about the exposed hickey on her neck later.

"Man, if I had known you were on your way, I'd have waited. Or come earlier. Or..."

"It's okay, Mona. Really. I needed to talk to you all anyway about sound check at some point." She looked him up and down. "Is this how you normally dress, James?"

The black shirt showed off a sculpted pair of arms. A gray and black flannel wrapped around his waist hung low, covering his black shorts. "Yes. No. How long have you been standing there, Tanya?" Apollo stood, crossing the distance between them. Wrapping her in his strong arms, he pulled her to his chest.

"Hi," she breathed against his skin. "Busy?"

"Mona and I were just..." He stopped short. What the hell were he and Mona doing actually?

"James wrote some new songs this morning." Mona piped up.

Tanya's eyes sparkled. "When is your next show? I've been so busy with school and my damn parents that I haven't been keeping track like I usually do."

His lip curled upwards in a grin. "Baby, I'll give you a private show tonight." He sounded cool delivering that line.

Tanya blushed. Wrapping her arms around him, she pulled him to her.

Her body radiated heat that was both awkward and comforting at the same time. She looked into his eyes, still the same lost expression hidden beneath rich emerald eyes.

"Ahem," Mona nudged Apollo in the rib. "We have to practice tonight. You still have to get that last song down with your bass solo."

*Oh fuck!* He'd completely forgotten about a bass solo he'd written last week ... except that he wasn't James Helios last week.

"It's done. Tonight, I promise." He waved his hand dismissively at Mona.

Mona winked. "We're really grateful to have you around as sound dude, Tanya."

"Me too. I think you guys have a great sound, and I'm glad to help out." Her skin looked so flushed right now. Apollo wondered if she was as embarrassed as he was, or if it was all in his head.

Mona shut the door on her way out, leaving her guitar behind. He was glad for her presence right now, she kept him focused.

"Listen, Tanya. I—"

Two fingers went to his lips. "I know James. You're not doing as well as you'd like me to think, are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't hear everything, but I saw the way you reacted after Mona slapped you. It's her or me. Isn't it?" She smiled weakly.

What? "No! She and I, James and I are..." Apollo heaved a sigh.

She frowned, her beautiful lips almost pouting. "You're involved with her."

"No, that's not it at all. It's really difficult to explain, Tanya. I'm not James. My name is Apollo."

"As in the god of the sun, Apollo?" Her frown became a smirk. "Please. If you don't want to date, that's all you'd need to say to me. I figured after last night that the feelings you had for me weren't real."

"How would you get that after what went on last night?" He spied the pendant around her neck. Reaching for it he gripped it in his hands but was instantly burned. "What the fuck?" He let it go immediately.

"James Helios, did you want this pendant as payment for last night?" Now she was fuming. Her eyes betrayed her emotions, showing intense depression rather than the anger her vehement tone suggested.

"No, I swear it Tanya. You've got to believe me. Would I lie to you?" He stood apart from her now, his hand still burning, the smell of burnt flesh rising towards his nose. Looking at his hand, he saw the imprint of the pendant. "Look! This," he shoved his hand in her face, "has got to prove something. Mortal man's hand does not just burn at the touch of jewellery. Not even where I come from."

She took his hand in hers, studying it carefully. He saw the angry cuts on his arms too, though they didn't match the ones on Mona's, they still appeared deep. What the hell was wrong with man that he must mutilate himself?

Tanya sucked in a breath. "I didn't know it was so bad."

"What are you talking about? You haven't even looked at the burn mark yet?"

She studied his hand closer, awe covering her face.

"What's going on, James?"

He sighed heavily and slumped against the couch. "That's what I'm trying to figure out."

She looked blankly at him for a moment. Tilting her head to one side, he watched her eyes bore a hole into his character.

His hair fell in front of his face.

"I think that's so sexy," she lifted a hand to his face, moving hair behind his ears. "You're not James."

Her voice was a bare whisper.

She stepped away from him. "Who are you?"

He let out an exasperated breath. "I'm still not sure you'd believe me."

"No, I'd believe you. Your energy seems ... foreign. That's the best way I know how to put it. You're either a really good manipulator of energy, or you're telling me something's amiss."

Humans in this time period didn't know much about energy. Mona was a rare case, that much he was certain of. "It's my turn to ask who you are."

"I am simply me, Tanya." She smiled. "Also, last night after we made love, I mean slept together—"

He held up a hand. "You were right the first time."

She blushed again. "I realised something. I've been after James for months, and he hadn't noticed me. Your behaviour is off, for James. For one, you're not sulking."

He frowned.

"Now you tell me who you are first."

He lifted his head, moved hair out of his eyes. "I'm not James Helios."

"Seriously? What are you doing in his house if that's not who you are? Are you a relative?"

"No. I'm..." He studied her face. Her eyes were wide and rounded, her soft lips parted in disbelief.

She tapped her foot nervously. She took a step back. "Who are you?"

"Tanya," he let out a breath he didn't realise he'd been holding in. His shoulders sank.

"I don't know how I feel about having slept with a total stranger, honestly. I never do those kinds of things. I'm not a whore, if that's what you're thinking."

"Never!" He stood up quickly.

"But I want you." Her voice was meek as she looked at the floor and away from him.

His eyes widened. "Really?"

She lifted her head.

He reached out to move red strands of hair away from her face to expose her pretty green eyes.

She shrugged. "Yes. I know it sounds strange, but I like to think of myself as a healer of souls. Yours in need of care."

Apollo cocked his head to one side. "Then tell me who you are."

Throwing her arms around his neck, she pulled him close enough to feel the heat from her thighs. "I am someone who believes in you, whoever you are."

"You must be a goddess." His mouth swept over hers. She pushed him away when he attempted a second chaste kiss.

"No goddess." She closed her eyes.

Apollo did prefer roses out of all other flowers. Especially red ones, like the one he held in his arms.

He kissed her, dragging her into the living room.

She kicked the door shut behind them.

Falling against the couch, her weight against his body felt right more than it hurt. His stomach fluttered nervously.

The pendant fell into the collar of his shirt, burning him instantly. He yelped.

Tanya jerked upwards, arching her softness around his pelvis. That felt good, despite the burning flesh.

"Oh my god, I'm so sorry James—er—whoever you are. Did it catch in your chest hair?"

He rubbed his chest where the pendant stung. "What's with that thing?"

"I don't know. I know people have allergic reactions to gold, but this is ridiculous."

He smirked. "Tell me about it."

She unhooked the necklace and set it aside. "Guess you're not in the mood anymore, eh?"

"Around you..." He arched his hips upwards. "I always am."

She slid off of him and sat. Her lustful expression remained.

Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

Apollo shifted his weight, sitting up beside her. Throwing his arm around her shoulders, he pulled her to him. "I guess we need to actually talk, huh."

"Yeah."

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## Chapter Four

"You don't know anything about your past, do you?"  
Tanya's statement caught Apollo off guard.

"What are you talking about?"

"You're a troubled soul with no idea of his true identity. You hide it." She leaned her head against his shoulder and reached for his hand.

He flinched. Waves of emotion flooded his mind, his heart skipped a beat. Her soft smile touched him in a way no other woman had since his entire existence. This is probably why he recognised her. She reminded him of the last women he'd been with before he'd been banished to this time period. That woman too was a redhead who seemed to capture a part of his heart...

"What's your real name?" Tanya cupped his cheek in one hand.

His hair fell in front of his eyes again. "Apollo. I am the Greek god of wine."

Tanya didn't react at all. Most people's jaws would have dropped, or their eyes would have bugged out. Tanya's face remained calm. Then again, Mona didn't react that way, either. What was with people in this time?

She leaned back from him, angling her body to face his. Her eyes narrowed. "That's the most ridiculous thing I've heard in a long time. You know, I could have you committed."

He scoffed at the idea, throwing his head back. "You wouldn't bother."

"You're right," she snickered. "I wouldn't. But let's say I do believe you. What happened?"

His gaze fell on her face. "Why would you need to know?"

"I feel people's energies. I'm an empath. Your energies feel tremendously different than anyone I've ever met."

He stared blankly at her.

Tanya reached for his shoulder. "You didn't have empathic people in Greece?"

Her touch sent a shiver through him, but he smirked. "I didn't have to worry about such things."

"Figures." She moved her hand aside in a careless gesture that annoyed Apollo.

A glimmer of light caught his eye. "Will you show me the back of your pendant?"

She picked it up and showed it to him, turning it around for him to see.

"The Greek inscription reads, 'A choice must be made if you are to be true to yourself.'"

"I know. I studied Greek mythology in college."

"You've attended college?" His eyebrows shot up. There were scholars in Ancient Greece, but education was for the wealthy not the plebeians such as—

He stopped himself. It wasn't nice to refer to someone he was fucking as a plebeian in this day and age. Mona had reminded him earlier.

"Yes! You started to attend from what I gathered by looking around your house. You have an impressive library. Or, James does anyway. Why did you stop?"

He touched her hand, feeling the warmth against his cold, clammy palm. "Because I'm obviously not James Helios."

She frowned. "I guess that makes sense. When did you appear here?"

His eyebrows rose. "So you believe me?"

She tilted her head slightly. "We're still figuring out that part." She gave him a light smile.

He crossed his arms over his chest. Hair fell in his eyes, and he brushed strands back behind his ear. "About three days ago. Hera banished me before the night of a big party. Thousands were coming from all of Greece to worship me. There was to be a festival just because I felt like it!"

She grinned wickedly. "You look like the delicious type to worship."

He nodded. "Thanks, but you are more of a goddess than I am a god right now."

Her face turned a shade of crimson.

"By the Fires of Tartarus, Tanya, you are a goddess in your own right. In my time, people would come to worship beautiful women like you. They would have been elevating you to something close to goddess status. That much is sure." He leaned into her body, aware of his own serious expression.

She frowned. "I doubt it."

"Why doubt my word?" His shoulders rose, tension building at her impudence.

Even as the words left his mouth, he knew he'd said too much. Looking deep into her eyes, reminded him immediately that she'd had a difficult past. Whatever had happened to her

in the past had managed to follow her here and weigh her down in the present.

"It's nothing." She looked away.

"No. What's nothing is an orgy consisting of hundreds of drunken women who've come with the sole purpose of fucking the god of light. You are something amazing."

"You're saying that because you want in my pants." Her tone was flat. "Just leave it be, okay?"

He scoffed. "I will do no such thing. I may not have my powers about me or an army of hundreds knocking my door down, but at least one human should listen to someone with some sense."

She stood, her breasts jutting out deliciously, as though she meant to intimidate him. "So you're not only stubborn but controlling as well?" Taking a few steps back, she reached for her purse but missed it.

"How dare you say that about a god of Mount Olympus!"

Her eyebrows rose. "If you're a god, you're certainly the asshole type. Are they all like this? Does Mona know who you truly are? Or have you fooled her, too?"

This was not exactly how he'd planned for any of this to go! Still, he couldn't seem to control himself. "Yes! Mona knows exactly who I am." He narrowed his eyes at her and stepped closer to her, breaking the distance she had put up between them.

She was incredibly annoyed by now, her green eyes dilated and lips trembling.

He took a step closer, his gaze fixed on hers. Beneath her shirt, her nipples were drawn into tight peaks that begged for his mouth, his oh so hot mouth to suckle.

She inhaled a breath, her shirt rose just a little to expose enough light brown skin of her tummy.

Without thinking, Apollo cleared the remaining distance between them and grabbed her by the waist.

"Hey, what are you do—"

Pulling her to him, his lips fell upon hers. Tasting and devouring her mouth as he forced her body against his, he tangled a free hand in her mess of curls.

Putting her hands to his chest, she pushed back against him but stopped and became pliant beneath his masterful mouth.

He nuzzled her lower lip with his, brushing two-day-old stubble over her chin.

Her fingers gripped his shirt, clinging to him while her head tilted back.

Apollo dipped his head between her breasts and flicked his tongue over her heated skin, tasting the light coat of powder she'd applied earlier, before dragging it slowly up her throat, over her chin. Kisses followed by little bites along her chin made her acquiesce beneath him further, though he still sensed resistance.

Claiming her mouth with his, he parted her lips with his tongue and explored the inside of her delicate mouth, learning the different folds and curves of her.

Her tongue wrestled with his, and she inhaled a deep breath.

He ground his pelvis into her hips, his steel erection hardening even more against her as she tried to resist.

She pulled away. "This could be construed horribly if I talked." She tangled her fingers in his thick hair and tugged his mouth towards hers.

He breathed in her scent, light and jasmine this time. "Nobody would believe you," he murmured between kisses.

Her skin burned his, made him ache with desire so deep in his core that he knew she must be his.

"I'm not one of your groupies," she muttered.

"Baby, I want you for my only groupie." He nibbled her earlobe and walked her back against the wall.

She jumped up and wrapped her legs around him. Her arms slid around the bands of his shoulders. "Damn you, James!" She moved her head up for him to kiss her neck. "Or whoever you are."

They stumbled against the wall near the bedroom before Apollo dipped his head to her shoulders. "Apollo," he growled. A hand palmed her breast beneath the shirt and bra she wore, feeling the beautiful round weight of her.

She moaned, sending vibrations through his body.

Her thighs squeezed around his hips, settling her heat directly over his.

He had to strip her and fuck her. Hard, his body determined, but to keep her here, he'd have to take his time and make her regret thinking he was nobody other than Apollo, Greek god of wine and fertility.

Drunk on her, her scent, her taste, the way she felt against his hard body, he needed her to be his.

Her tongue caressed his neck, sending a heat wave straight to his groin.

He throbbed painfully beneath his jeans. He snaked a hand between them over her abdomen, spreading his fingers possessively over her skin. She was warm to the touch, soft, feminine. Different than the harlots he'd fucked in Ancient Greece. Those women were playthings, merely useful for passing time and satisfying his lust.

Tanya represented something more, something deeper. Something he would stay in this realm for...

Her lips fell on his skin repeatedly, sucking and biting, sending shudders through him.

His hips arched into hers, rubbed up and down, feeling her burning desire between them. Sweat broke out on his brow, the heavy layers of hair stuck to his forehead.

Strands of hair whispered across her face.

Apollo lifted her up, adjusted her and moved those strands behind her ears. "Come to bed with me?"

Her heated gaze told him all he needed to know.

Moving swiftly around the door jamb, Apollo carried her into the bedroom and gingerly set her down on the bed, his hands reaching for the snaps on her jeans.

"What are you...?" Deft fingers popped the snap on her jeans quickly before they were yanked down long, slender legs along with her panties.

"You should not wear these." He breathed hot air over her mons.

She shuddered even more when his lips pressed into her delicate lips.

Sliding his tongue between her perfect folds, he tasted, explored and swirled around until he felt her shudder, hands gripping his hair.

"Right there," she panted.

His teeth seized the little nub of her clitoris and suckled lightly, while he slid his hands up the length of her thighs. Two fingers walked slowly up her leg while the other hand held her firmly in place.

She sucked in a breath.

Apollo looked up to see her chest heaving with each deep breath.

The leg he pinned down struggled, trembled beneath him. He laughed low, a guttural sound that sent vibrations throughout her.

She shook her head back and forth.

His tongue laved and lapped at her sensitive flesh while two fingers slid inside.

Her muscles instantly clenched around him, soft velvety grip.

"I think you're beautiful," he muttered while kissing his way up her hips.

Her fingers tightened their grip on his hair, tugging him hard.

Apollo was used to the pain from other women, but this was more delicious, just having her naked and squirming beneath his skilled tongue. Lowering his head to her pussy, he licked and suckled her flesh, tasting juices from her.

Her body shook, grip tightening further, yanking on strands of hair now. "Fill me," she begged. "Please."

His cock jerked. It ached painfully. Reaching down with one hand, he undid the zipper on his jeans and slid them off, freeing his cock. Taking hold of himself, he gave himself a few pumps while continuing to lick and finger Tanya.

Her breaths came in raspy pants, begging for more, demanding more.

Inhaling her musky scent, he felt light headed, intoxicated again. Drunk on her body.

"Fuck me." She looked over her breasts and pulled at her bra and top to reveal pale skin and darker, puckered areoles that begged for his mouth.

"Make love to you," he corrected, kissing his way up her belly.

With each kiss landing on her skin, she clenched her stomach muscles. Her weight shifted, legs drawing up and spreading. "In me, James!"

He bit her hip.

She yelped.

"Who am I?"

"I don't know, but I want you!" Her words came out in ragged pants.

"I am the Sun god, Apollo." He nibbled her hip and licked his way up her side.

She shivered beneath him, hands roaming over his back to find the bottom of his black shirt. Grabbing the hem, she lifted it up and over his head, tossing it on the floor.

Apollo brought himself over her body, the head of his cock just mere millimetres from her centre, while the rest of him

blanketed her. He rose on his arms and looked down at her through the thicket of his hair.

Her eyes were half-open sea-green pools of desire. Her mouth, open slightly, begged to be kissed. Her tongue darted over her lower lip and back in her mouth before she looked at him with a wide smile. Tanya arched her hips towards his, the briefest contact of his cock head brushing against her throbbing clitoris.

Apollo groaned. Her heat was intense just from the slightest touch, but he held off. "Who am I?"

"The man about to fuck me?" Her eyes fluttered.

He swooped down and seized her mouth with his, plunging his tongue deep inside as he conquered her mouth.

She wrapped her hands around his neck, slid them down his broad shoulders and dragged her nails over his flesh.

He resisted the urge to arch into her, though it'd only take the slightest of moves to impale her with his swollen cock. He had to make her his, had to get her to admit he was the god of wine.

Pulling back, he looked at her body, deciding he could force himself to hold out just a few seconds longer. Nipping her neck, he lowered his head to capture her breast between his teeth.

Rubbing her taut nipple with his tongue made her curl her back up, brushing her lips against his cock. Still with the taste of her love juice in his mouth, he soaked the other nipple and suckled, hard.

She cried out, begging, panting, balling her fists in the sheets before dragging her nails down his arms.

Pain radiated from her nails, especially where he'd previously cut himself. But the pain was nothing compared to the many emotional scars he'd held onto, or the fact that he was just barely touching her heat and wanted her to belong to him, to know him for who he was now.

Apollo, god of wine.

And hers.

"Who am I?" He grated his teeth across her breast, palming and squeezing the other one.

"Apollo," she cried out. "Apollo if you insist, but damn it, I need you in me!"

"And I'm yours." He raked his teeth over her flesh, down her belly before dragging his tongue over her breasts, throat and finally capturing her mouth again.

"Yes," she murmured between kisses. "Yes please!"

Apollo took hold of his thick, throbbing cock and slid inside Tanya in one swift motion.

Both groaned aloud.

The intensity of her heat was even hotter than last night, the fierceness with which she gripped his cock was just ... 'wow' was the only word he could use to describe her!

She arched her hips upwards, giving him more depth.

Slowly, he pulled back, painfully slow to make sure she understood just how fully he intended to possess her.

Tanya whimpered when he slipped out. Her eyes opened wide in disbelief. "But," she stammered when he shoved his cock in hard and fast.

Moaning her name, he continued pumping inside, taking long, deep strokes as pressure in his balls built up. After a

few moments of their slow, hypnotic rhythm it became difficult for him to maintain such a pace, though he tried.

Tanya's muscles clenched around his cock and gripped him like a tight fist.

Apollo couldn't stand it anymore. Lowering his head to her neck, he nuzzled her flesh, feeling the heat from her body, the dampness from her hair against his fingers as his hands held her by the shoulders. He slid in and out, in and out, his pace picking up.

Her movements matched his, the sound of skin against skin echoing loudly throughout the room, combined with their groans, each calling the other's name out.

Apollo bit down on her shoulder, his cock quivering furiously.

She cried and came, her body shuddering beneath his.

Her nails dug into his sides, he growled and shot his seed deep inside her, spurting hard and fast so that cum dripped out of her folds.

Both were panting when he opened his eyes.

Moments later, he looked down at her. She was beautiful, the way her skin glowed in contrast to her red hair. Her lips were swollen, eyes only half open. She smelled of sex, and the faint scent of his cum.

Before cleaning herself up, she dipped her fingers between her thighs and brought his semen to her ruby red lips.

"Apollo," she called out.

He rolled over and looked at her, watching her fingers.

She slipped them between her lips and sucked them, pulling them out slowly before getting up and sauntering off into the master bathroom.

Damn, he hardened again. How a mortal woman inspired a man to want to be with her always, he'd never know. But Tanya was definitely the one for him. Of that, he was certain.

\* \* \* \*

*Undertow* played on his stereo, the CD opening with the vocalist's soft voice and quiet guitars. Somehow, Apollo found the beat and rhythm of the music to be sexy. His body grew aware of Tanya's presences, the slight touch of her fingers against his chest.

Hair on the back of his neck stood up. Why was she so sexually charged? He didn't care. He was the god of wine, and he was drunk on her touch. His cock begged for release beneath his shorts. Hell, how he'd ended up in clothes that showed off his legs was beyond him, but Tanya's hands still found the zipper.

"I want to help you heal, Apollo." Her voice was a bare whisper against his ear.

Her lips brushed against his skin, sending a euphoric vibration throughout his body. "You have to let me heal you too, Tanya."

Before she could react, his hands cupped her breasts, feeling the heat of her body. Squeezing her ample flesh, he lowered his mouth to hers. The softness of her lips against his sent signals to his loins. He was totally turned on for this one woman.

She moaned, sending vibrations through his body.

A hand reached for the back of her head, fingers tangling in her hair. Running his fingers through silky strands, he pulled her closer, inhaling her soft scent. She was indeed a goddess, at least in this time period.

"You are mine, Tanya." He claimed her mouth again and again, tongue darting between her full lips.

Coaxing her tongue into his mouth, he sucked on it.

Her hands explored beneath his shirt, sending signals towards his crotch. Her hands burned against his skin.

He slid a hand beneath her top, cupping a breast. Squeezing, Apollo pinched the hardened nipple into a tight bud. He rolled her nipple between his thumb and forefinger.

She moaned into another deep kiss, her lips emulating her body, becoming pliant beneath him.

"I don't care who you are, but I want to heal you," she whispered into his ear.

"Then, make love to me, again." he replied, butterflies churning in his stomach. The words were foreign, yet they seemed right.

\* \* \* \*

It'd been two days since he'd seen Tanya. She'd been busy with school, and he'd sat at his desk both days, trying to figure out the damn bass lines for the songs he'd supposedly written.

James had written them.

The thing was, it became easier with practice, but he wasn't sure if that was because the songs were fairly simplistic, as most grunge appeared, or what.

Mona sat across the room from him, her black guitar in her hands. She flipped her hair out of her face and stared directly at him. "Dude, you're looking more like James and less like yourself."

He'd seen the results. The image in the mirror was not Apollo, but a *mélange* between James Helios, long-haired in flannel with olive skin and cut marks, and Apollo, perfectly flawless skin and shorter hair. They shared the same facial features, same body features for the most part. James had a little gut, which Apollo hated. "I know. It's happening at an incredible rate. I'm not even feeling the same way, Mona. Have you heard me play this bass?"

"Not yet. Why? You got skills, dude?"

He nodded. Picking up the large, four-string guitar, he plugged it into the amplifier and turned the power on. Cranking the volume up, he strummed an open chord with his fingers. Settling himself against the wall, he began fingering chords and playing as though he'd done it all his life.

Aggressive, angry sounds came from the amp, matching some of the words he'd written earlier.

Mona's eyes widened. She picked up her guitar and started playing alongside him. It sounded perfect, the harmony and style of their playing complimenting each other. His drop D tuning gave heaviness to her rhythm.

Apollo waited a beat, pulled his fingers from the bass and started thumping the notes out.

"Dude," she shouted. "Sounds like Les Claypool! Fuckin' rock on, James!"

"I know. I'm—" he stopped. His breath caught in his chest.

Mona stopped in mid-strum, the sound carrying out until she'd muted the instrument. "What?"

"You called me James." He narrowed his eyes at her.

"You certainly look more like him than you did a few days ago. What can we do?"

He slumped down against the wall, sliding down onto the tile. "I don't know. You have any ideas?"

"None. I haven't found anything of use in the library." She paused. "Wait. There was something."

"What?"

"Well, there was a lot of talk about the gods exchanging things with mortals in order to attempt to retain their stature."

"So? Some of the lesser gods did shit to retain favour and remain worshipped. What of it?"

*A choice must be made ...* The words echoed in his head.

Mona's grey eyes lit up. "So, you have nothing to bargain with."

He closed his eyes. Why did he remember the inscription on Tanya's necklace?

"My girlfriend's necklace..." He trailed off. His breath caught in his throat as he realised what he'd just called Tanya. Was she...

"What? Girlfriend? This is news." She smirked. "She liked the ride that much?"

Better to play Greek god. He gave her a cocky grin. "Baby, all women want a ride on the wine train."

Mona snickered. "That sounds like a certain former god. What about her necklace?"

"Every time it touches my skin, I burn. I don't know why."

She crossed her arms over her ample chest. "Because you're a mortal. The necklace is obviously a gift from the gods. Did you notice anything unusual about it?"

"Yeah, the Greek inscription said something about a choice being made if I am to be true to myself."

"That makes sense. With your twisted heritage, it's no wonder Hera put you in the body of another soul who feels the same way you do."

"Yeah." He looked away.

Mona appeared in front of him and knelt down. "Listen, man I'm sorry."

He let his head fall into his hands. "About what?"

"What I did the other day. It wasn't right. You're not James Helios, and I can live with that."

"Thanks, I guess."

She threw her arms around him and pulled him to her. She was warm, comforting. Hell, he felt safe around Mona. She seemed to actually understand him, similar to the way Tanya did.

He'd gained acceptance in this time. He couldn't get that from any of the other gods, let alone his parents in Ancient Greece. Did people here not understand just what he was?

Greece...

He missed home. His large temple and all the splendour of being a god were things he lacked here. His many devout followers who would come from all over the Ancient world just to worship at his feet and attend his festive parties were no longer present.

Not having to deal with that bitch Hera, who had put him here in the first place, was a bonus to living in the nineties. Although the women weren't dying to bed him and the alcohol didn't flow so freely, this seemed like a better place to be than Ancient Greece.

Tanya. She was here in the nineties.

He straightened against Mona. "That's it. I'm staying here, Mona."

Her jaw nearly hit the floor. "What?"

"I'm staying in this time period. With you, and the rest of the band. And," he paused, "and Tanya. I have to be near her."

"That's all fine and well, dude, but what about the personality quirks you and James have?"

"Dude, what?" He caught himself saying 'dude'. What the fuck?

"The fact that you sound even more like James, you look more like him, soon if we're not careful, you'll have traded places with him. That would totally suck, man."

His heart sank again. He could either stay here where he'd gained acceptance, or go back to Greece where he could be himself. Those were the choices he had—provided he could even figure out a way back.

The weight of it all sunk into him, hitting him with the force of Zeus's temple falling upon him. "This shit isn't fair." He'd slammed his fist down on the table. "It's just bullshit."

"I know." Mona stepped back.

He looked into her eyes, hoping to find a solution to his problems, but there wasn't one. It seemed that Hera had sent him here to know despair, too.

"Does Tanya know about any of this?"

He nodded. "I told her the last time we were together. She said she'd felt something different in me all along but couldn't place it. When I told her, she didn't even bother giving me a reaction."

"Tanya sounds like a special woman." Mona's lips pursed.

Just hearing Tanya's name made his heart flutter.

"Indeed."

She smirked. "So I take it you're coming to band practice tonight?"

He shrugged. "I probably should. I haven't been since this whole incident started, right?"

She nodded.

"So, what time and when?"

"Same time as always, man. Seven-ish, and it's your turn to bring beer. I suggest you get a lot. We're practicing for a show on Friday night."

"Fuck me, man."

"Yeah, that's the idea." She grinned and headed towards the door. "Oh, when do you see Tanya next?"

"I don't know. I was hoping we could see each other tonight. That'd be awesome." He frowned at his use of youthful slang.

"Heh, just like James. We'll figure this out." She winked and shut the door.

Alone again, Apollo slumped against the wall and let his head fall into his hands. His hair blocked out the view of the room. He was sure that he wanted to stay here now. Even if it meant losing himself, the person he thought Tanya had fallen in love with. At least, they'd be together.

"Fuck it." He stood and picked up his bass again. Slinging it over his shoulders, he went back to playing the new material he'd written over the last few days until he'd learned it by heart.

Each chord, note and word meant something to him and touched him deeply.

Flinging his hair wildly around, he hammered on the strings, launching into an angry assault that made sound fly out of his amp. Speeding up the tempo of his playing, he felt a rush of adrenaline in his music that the lute could never bring him. There was an outlet for his passion, for his anger, in this instrument.

After several hours of playing, writing parts to different songs, rewriting parts of music and changing lyrics, Apollo had come up with five new songs that needed guitar, drums and rhythm.

He couldn't wait to show Tanya.

His doorbell rang repeatedly, followed by a loud knocking.

He set the bass down on the couch and went to the door, his ears still ringing.

Opening it, he saw Tanya standing in the doorway, hand on her hip, head tilted to one side. Her lips looked delectable. Her red hair was pulled back, emphasising her round face. Dressed in a green sweater and khakis, she stepped back from the door.

"I didn't know you played." She'd smiled and feigned surprise.

Apollo smirked. "I didn't either, apparently."

They stood in silence for a moment before Apollo reached for her. Grabbing her by the wrist, he pulled her into the hall entrance and planted a hard, solid kiss on her lips.

Her hands smoothed up his broad shoulders, stopping at the base of his neck.

He bent his head down, kissing her tenderly. His hair fell over his eyes.

She swept his bangs back behind his ears. "I like your hair," she whispered between kisses.

"It's growing on me." His arms went to her waist, sliding over her hips.

Apollo's body relaxed against her sensual massage. His hair stood on edge, and he became erect beneath his shorts. Suddenly, the denim was too tight. His hands moved to the button on her pants.

"The door's open," she laughed.

"I don't give a damn, babe."

They stumbled further into the room with her managing to shut the door with her foot. He reached for the hem of her

sweater. Tugging it over her head, he tossed it aside. Gliding up the sides of her belly, he reached for her t-shirt and lifted it up to expose her white lacy bra and creamy, freckled skin.

"I love seeing you naked." His voice was now deeper, guttural.

"I'd like for you to make love to me, Apollo."

He winked. "All day." His hands cupped her breasts, giving them a gentle squeeze.

Her nipples puckered beneath the lace.

Pulling the cups down beneath her breasts gave them some lift, not that they needed it. Lowering his head to a puckered nipple, he took the tiny bead into his mouth and sucked, his hands sliding up and down her soft, heated skin.

Each touch brought a different sound from her. A whimper. A groan.

His teeth grazed the tops of her breasts.

She cried out in joy.

"I..." she wrapped her legs around him and pressed her hips firmly against his.

"Want me inside you?" Grinding himself against her couldn't bring him close enough to relieve the painful erection beneath his shorts.

She reached for the top of his pants and tugged on them, but they wouldn't budge.

"Undo the snap, silly."

He trailed his tongue over her clavicle and settled on a soft spot just below her chin.

She arched her body into his, her hands sliding down his shorts. She grabbed him through the cloth and gave him a squeeze.

Apollo forced air into his lungs. The warmth of her hand around his cock made him twitch. How he ached to be inside her now.

Tanya's head arched back, exposing more of her neck to him.

He unhooked her bra and let it fall down the sides of her arms.

She let it fall to the floor. One hand reached for his shirt, pulling it up over his head.

He reached for the snap on his shorts, flicking it open with two fingers. His shorts fell around his ankles.

Apollo stood before her naked and aroused.

"Never have I had such a delicious morsel of a man play with me before," she cooed. Reaching out to touch him, she grasped wisps of hair and moved them aside.

His forehead had grown sweaty.

Stepping closer, Apollo touched her bare shoulder, sliding his hand down her arm until he'd grabbed her and pulled her to him.

Her body burned, her skin had become a light red colour.

"I've never had a lovelier woman than you share my bed."  
*And my heart.*

She took hold of his cock and began pumping him. Kneeling before him, she now saw his cock at eye level. "I've got an idea." She flicked her tongue across the tip of his cock. It bobbed.

Tanya grinned in delight. Taking hold of him in one hand, she flicked her tongue over the head of his cock again and again.

All the blood had rushed to his dick, disallowing thought. Her tongue swirled around his cock head.

Apollo leaned forward, hands on her shoulders to brace himself. One hand yanked the ponytail holder out of her hair, letting it fall freely in a heap over her shoulders. His fingers tangled in the mess.

She blew hot air on him.

His cock jumped. One hand pumped his shaft. Pre-cum oozed from the head of his swollen cock.

She licked the slickness from the base of him to the tip.

Apollo ground his teeth and hissed out a breath. The spiral in his body that was release started a slow tightening.

Finally, she engulfed his member in her mouth, taking him all the way in. Her tongue slid over the underside of his cock, from base to head slowly. Control slipped through his fingers. Strands of hair fell over her face, brushing against his bare thighs. The tickling sensation made his balls tighten.

One hand cupped his scrotum, tugging tenderly.

His cock popped out of her mouth.

Pressing her tongue against the underside of his balls, she licked the smooth skin up and down before catching loose skin between her teeth.

"I've never known a god to shave themselves down here," she giggled.

"You've known other gods?" Apollo didn't laugh. He groaned, bracing himself harder against her shoulders. His knees became weaker with each oral caress.

"No. None." She blew a breath against his cock. Taking his dick in her mouth again made him sway.

"I'm going to come if you don't stop." His hips moved back and forth in rhythm with her mouth. His breathing became ragged. Sweat dripped down his face.

Pressure continued to build inside him. His heart couldn't believe she was doing this. The women in Ancient Greece were prone to unusual sex acts, but they often felt degraded afterwards and expected exorbitant favours for their husbands.

He was tired of giving at a higher cost.

Tanya continued bobbing up and down over his cock, rotating her head from side to side occasionally.

The tension in his body became too much. He couldn't hold out any longer.

"Tanya, I'm going to—oh by the gods," he growled and released his seed deep down her throat. Throwing back his head, he came in spurts, his body tensing. Every muscle in his body flexed.

Tanya continued sucking, watching him with wide eyes.

His mouth opened, words were spoken but came out as short grunts.

Sucking and slurping the head of his cock, she swallowed every last drop before wiping her mouth with her wrist.

Apollo glanced down at Tanya, who had a wide grin across her face. She stared up at him with her big emerald eyes, almost as though she asked only for him to be pleased.

Well, he certainly was that and more.

His breathing returned to normal. He wiped his hand over his sweaty brow.

She raised a hand to him.

He took it and helped her to her feet. "You look lovely with a thin sheen of sweat covering your yummy body. I can't wait to explore more of it."

He then saw the downer. It was nearly seven o'clock. Mona would be here in a few minutes to pick him up for band rehearsal.

"Fuck."

"That's what I intend on doing, big boy."

How did he end up this lucky to have a woman who was free and wild? Sadly, he heard the car pull up in the driveway and the honk of the horn.

"Oh, what's that?"

"Mona."

Tanya raised an eyebrow.

"I have band practice tonight."

"You're actually keeping up with this charade?"

"Not so much the charade, but rather the new me." He slid his shorts back on, zipping them up. His cock was still semi erect, and his body was on fire for hers, but duty called. "The more time I spend here, the more I become—"

Her lips sealed over his.

He inhaled her sweet scent before she pulled away. "I understand. Go play. I'll be here when you get back, if that's okay."

She was back to doubting herself again. Not good.

How could the little sexpot who just blew him be the same person who didn't love herself?

"Of course."

He bent over and picked up his shirt. Mona honked the horn again.

"Goddamnit! I'm fucking coming, Mona!"

She had no idea how true his statement was a few moments ago.

"Is she always like this?"

"I don't know. Wait here. Make yourself at home while I'm gone. I don't know how long I'll be, but I'll be back tonight. I promise."

She gave him one last hug and sat on the couch, adjusting her clothes.

He slammed the door behind him and started down the sidewalk until he realised he'd forgotten something.

"Damn it." He ran back up the steps of the porch and opened his door.

"Back so soon?"

"Forgot something." He grabbed his bass and flannel, kissed Tanya chastely across the lips and fled out the door again.

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## Chapter Five

"Dude, you've had hella beers!" Jon, the drummer had tried matching Apollo beer for beer, but Apollo pounded them back with a vengeance. The more he drank, the looser his inhibitions became. It was much easier to pretending to be James Helios, rather than stuffy old, confused, Apollo.

"Man, I know. My fucking head's gonna hurt like a bitch in the morning." He threw his head back in laughter. It felt good to let the liquor unwind the tangled mess of tension inside his head. Still, he'd been thinking about Tanya all night during the show. She'd be at his house, waiting for him, lounging around in his bed.

The thought made his heart flutter.

"Yeah, but you're having a blast, James. Right on!" Mona screamed loudly, wiping sweat from her brow and adjusting the torn black t-shirt so it covered more of her.

"Yeehaw!" Apollo could barely see straight. His vision had blurred so badly that Mona had to help him walk. He knew there was something he was forgetting, but he couldn't place his finger on the exact details in his mind.

Jon had challenged Mona to a drinking contest as well, but ended up throwing up before Mona had even gotten started.

"I'm the Greek god of fucking wine," he yelled to no one in particular. Laughter echoed around him.

Mona came back with another case of Belgian ale and opened two bottles. Handing one to Apollo and popping one

open for herself, they clinked bottles and chugged until the bottles were empty.

"The funny thing dude, is that you're totally in character tonight. I could almost believe you were James." Mona punched his shoulder before taking a long pull of her beer.

He laughed hysterically. He slid off his chair and crashed to the ground, laughing harder. His stomach ached and felt sick. His head started to hurt.

"Here," Mona handed him a large glass of water. "You and James have the same problem. Drink up."

Apollo took the glass of water and tried to drink it down, but the second it hit his lips, he felt sicker than he ever had.

This was pathetic for the god of wine.

"You played a fucking killer solo dude. Ben Sheppard is totally going to give you props."

"I know, man. Wait." He stood and rushed into the open air, his guts feeling like they were trying to escape his body. His head felt heavy, his body heavier. His sluggish movements bothered him.

Mona was beside him, holding his hair out of his face while he threw up.

His insides heaved, his stomach convulsed and his lungs ached. "I can't believe—" He tried to speak but couldn't finish a sentence.

He saw black.

"It's okay, lover. Hush, I'll take care of you. We'll keep you okay for Tanya."

Those were the last words he'd heard before he blacked out.

\* \* \* \*

Voices woke him. Stirring ever so slightly, Apollo heard them. He tried to open his eyes but the world was a painful blur. His mouth was parched as the desert. Closing his eyes, he shifted his weight in bed and listened.

"The real James Helios is a Pantera fan, Tanya. He lives for the speed metal, the lifestyle they have of playing hard and living fast. The problem is simple." Mona sounded serious.

Apollo tried again to open his eyes slightly. The world tried letting itself into his head, making him dizzy. His head pounded loudly, his heart beating louder at the sound of Tanya's voice.

*Gods damn you for your hangovers to mortals!*

Mona's voice echoed, "He's a real head case."

"I want to help heal him, Mona." Tanya's voice was so sweet. She was a caretaker all right.

"I understand. James was a personal friend of mine, but he's gone and I've accepted that. Just be careful. Apollo is a mess right now."

"I know. I can feel his troubled energy. You said he's really Apollo the god of the sun?"

Mona sighed. "I did indeed. You'll be at our show tonight?"

"I have school until late but you guys sound great so I'm not needed, right?"

"We'll do okay."

"Glad. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

Apollo tried to smile, but it hurt. He couldn't move a muscle without his head aching. His head felt like it was

splitting in two. His ribs ached and there was blood on his arm.

"What the fuck happened?" There were no images of last night. Nothing. He could only remember the sickness in his mouth and the bitter, heavy taste of drinking too much.

His mouth was parched.

He was hung over. Again. Damn, this sucked!

"His background is messy, Tanya." He heard the door close gently, blurring the voices.

Damn right his background was messy. His parents wouldn't claim him. Zeus wanted nothing to do with him. And that bitch of a mother, he could barely remember her name right now. What purpose did he serve living in Ancient Greece right now anyway?

"I've got no use back home. None," he whispered.

Everything in his head was one big jumbled pile of shit. He couldn't think straight. Anger flared beneath the surface of his skin. He wasn't sure what he was upset about, but he knew he felt pathetic. It wasn't fitting for a god of any sort to behave the way he had been over the past few days. It was fine to socialise with the lesser classes, even sleep with them. But partaking in their debauchery was a definite no-no.

Except that was the thing the god of wine did the best. It was his favourite thing to do, mixing it up with his followers.

He clutched the sheets in anger. "Fuck me, man!"

He had no idea what the hell was going on. But this was getting damn annoying. The fact was that he was truly in love with Tanya. But would her love returned be enough to help him cope with his past?

The door opened. Light spilled in through the cracks. Mona and Tanya came in together.

"He's so peaceful right now," he heard Mona say.

"Look at his expression. He's upset, dreaming perhaps." Tanya was wrong. He was fully, painfully cognizant.

"Take care of him, Tanya. James was my best friend, but I've grown fond of Apollo."

Apollo watched Tanya nod through half-open eye-lids.

He watched Mona leave, and the door close gently.

Closing his eyes, he waited for Tanya to follow suit.

The bed sagged beside him. A cool washcloth covered his forehead. "Your pain is so heavy, I'm not sure I can heal it," Tanya whispered.

For the first time in his life, Apollo was scared that someone would actually attempt to care for him. The worst part was they would fail.

The thought broke his heart.

\* \* \* \*

The night of his first show as 'James Helios' Apollo stunned even himself. Playing skilfully, he and his band had cranked out fifteen tunes at a local club before knocking back drinks at the bar.

Sweaty, pumped and slightly buzzing, he'd played and sang his heart out. The crowd moved like they felt his pain. There were plenty of angst-filled generation X people in the crowd who definitely got the message.

*Screw your parents. They don't give a damn anyway, and they hate you for being born.*

Mona had kept close to him on stage all night. She was great company, but he wished for Tanya.

During the early part of the show, he'd hoped to spot Tanya in the audience. They even let the bouncers know she might be showing up to watch them play. Seeing no sign of her halfway through their set, he decided to let the idea go and charge ahead as the sexy vocalist and bass player for Helios.

The thought worked well. A few groupies who had been following the band around managed to snag autographs from the other members of the band, and a few stupid drunk boys had even managed to coax Mona into kissing them.

Until she'd slid next Apollo. Then they backed off.

Feeling her arms around his slender waist was an entirely different feeling than when Tanya held him.

Not that he could complain. He was, after all, James Helios.

Right?

"So, Apollo..." Mona's fingers crept up the back of his neck and settled at the base of his skull. "Want to head back to your place?"

The crowd was beginning to die down. It was nearing last call, and Apollo was tired. He was certain taking Mona back to his house was a bad idea.

"Sure. You can crash with me, and we can go to class in the morning."

She slapped his shoulder. "You're so not going to class, dude." She laughed.

Apollo snickered. A part of him recognised the problem.

He wasn't James Helios. And he didn't 'go to class'. Even if he was, James was a flunky. He was the Greek god of wine. Right.

They knocked back a few shots and called it quits for the evening around two AM. After an hour of cleanup, he took Mona's hand and followed her back to her car, stumbling most of the way.

"Let's just go back to your place. I have things there, in case you haven't discovered them yet."

"Like?"

"Toothbrush, extra clothes. Weed."

He laughed. Apollo had never smoked weed. The experience could certainly be enlightening. He knew mortals often smoked opium before coming to his temple, something about the plant helped to induce lust and peaceful feelings amongst his followers.

They'd returned to his house. Falling against the couch, Apollo flipped on the dimmer switch, giving the room some light. His head still hurt, but he could think clearer than he could an hour ago.

The aftertaste of cheap booze was still in his mouth.

Mona walked into his bathroom and returned a moment later with a glass of green liquid.

"Here." She offered it to him.

"What's this?" It had a strong mint smell.

"Mouthwash. Gargle with it and spit it out, man."

"Okay."

Fifteen minutes later, Apollo ended up sitting on the couch with Mona. He studied the way she put the pipe to her lips

and inhaled. Seeing her mouth around the glass cylinder was hot.

She took a hit and swallowed before blowing a thick, gray cloud of smoke into the air.

He reached for the pipe. The motion seemed natural.

She shook her head no. "You better not." She coughed after taking a hit. "You're not James, remember?"

"True." Her solemn expression shocked him. Surely, Mona was a lifelong partygoer. She'd want him to partake in the sins of man, right?

"We can't have you getting high and drunk all the time." She took another drag from the pipe. "We still haven't figured out how to get you back to Ancient Greece. Or at the very least, stop you from fading out."

Reaching for the pipe, he frowned when Mona shook her head. "Not for you."

He looked down at the carpet. "I'm not so sure I'd mind fading out, Mona."

She brushed against his thigh. "What do you mean?"

The stereo played *Purple* by Stone Temple Pilots. Apollo didn't answer. Instead, he started singing, "*Somebody told me, I was last to know..*"

Mona put her hand on his thigh. "No, my love. I'd never do that to you."

Their eyes met. He saw himself in the reflection of her eyes, and it amazed him. His face looked so much younger. The lines around his eyes that made him look older had started to fade away.

"What I wanted..." He trailed off, looking a little closer at Mona's eyes. At Mona.

Mona's eyes were a beautiful midnight blue. The amount of emotion the human eye could illustrate still amazed him.

She smiled, her dark hair falling in front of her face. Dressed in her short skirt and sweater, complete with fishnets and ankle boots, she looked really cute. Her eye liner emphasised her round eyes.

He'd never noticed Mona's face before. Her purple lipstick was different. Most of the women he'd been with wore nothing on their lips.

None of them wore makeup. Hell, he couldn't remember if makeup even existed in Ancient Greece. And right now, with Mona's hand sliding up his jean clad thigh, he wasn't sure he gave a shit.

His dick grew hard, but his heart ached.

Something was amiss.

A tender hand touched his cheek, brushing strands of hair away from his face and behind his ear.

Nobody touched him this way, except for Tanya. It was a different kind of love, he reminded himself. Still, one he had never received from anyone on Mount Olympus.

But Tanya hadn't shown up tonight. And she wasn't in his bed, he was pretty certain of that fact.

Mona had been supportive the entire time he'd been in this time period.

Her hand slowly inched up his thigh towards his zipper.

"I've always wanted my own personal god," she whispered.

Her mouth moved sensuously, her tongue licked her bottom lip.

Apollo leaned forward and flicked his tongue across her lower lip.

She sighed. A hand caressed the back of his head. Her fingers massaged his scalp.

Hormones raced through his body, heading south.

He reached for her top, lifting it up enough to expose her flat stomach.

Shaking her head, she stopped him. "No, honey."

He frowned. "But Mona, why?"

"Because you're not the man I want."

"Oh." He looked away. Confusion crossed his face.

"It's not like that, Apollo. You're not James Helios. You're Apollo, the god who fell in love with a mortal named Tanya."

There was that. Tanya, the woman Apollo was in love with. He sighed. Guess it was good that he was too tired to fuck another woman, give Tanya the test. He exhaled slowly. He certainly had fallen in love with Tanya and quickly too. Apollo couldn't remember loving anyone, ever. For that matter, nobody had ever really loved him, either.

"You're right." He smiled. Letting go of her shirt, he patted her thigh. "Will you still spend the night?"

"Of course. Dude, just because you're the god of wine and not James doesn't bother me. Get ready for bed, and I'll join you after I brush my teeth." She fell back against the couch, giggling. Her breath reeked of weed.

He nodded. "Okay."

Standing, she smiled and walked into his room.

Again, the fact that rejection didn't come made him wonder what he was missing in Greece.

Lying on his bed, tangled up in the dark purple sheets with an arm draped over Mona, he felt rage stir inside of him. His stomach fluttered. Confusion seemed like the only emotion he could recognise these days.

He glanced at Mona, who slept with an arm draped over his thigh. Her tank top sleeve had slid halfway down her arm, exposing her pale flesh. Angry cuts marked her skin. Her purple hair fell over her shoulders.

He brushed a leg against hers, his bare thigh coming in contact with boxers.

Lifting the sheets up, he fluffed them and pulled them over the both of them. Yawning, he closed his eyes and tried to fight the sandman for sleep.

*You only have a little bit of time left, little man.* A feminine voice whispered in his head from out of nowhere.

Apollo shot up, his eyes flashed open. His head hurt. Looking around his room, he only saw Mona lying beside him, her body tangled up in a mess of sheets and blankets. A knife was in her hand. Was Tanya like this when she slept? Did she feel the need to bleed herself too?

"Who said that?" He looked around.

She stirred but didn't wake up.

He inhaled sharply and let out the breath slowly. Distant laughter could be heard, but he couldn't put a name or face to the voice.

"Shit man. I'm fucking tired."

He fell back against the pillows, eyes closed.

One more thing.

He leaned over and took the knife from Mona's hand and set it in the drawer next to his side of the bed. She wouldn't be hurting herself tonight.

*Apollo is dead, children of Greece. Worship him no more.*

An image flashed in his mind of all the gods surrounding a grave. He'd never been to Hades before and had no desire to go either. It was bad enough hearing Hephaestus and the Fates laughing at the souls of the damned. It was maddening in Hades. Everything was dark, red and hot. Tales of men who struggled to breathe but couldn't get a full breath in their lungs had frightened him as a small boy.

He grew older and learned to tell the others to piss off.

Fighting sleep and dreams grew tiresome. Apollo woke, opening his eyes and wincing. Sliding out of bed, he padded to the bathroom, despite his body's painful cries. A warm shower would certainly improve his mood.

Stripping, he headed for the bathroom and turned on the hot water in the shower.

The instant steam filled the room, he inhaled deeply, hoping he was letting go of all sorts of dead emotional weight that James carried with him.

Wiping away the steam from the mirror, he looked at himself. Shock registered on his face when he realised he didn't look like Apollo at all, but a totally different person.

His hair had grown down past his shoulders, his skin was paler. The cuts on his arms blended in with scars that were there since the gods only knew how long.

"Oh my gods. What's going on?" The horrified expression on his face didn't begin to cover every emotion coursing through him now.

"Mona, Mona, wake up! Something's wrong with me!"

He ran to the bed and shook her.

She rolled over and wiped her eyes. Then it hit her.

"James?"

"Yes! No! Mona, what's happening to me?"

"Dude, this is freaking me out." She sat up and reached for his hand. "Yup, just like James."

"What? What's just like James?"

"The scars on your arms. I don't suppose the god of wine is a cutter, is he?"

"No." He shook his head back and forth. "I don't know anymore." He tried to remember the past. Things on Mount Olympus, the colour of his temple, all the whores he'd slept with. None of the images came readily to his mind.

"We have to find Tanya. Her pendant has the answers. I meant to tell you last night, but we got so fucked up that I forgot. And you were still ... you last night." Mona looked at his hips and then away, blushing. "I can see what Tanya's getting, and I'd like that, too."

"Oh gods!" His erection bobbed from the cold air.

"Get some pants, man!" Her eyes widened.

"Right." He quickly found a pair of long black shorts and slid them on, nearly catching his erection in the zipper.

Mona laughed until he glared at her.

"It's the penis in the zipper thing, dude. That's funny shit."

He glowered.

"Okay, relax. We'll get this figured out. Do you have Tanya's phone number?"

"No."

"Have you made your choice?"

He shrugged. "I'm not even sure what the question is, Mona."

"You'd better figure it out. By the looks of things, your Greek body is going to be replaced by the body of an adolescent who has bad habits I've been trying to break him of."

"But you've got the same bad habits! I've been trying to break you of those, too, Mona!"

"What?" Her jaw dropped.

Panic settled in. Adrenaline raced through his system. "I don't know!"

"Never mind. Do you know where Tanya lives?"

He shook his head.

"You've fucked this woman how many times already and have yet to get her phone number or address? What kind of god are you?"

He glowered. "Watch it, Mona."

"Geez man. I was kidding. When did you see her last?"

"Last night before ... oh no!" His hand covered his mouth. "Oh shit."

Mona leaned forward, adjusting her top. "What?"

"She was supposed to be here when we were done with the show last night. Instead, you and I came back, and she wasn't anywhere at all."

"Funny, I invited her to our show last night. Guess she had better things to do than see you. You must be a schmuck."

He scoffed. "How can you crack jokes at a time like this?"

Panic hit him with the force of a freight train. His skin shook. His voice trembled. It didn't even sound like his anymore.

She looked him frankly in the eyes. "Humour is what makes pain easier, Apollo."

He narrowed his eyes. "I fail to see how."

"Yup, a cynic like the real James."

He sighed heavily and sat at the edge of the bed.

"Did she leave anything here?"

Apollo looked around the room. Shaking his head, he stood and ran into the living room, the last place they'd been intimate. There was nothing to be found except for the pipe, metal tin and a lighter along with Mona's purse.

Mona came into the living room, dressed in a black Soundgarden T-shirt and a pair of James's pants. Her hair looked scruffy still, but it was no worse than his.

"Fuck me, man. I'm not a happy camper." The youthful slang came easier.

"Do you know where she works?"

He shook his head.

Mona heaved a sigh. "Dude, we're fucked until we get that pendant."

"You're telling me that the pendant is the cure for all of this?" He raised an eyebrow. "Hardly can I believe that jewellery has any magical properties in this time of machines and man."

Mona chuckled. "That sounds like a Greek god speaking. But I did some research yesterday in my old texts and found more information. It seems that the pendant has an inscription on it, which has something to do with your way out of here. You just have to make Tanya care."

"Great. And I've only got a little longer I suppose?"

She raised an eyebrow. "Nope. You look just like James, right about now."

"Fuck." He sank down on the couch and slumped against the back. His head lolled back. "What am I going to do?"

"Think. You're going to think, Apollo. James was heading down a bad path in his life with the drinking and the drugs because of his parents' mistakes. You have to fill in his role in this universe, and always, the gods are supposed to learn some sort of damned lesson. What is the lesson here?"

"I don't know," he snapped.

She strode across the room and slapped him.

Again.

The sting shot through him. It really hurt. "You just slapped—"

"You. I slapped whoever inhabits that body right now. To me, it's Apollo. So, you fucker, think. Have you made your choice yet?"

He didn't know what choice there was to be made. His head was so full of confusion, so full of animosity towards his mother and father, Hera and Zeus. At times, he hated himself.

That was when the demons came out to play.

The Fates be damned.

"Hello?" A knock on the front door set his train of thought off.

Both Apollo and Mona turned to see Tanya standing in the doorway.

"I forgot my purse last night and I uh, oh. I have interrupted something again, haven't I? James! It's you!" Her eyes lit up, eyebrows rising. She stopped short in her tracks. "Wait..."

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## Chapter Six

What was with people and empty smiles in this time period? Apollo couldn't discern whether she was glad to see him or James.

Dressed in hip-hugging blue jeans and a white t-shirt, she looked delectable. His heart raced, and his erection throbbed beneath his shorts. She even smelled of perfume, a mix of floral scents he couldn't place.

His skin itched to touch hers.

Her manicured nails were long and painted a pretty shade of red. He longed for them to leave marks in his skin while she writhed on top of him.

Over him. Under him. He didn't care which, as long as she stayed with him.

Her red curls were pulled back from her face, leaving a few loose strands around her ears. Lipstick and light eyeliner made her look more adult, but to him, she was still Tanya, the goddess.

"I'm right here," he spoke first.

She laughed. "Do I know you?"

"Tanya, it's me. Apollo. Do you have your pendant?"

She raised an eyebrow. "James?"

Great. This was how cruel the Fates were that they'd make the situation even worse for him by having the love of his life show up now. He must look more like James now. Goddamn bitches. Staring at Tanya, he saw her scowl. Setting a hand on her hip, she blew out an exasperated breath.

"I don't understand what's going on. I thought Apollo was..."

Apollo frowned. "Mona, a little help?"

With a nod, Mona turned to face Tanya. "We have a situation, Tanya."

Tanya shrugged her shoulders. "I don't understand what's going on."

"You didn't tell her, did you?" Mona stared fiercely at him.

"Tell me what?"

Apollo looked at Mona, tension building in his shoulders. "I did. I swear I told her. The first night." He raised his hands to his sides, licking his lips at the sight of Tanya's ever so sexy body.

"What's going on?" Tanya stepped back from the two of them. "Are you two.." She covered her mouth with a hand.

Mona sighed. "Looks like I'm going to have to do this for the both of you idiots."

She walked over to Tanya and yanked the pendant off her neck.

Tanya reached for Mona but missed her. "Hey, give that back!"

Mona looked at Apollo. "Apollo, hold this." She tossed it to him.

He caught it and held onto it as astonishment set in. He realised he could hold the pendant and not immediately get burned. The pendant warmed slowly in his hand.

"Have you made your choice, James?" Mona grabbed him by the shoulders.

Her nails dug into his skin, and he shook his head. "I still don't know what choice to make, Mona."

"I do." Tanya crossed the distance between her and Apollo. Reaching for the pendant, she gripped his hand in hers. They locked glances. She smiled, licked her lips and appeared to see past the disorder that was James Helios. Her eyes were soft, holding compassion and love, as well as astonishment in the way her eyebrows arched upward, almost questioning her luck as well as his.

Apollo gazed into her eyes longingly. "I could stare into those eyes forever, Tanya."

"Well you'd better not, whoever you are. I just—" Her breath caught in her throat. "Who are you?"

"I'm..." He felt his face change. His body began to adjust to a new height. His hair shimmered, grew longer and more scars appeared on his arms. His skin had tanned, his legs became thicker, less lean. His stomach bulged slightly forming a gut.

"What the fuck is wrong with me?" His voice sounded shrill and weak then masculine but not his own.

"Apollo. He's fading faster, Tanya. Give him something to believe in!" Mona made him face Tanya.

Tanya's eyes widened and her jaw dropped. "I don't know what you mean. I'm not sure I can give him anything. I don't even recognise him." She shook visibly.

"Stop listening to that crap in your head, Tanya!" By this point, Mona had gone from a raised voice to shouting. She looked at Apollo. "You're fading faster!"

"We wanted you for our sound person. He wanted you as James but was too dumb to tell you. Now you've got a different man with a problem in his head. He needs something, someone to believe in. Give him that something!"

"Do you know me?" Tanya whispered to Apollo.

"Tanya, I recognise you." Tears stung the backs of his eyes. Sadness threatened to overwhelm his heart. A shiver raced up his spine.

Images of others yelling at him, fighting over him in some other land flashed in his head. He grew angry immediately, clutching the pendant harder in his hands despite his burning flesh.

"Apollo, how can I help you?"

She knelt in front of him.

He looked at her, wishing he could give her the answer. The pendant became too hot in his hands, and he dropped it. It fell to the floor, landing in front of him. He had a choice to make, that was all he remembered. All he knew. But Mona had told him he needed to believe in something. Why? Why now? Why deal with belief that was impossible when he wasn't himself any longer? He was James Helios, lead singer and bass player for Helios, right? He felt empty right now. Was that him, or James? Who was in his head now? Gods damn themselves, damn Hera! Damn this world he was in, damn the fucking world he'd come from!

"You've got to give him something to believe in, Tanya. The choice is yours as much as it is his," Mona shouted.

"What fucking choice do I have, Mona? I mean, really." His head fell into his hands. Tears slid down his face. His hair

blocked out the view of Tanya's face, but his eyes settled on her thighs.

"Give him something to believe in. Apollo has a troubled past, Tanya. He was born to a human, then his mother was killed by Hera, jealous bitch goddess wife of Zeus. His father took his unborn foetus and put him in his thigh, giving birth to a child he didn't want. No other gods cared for him or gave him anything. He's only had the wine and fertility thing!"

Apollo hung his head in shame. Mona's words were true. His father didn't love him. Neither did his mother, or any of his followers. Nothing in Ancient Greece mattered.

"He's uncertain of everything in this lifetime as the god of wine, and even more confused as James Helios. Neither of them had parents who cared. Neither of them had parents who loved them wholly for who they were. James's parents caused the scars on his wrists. I know you've seen them. I can't speak for Apollo, though he's my friend. But you've got to do something to show him you love him."

Frozen, he stared only at Tanya, seeing his reflection waver in her eyes. His world was disappearing, which could be a good thing. Still, he tried to reach for Tanya, for Mona. For someone just to help him.

The god of wine was powerless. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out.

Tears slid down Tanya's cheek. "What are you talking about? Apollo is ... James is," she stuttered, looked into Apollo's eyes.

His pulse sped, his body throbbed. Neither woman moved. *You're not even enough god anymore to bitch about fading away. How sad is that ...* The thought sunk in slowly.

Tanya stiffened as realisation hit her. "I needed to listen more to my intuition than anything else!"

"That's exactly what I'm saying, Tanya. Apollo loves you. Needs you, needs to believe you need and want him! Make him believe it, damn it!"

Apollo looked into Tanya's eyes. The world didn't matter if he could stay with her. He fought hard against the part of him that was slipping away to become James Helios. He didn't want to take away from the man, but it seemed like James would have a better life in Greece as the god of wine with all the women he could ever have, than if he remained here on mortal earth. And Apollo really loved Tanya. Shit, if he could just be with her for the rest of his life, he'd have peaceful days.

Tanya's breathing became shallow. "His eyes are becoming darker, more like James's! No!"

Apollo couldn't speak. He opened his mouth, but no words came out.

It was too late for him.

Tanya wrapped her arms around herself and began to cry.

Apollo hated seeing her this way, but he supposed it was for the best. Nobody in any world could give him what he needed.

He certainly couldn't provide it for himself.

Mona slapped his shoulder, causing him to look up from Tanya's shoulder. "The ticket to the future is blank, Apollo. She loves you."

He looked back at Tanya, his eyes filled with tears from the sorrow that weighed heavily on his heart. It had to be too late. Had to be. He didn't feel himself anymore. That little part of him that was Apollo hadn't burned completely out yet. It held on tighter and tighter, struggling for control over the James Helios energy. "Do you love me, Tanya?"

Tanya wiped away a tear and turned to look at Mona. "Will you leave us alone for awhile, Mona?" She sniffled.

Mona nodded, her eyes swollen and puffy. "Take that with you." She pointed to the pendant on the floor. "When he's made his choice, something'll happen."

"Thank you." She returned to looking at him. Her soft smile filled holes in his heart.

She took his hand and pulled.

"Where are we going?" His voice was no longer his own. It was softer, more pain filled.

"You'll see." Tanya smiled weakly.

She led him back into the bedroom. The bed was still unmade. Clothes were spilled out over the room, while empty bottles and Mona's pipe lay on the dresser.

Tanya stopped at the foot of the bed, turning to face him. She pressed her lips to his.

The sensual feel of her mouth against his made him swoon, his knees go weak. His cock hardened, and his heart thumped loudly in his chest while blood pounded in his ears.

She pressed her body into his, soft curves against his hard flesh.

"What are you doing, Tanya?" He pulled back from her.

"Giving us something to believe in." Her eyes seemed to sparkle.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him down to the bed with her.

Apollo crawled over her, blanketing her now. Heat radiated from between her thighs, sending signals straight to his cock and throughout his body. He had to have her.

Cupping her face, he looked down at her, aware of his reflection in her eyes.

"You're still a male," she whispered against his ear.

Vibrations ran down the length of his body, sending shivers throughout him.

Her tongue flicked along his earlobe, trailing fire over him.

She ran her hands up the sides of his body, the pendant warming as it slid over him.

He squirmed and pressed his hips into hers, his erection throbbing painfully by now.

"You're what I have to believe in, my love." Her sultry voice made his stomach flip-flop, and his heart race. Her nails raked over his bare shoulders, down his sides. The pendant began to glow. He paid little attention to it though.

Tanya reached for the hem of her shirt. Arching upwards, she slipped off her shirt, exposing creamy, plump breasts that begged for his mouth. Nipples peaked taut.

"Taste." She took one in hand and offered it to him.

He dipped his head down, tongue flicking over the nipple.

She jumped, her breath hitching in her throat.

Apollo took her entire nipple into his mouth, sucking, grazing his teeth against the soft flesh.

Hands tangled in his long hair, tugging his head upwards and back down again.

He spread his legs over hers, straddling her now.

Her tiny hands covered his chest, fingers expanding over him. "You're so muscular." She wriggled an eyebrow.

A guttural sound escaped his throat. Dipping his head down again, he suckled her other breast. His tongue laved between them, diving into the valley between the mounds.

She twisted beneath him, her mouth open. Eyes closed, she caught the snap of his shorts and undid it.

His cock fell forward. She caught him and gave him a squeeze. "I love this."

A free hand cupped her crotch, heat radiating against his palm hotter than any other. Her pants were damp. "I'd love to feel this," he groaned.

She tugged his shorts down past his hips.

He kicked them off clumsily. "Yup," she laughed light heartedly. "Just like a male."

He arched an eyebrow. "What?"

She threw her head back in more playful laughter. "Just play with me, Apollo."

She'd called him by his name without doubt or hesitation. He didn't have to be told twice. A hand reached for her zipper. Tugging it down slowly, he wanted her to ache for him as bad as he did for her.

She looked sternly at him.

He slid the zipper down more quickly, parting the material of her jeans.

"Pink satin?"

"Hey," she pressed a hand to his chest, "a girl's gotta have comforts."

Gritting his teeth, he looked at her, remembering how smooth and soft she was, how creamy her core felt wrapped around his steely shaft. "They come off." He tugged her pants down over her hips, panties, as well. She was shaved except for a tiny strip of hair surrounding her pussy.

He licked his lips.

Tanya parted her legs as far as she could within the confines of her jeans. "I want you inside me," she said in a low, steady tone.

"I want inside of you, too, Tanya. I want—"

She took him in her hands and pumped him.

"Oh honey, I—" he gasped.

She tugged his cock closer to her pussy.

He stopped short of penetrating her. "I want this but..."

"But what?" She smiled through half open eyes.

"I, Tanya I..." He couldn't finish his sentence, not with her gripping his cock and manipulating him.

"What Apollo? Tell me. It's okay. It has to be." She pressed a free hand to his heart.

His mouth went dry.

She leaned into him. "We can do this together."

He had to trust her. The war in his head seemed unstoppable right now. He felt as if he was on the peak of the hill, about to be forced off.

"Together." The words escaped his lips in a soft whisper.

Plunging inside her, electricity arced between them. Sparks flew and fireworks went off in his head. The image he had of himself on the hill changed. He'd jumped.

"Make love to me, Apollo. Choose me," she begged.

His body fell over hers, hips moving up and down. In and out.

The feel of her heartbeat against his chest complimented his. He moved, not wasting precious time right now.

His world centred on satisfying her.

Tanya began crying, screaming his name the closer she got to an orgasm.

She looked so beautiful, sweat-covered and raggedly breathing beneath him. He owned her, had to have her. That was the choice he had to make.

Apollo thrust harder, deeper inside her, hands digging into her tender flesh. "I love you." He slammed himself against her.

Bucking in time to his thrusts, Tanya's body quivered beneath his. An orgasm crashed into her. Her pussy squeezed him, milking everything from him, including the last little bit of self-destructive urges that James Helios had. "I love you, too," she repeated, "I love you, too, Apollo."

Falling forward onto her from exhaustion, he revelled in the feel of their bodies, soaked in sweat together.

The pendant lay on the bed beside them, glowing brightly.

Both of them looked at it.

"What's it doing?" Her husky voice kept him hard inside her.

"I don't know. It's your pendant." He scratched his head.

"It's your fate, silly."

The pendant crackled, shattering into tiny pieces. A light flew from the pendant, dancing around the ceiling until it slammed into Apollo.

He arched upwards, screaming in the delicious pain from still being buried inside of the woman he intended to spend the rest of his life with.

Tanya cried again, and another orgasm ebbed through her.

The glow surrounded them both, but Apollo felt it. His skin burned painfully, his hair started falling away.

Old scars fell away like layers of an onion. He felt lighter.

His jaw dropped, his body burned and started to smoke. Quickly, he rolled off Tanya and onto his back. "What's happening to me, Tanya?"

"I don't know!" Her grip on his hand tightened.

He writhed back and forth, pain searing his soul. The room started to spin. His head felt like it was in a vice grip.

Suddenly, it all stopped.

Tranquillity set in.

"Apollo?" Her voice was a faint whisper.

He lifted his head. Looking at her, his heart skipped a beat.

"You look like..."

"Like what?"

He rushed off the bed towards the bathroom.

Throwing the door open, a wave of steam hit, warming him instantly. He'd left on the shower. "Damn it." He wiped condensation from the mirror and turned off the shower.

Tanya came up beside him, wrapping her arms around his slender waist. "I love your washboard stomach, Apollo."

He beamed. He threw his head back, already missing the hair that would have normally fallen in his eyes. "My hair's gone back to being short!"

She stroked his head, fingers tangling in the short black strands. "I don't know, I liked it." She purred.

He turned to face her, circling his hands around her waist.

"How do you feel?"

Apollo shrugged. "I don't know, I feel ... lighter."

"Me too." She grinned. "So, what now?"

A pink flash in the bedroom startled them both.

Wrapping a towel around his waist, he walked out of the bathroom and groaned when he saw who had appeared.

Tanya, clad in a bathrobe, joined him at his side.

"You," he pointed at the buxom woman dressed in pink with sparkles floating around her. Blonde hair flowed around her, down past her ample breasts.

"Yes, me, Apollo. I have some news for you."

He narrowed his eyes and glared steel daggers at her. "Am I to return to that hell of a world?"

Tanya clung tighter to his side. "Who is this, Apollo?"

The woman smiled. "You must be Tanya. I'm Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love."

Apollo wanted to be sick.

"What are you doing here?"

"I've come to unite your souls for eternity, silly. That's what the Goddess of Love does!"

"Oh?" Tanya's eyes widened. "We kinda already did that." She blushed.

Apollo thought Tanya was cute. Ares' sister was annoying, however. "Be gone with you. I'm tired of Greece and her games."

"Oh hush, you old windbag." Aphrodite looked around at the mess he called a room. "Nice place you have here. Or rather, James had."

"What became of him?" Apollo pulled Tanya to him, tightening his grip around her waist.

"He inherited your misery for the time being. Hera isn't really fond of him, but nobody is allowing her to change the rules right now."

"I bet that's pissing her off."

Apollo and Aphrodite laughed. "Yeah, it is. Dumb bitch. Anyway, you read the back of the pendant and made your choice."

"What choice did you actually make, Apollo?" Tanya snaked a hand around his hips and started fumbling nervously with the towel.

"He chose life with you, silly." Aphrodite tilted her head to one side.

Apollo looked at Tanya and found her blushing.

"By the way, Tanya?"

"Yes?"

"I have some news for you, too." She smiled. "You're a mortal reincarnation of Artemis."

"What?" Apollo looked truly surprised. Judging by the open-mouthed expression on Tanya's face, he gathered she was just as stunned.

"Yeah. It turns out that Hera's been playing this switching game on all of us long before Ares had his little mishap. You were cursed with the heavy burden of sorrow, until you find your soul mate. Turns out, it's this big jerk."

Tanya laughed, a glorious sound even if it was at his expense.

He smirked at Aphrodite.

Tanya's arm squeezed him tighter. "Baby, I love you."

"I love you, too." He bent down to kiss her chastely.

"Don't mind me. It's nothing I haven't seen before."

"Hush, woman." Apollo glared at Aphrodite.

Tanya pulled his mouth to hers, hungrily claiming him.

He slipped his tongue between her lips and wrestled with her tongue, enjoying the sensation of her velvety mouth organ brushing over his.

He explored the folds of her mouth, his hands caressing her over the bathrobe.

She moaned and pulled back. He licked her bottom lip.

"Ahem," Aphrodite coughed. "Just because I have seen it a million times doesn't mean I want to see it again. Not with you, Apollo. Ew!"

"You fucked your brother," he retorted.

"Did not!" She stuck her tongue out at him.

He sighed heavily. Damn childish woman. "So, what happens now?"

"That's up to the two of you. Your ticket to the future is blank now. You can go back to Greece with me, stay here with her, take her back with you, it's your choice."

Apollo looked lovingly into Tanya's eyes. "What would you like to do, my little lover?"

"We could live in the wine country of France." Tanya rubbed his back.

Shivers raced up his spine and down again, hardening him beneath the towel. "An excellent idea."

She nuzzled his shoulder. "Wait, what about Mona and the band? Do you still want to be a rock star?"

"I forgot about the band, but I'd like to have Mona in my life as a friend, if that's okay with you, Tanya."

"Of course. She's the one who helped us." She licked his neck.

Goose bumps appeared on his skin. Tanya truly was the wisdom of Athena.

"Then it shall be so. But I have to leave now. There will be a check in the mail for you soon that'll help the both of you to France. He'll no longer be a god with powers or anything but he's being kept close to his home in a manner of speaking."

Tanya hugged Apollo tighter to her but looked at Aphrodite. "Thanks Aphrodite. What about Mona?"

She shrugged. "I can't say."

"But you know about her future, right?"

"Yes and no, Tanya. The Fates have clued me in, but I am not at liberty to say. Gotta go! Bye!"

She poofed out of the house in a large pink, glittery flash, and Apollo was again alone with Tanya. Her big beautiful eyes sparkled like gems.

"What was the alternative to choosing life with me?" She trailed a finger over his chest.

"Truthfully? The death of my soul. I didn't realise it earlier, but when I began to fade away, I thought hard and long about everything that's happened to me over the last several hundred years. I didn't like what I saw as a future, so I probably would have committed suicide had you and I not met."

"Oh."

"But I chose you. So I'm happy." He pinched her ass.

"Oh," she yipped.

"Wanna get married?"

Her face lit up like the Parthenon on a full moon. "Do you mean it?"

"If I can spend the rest of eternity with you, then I do mean it. Let's get married, please?"

"Oh god, Apollo, yes! Yes!"

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## Epilogue

*Six months later*

The air smelled like earth, musty and damp after the spring showers. The sun rose over the horizon, signifying another beautiful day in southern France. Grapes grew in the fields, hundreds of rows of magnificent grapes all set for pressing into the finest Bordeaux could offer.

The farmer who'd sold them the land said it wouldn't produce, but Apollo, now calling himself Bach, said for the farmer not to worry. He knew how to till the land and make it grow.

Standing outside on the patio of the little cabin he shared with Tanya, Apollo took a deep breath. The band had gone on temporary hiatus while the couple had moved out here. Thinking back, they'd hardly gotten any real work accomplished. They'd spent too much time in bed exploring each other's bodies and practicing a more laid back way of living.

Mona called once in awhile to check in and get details about the wedding. Apollo was glad to hear her voice and from the sound of things, she had her own happy ending in the works. A boy who called himself Talon seemed to have captured her fancy. He had a Greek heritage that was as impressive as it was long.

"How do the grapes grow so quickly?" Tanya came up beside him. Tugging his hair, she began to braid it. It had

grown to his shoulders in the past six months and had become a welcome addition to their foreplay.

"I am the god of wine. The vines recognise that. I am all that they will ever need in this lifetime."

"Just as I am all you'll ever need?"

He cupped her chin, turning it up towards his mouth. Sealing his lips over hers, he pulled her into his body for a kiss. "Indeed," he murmured between kisses. "You are all I will ever need."

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## **About the Author**

With a total of 11 novels out and more on the way, Sascha Illyvich writes paranormal erotic romances, erotica in many genres and an occasional contemporary erotic romance. In addition to writing, Sascha is a reviewer for Coffee Time Romance, radio spokesperson for the online radio station Radio Dentata and workshop host.

Sascha's latest seminar "BDSM in Romance" will be launched online soon for a nominal fee.

Oh, and Sascha likes cigars and scotch!

Email: [stpbigbangbaby@yahoo.com](mailto:stpbigbangbaby@yahoo.com)

Sascha loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at [www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com).

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Nectar of the Gods  
by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase

## **POSSESSING POISEDON**

Annmarie Ortega

\* \* \* \*



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Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

## **Dedication**

Thanks to Marianne LaCroix for being such an incredible friend. Hey Mari, we're not just on the same page ... We're in the SAME BOOK!

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## Chapter One

Beth was reclined on her lounge chair on the deck of her beach house when she dreamed of the man again. She'd started having the dream two days after she'd moved into her new house this past week.

Beth would fall asleep on the back deck and the man would appear. He would walk up the steps of the deck from the beach and stand next to her while she sat back in her lounge chair. Standing over her, he was at least six foot three, with dark brown hair that was all one length, just above his shoulders. He wore a necklace around his neck that was made of white shells that sharply contrasted the golden bronze colour of his skin. He had a killer body and a chest that just screamed to be touched. The only clothing he wore was a pair of skin-tight, royal blue swim trunks that left absolutely nothing to the imagination. His whole body was always soaking wet, with water dripping off the ends of his hair, running down his wide shoulders, his sculpted chest and abdomen, down his muscled legs to a puddle around his bare feet.

He would look at her as if he wanted to devour her, then he'd bend down and simply kiss her gently on the lips, turn and go back down the steps and walk away heading towards the water.

Beth enjoyed the dream. She actually looked forward to it, in fact. That one kiss he would place on her lips was like

heaven, and this beautiful stranger made her want more, much more, than just a gentle brush of his lips against hers.

So she had fallen asleep again in the warm sun while reading a book. She needed time to relax after finishing all her unpacking from moving in the house. When he appeared she anticipated the touch of his lips to hers and even in her sleep her lips parted ever so slightly waiting for his kiss.

This time, however, when he kissed her it was different, and her whole body reacted to him. It wasn't a gentle a kiss like he usually gave her. This one had a passion behind it, as if he wanted more than his usual gentle brush of her lips against his. A shudder washed over her, and there was a deep pulse that started between her legs and radiated through her. In her sleep, she rubbed her thighs together, wanting the pulse to continue and not stop.

Beth rubbed her eyes as she woke up from the dream, wishing to herself that her dream man were real, and reached down to pick up the book she'd dropped when she had fallen asleep. As she reached for the book she saw the footprints on the deck. They came up from the stairs to her chair then turned around and went back down the stairs again.

Beth sat up, her eyes growing large as she looked at the wet footprints in disbelief. She stood up straddling the chair and looked up and down the beach, seeing no one in either direction. It made no sense! There was nowhere for someone to hide on the beach, yet whoever had made the footprints had literally disappeared. She stepped over her chair to look at the footprints again, but they had totally disappeared. Her brows furrowed as she remembered what she had seen

literally seconds ago. There was no way they could have dried so quickly, yet they had disappeared like magic. She reasoned to herself that her eyes must have been playing tricks on her when she'd woken up, and there were no footprints after all, though they had seemed so real.

She was relieved the footprints weren't real, because it unsettled her that someone could have gotten so close to her without her knowing it. A chill ran through her even though the sun was shining brightly overhead, and she wrapped her arms around herself as she went inside and locked the sliding glass door behind her.

\* \* \* \*

The next day was absolutely beautiful outside, and Beth decided to go for a swim. She was so relieved she had unpacked all her boxes she thought she deserved a little relaxation. Putting on her bathing suit, she looked at herself in the mirror. Her white-blond hair hung midway down her back, and she decided to put it up. Grabbing a hairclip, she secured it to the back of her head. The bright red one piece tank swimsuit was flattering, and she grinned at her reflection, thinking she didn't look half bad in it although she could use a little more sun.

Taking her beach towel off her bed, she made her way through the hall and walked through the living room and out to the deck. Beth left the towel on her chair and walked down the stairs and across the sand towards the water.

The water was cool and refreshing. Beth loved being able to just walk out her door and go right to the beach. Living in

the Midwest, there were only a couple months out of the year when it was warm enough to use the outdoor pool by her house. Now that she was on the West Coast and in a warmer climate, she hoped to be able to swim a lot more. She waded into the water and started swimming out, marvelling at the beautiful day, clear skies and sparkling water.

Beth wasn't really paying attention to how far she'd swam out until she had the first shooting pain in her side. She recognised the swimmer's cramp immediately and she started to tread water as she turned to the shore to see how far she'd come. *Shit*, she thought, she was out way further than she'd realised. Even now, just treading water she knew there was no way she'd be able to swim back to shore. Her eyes scanned the beach, and she didn't see anyone. There usually weren't a lot of people on the beach here since there were mostly private homes. There was no one there she could try yelling to for help—she was on her own.

No one even knew she was out swimming, and no one would know she was missing if she didn't make it back to shore. Living by herself, she didn't have any family who would eventually miss her. She wasn't working now either, so no one would miss her if she didn't show up at work. Panic set in, and Beth tried to swim a couple strokes towards the shore before she swallowed her first mouthful of water. It scared her, and she went underwater for the first time fighting to keep her mouth closed and struggling to get her head back up above water. She knew panicking was the worst thing she could do, but she was totally helpless and terrified.

If she got back to the surface, maybe she could float on her back for awhile until the pain in her side went away. It was a good idea and might have worked if she hadn't opened her mouth again and swallowed more water, making her panic even more. She thrashed around under the surface until she didn't even know which way was up. Even with her eyes open, all she saw was blue all around her. She thought her heart would burst if she didn't get air soon and tried to decide which way was up.

All of a sudden, arms reached around her waist, and she saw the man from her dreams in front of her, holding her. For a moment, she thought maybe she was dying and he was an angel brought to take her to heaven.

He pulled her close so their chests touched, and he let go of her with one hand and pointed in the direction to go up. She frantically nodded yes that she understood, and he held her with both hands again, kicking his muscular legs, taking them both to the surface.

When her head broke through the water, she gasped and choked for air, coughing and spitting out water. The man held her tight and never loosened his grip, and she heard him say, "It's okay, I've got you," just before she lost consciousness.

When Beth woke, she actually thought she was having her dream again. She opened her eyes, and she was lying on her lounge chair. The man from her dreams bent down next to her, staring intently at her face with concern. He was very close to her, so close she could see the amber flecks in his brown eyes and she could feel his warm breath on her face.

She leaned forward and kissed him on the lips, then pulled back suddenly, realising she was awake and not dreaming.

He looked at her with an amused smile on his face. "I guess you're all right then," he laughed.

"Oh my God, I'm so sorry, I thought I was drea—never mind," she said. She noticed he was dripping wet, just like in her dreams, but this was real, and she was awake.

"You know, you should never swim so far by yourself. You're lucky I was close by," he said to her as he stood and ran his fingers through his wet hair.

As she watched him, Beth remembered how she'd been swimming and the cramps and going underwater when she was so far out from shore. She then remembered his strong hands that had held her and how he had appeared out of nowhere to save her. Beth realised she owed him her life. If he hadn't shown up when he did, she would have drowned.

"Thank you so much for saving me. I am so lucky you were there. I remember looking at the shore and not seeing anyone at all. I don't know where you came from, but I'm thankful you did. You're like my guardian angel," she told him.

He looked a bit uncomfortable with all the gratitude she showered on him. What she didn't know was that he'd been watching her from the time she'd entered the water. He had sucked in his breath when he had seen her wading into the water in her red bathing suit. He'd thought she was so beautiful and wished he could do more than give her a chaste kiss while she was asleep. She was never in danger of drowning, because he wouldn't have let that happen to her,

and even at her most terrified moment, she was actually quite safe. Ever since she'd moved into the beach house, he had been enchanted by her. Something about her drew him, but he didn't know what it was.

"I'm Beth, by the way. What's your name?" she asked him, bringing him back to reality.

"Call me Denny," he answered her. "It's a nickname my kid brother used to call me, and it kind of stuck with me," he explained.

"Well Denny, I really feel like I need to pay you back for saving me," she said. "Maybe I could make you dinner tonight?" she suggested, her eyes lighting up at the idea.

"No, you don't have to do that," he said, not wanting her to go out of her way just for him although he liked the idea of spending more time with her.

"Well, then what can I do?" she asked, looking up at him and waiting for his answer. She felt obligated to do something for him for saving her life.

"Actually..." he started with a twinkle in his eyes. "How about another kiss? A real one this time," he suggested while raising an eyebrow and grinning at her.

She looked up at him in shock at his request, and she started to blush. The whole time they'd been talking, she had been trying not to focus on what little clothing he had on. She noticed he had on the same blue swim trunks he wore in her dreams. She tried desperately not to look at the swim trunks that were so revealing, hugging every bump and curve of his body. Beth was really attracted to him and wanted nothing

more than to kiss him again, she just hadn't expected him to suggest it.

"Really?" she asked him, not totally believing his request. "You want me to pay you back by kissing you?" If it was what he wanted from her, she wasn't about to refuse him. She thought about how long it had been since she'd kissed a man or since she'd been in a relationship. Beth had been going through what she kiddingly referred to as her 'dry spell' for quite some time. She had gone on numerous first dates but hadn't found anyone who really interested her enough to even try for a second date.

Denny took a step towards her chair and reached out his hand. She took it, and he helped her up from her chair.

She reached up with her hands and placed her opened palms on his chest just like she had wanted to do since her first dream of him, and his muscles flexed under her palms. It was hard to believe she was actually with the man of her dreams, touching his body, and she swallowed so hard she thought he must have heard her.

He leaned down to her to whisper in her ear, and his wet hair brushed against her face, like little, wet kisses. "Kiss me, Beth. Kiss me like you mean it."

When he moved back to look at her, the hair on the back of her neck stood up and a heat washed over her from head to toe, the throb of wanting him between her legs refusing to be ignored. He wasn't asking her for quick peck on the cheek type of kiss. He was asking for a real kiss, and she somehow knew it was going to be the best kiss of her life.

Part of her said this was dangerous, kissing a total stranger she didn't know at all, but another part of her rationalised that he had just saved her life.

She rose up to him slowly on her toes to place her kiss on his lips, and it was even better than the kisses of her dreams. She was right. It was the best kiss of her life. Gentle yet full of passion and wanting and promises of more to come. Beth felt so drawn to him, she moved closer so they touched and his growing erection pressed against her, teasing her and exciting her. It made her more aroused knowing he was so hard for her just as she knew she was so wet for him, and it all started with just one kiss. She wanted him to touch her, to ease the ache between her legs, to take that hardness she felt pressing against her abdomen and slide it into her, as deep as he could. Heat spread from between her legs again, radiating through her whole body, and she trembled at the thought of him inside her.

Beth pulled back from the kiss with her hands still on his chest, and they looked at each other eye to eye. Slowly, they both moved in for another kiss, and there was a connection, electricity between them. Denny leaned down to meet her halfway as they kissed again, and this time, his tongue brushed over her lips and she eagerly opened her mouth to him. He wrapped his arms around her, as if he protected her from the rest of the world, before he slid his tongue into her mouth.

As her tongue touched his, it only made her want him more. Their tongues stroked each other gently at first, then growing harder and more demanding. As if he read her mind,

his lips moved from her mouth across her cheek and to her ear where he whispered to her, "Beth, I want you. Can you feel how much I want you?" His hips brushed against hers, as he purposefully rubbed his hard cock against her, allowing her to feel his arousal.

Beth swayed with her eyes closed, wrapped in his arms as his tongue circled the inside of her ear, giving her chills as his body touched hers. She couldn't recall ever experiencing such an overpowering desire for a man as what she experienced for Denny. Her desire for him was overwhelming, and she had the sensation she was drowning again, only now she needed more of him, as if he was the very air she breathed, and if she couldn't get more she'd slip under and be lost forever.

Even though she knew she was acting against her common sense, something deep inside told her she had nothing to fear from Denny and he would never cause her any harm. So far, he had proven to be her protector, saving her when she couldn't save herself.

He started kissing her neck, and she leaned back, arching her back so he was holding her up. His tongue moved down her neck and chest to where the edge of her swimsuit started, and he wished it wasn't there to stop his tongue from tasting the rest of her body. Beth stood back up, and Denny let go of his hold of her. He reached up and took off her hairclip so her long blonde hair fell down her back.

Denny took her by the hand and spun her around, as if they were dancing, and he twirled her around so her back was to him. He took a step forward so his hardness brushed against her buttocks, and she unconsciously rubbed herself

against him. He wrapped his arms around her and ran his hands slowly down the front of her body, over her breasts, cupping them for a moment, then down her stomach to touch her between her legs. His fingers slipped under her suit, and he slid a finger into her wetness. She leaned back into him and sighed, and as he stroked her, she moaned without meaning to, but his touch had set her on fire. She longed for his hard sex to be inside of her, and not just his finger.

"I want to make love to you," he said in her ear as he leaned down to her.

She took hold of his wrists and slid his hands out of her swimsuit and turned around to face him. Taking him by the hand, she said, "Come inside," and she led him into her house.

Beth guided him by the hand through the living room and down the hall to her bedroom. The walls and carpet were white, the windows from floor to ceiling. There were white sheer curtains tied to give a view of the beach. Her room had a queen size bed with two nightstands and two dressers, one with a mirror. There was a floral slip-covered recliner in one corner with a floor lamp next to it and a pile of books waiting to be read.

They stood at the foot of the bed, and Beth reached for the strap of her swimsuit to start pulling it down over her shoulder.

"No, let me, Beth," Denny said as he reached to pull down one strap then the other. The look in his eyes reminded her of someone unwrapping a present when they already know what

it was but still couldn't wait to get their hands on what was under the wrapping.

He used both hands to slide the straps down her arms, exposing her breasts to him. His fingers brushed over her hardened nipples before his fingers ran down her ribcage as he pulled the suit to her waist. He leaned over and circled the hardened peak of one of her breasts with the tip of his tongue then opened his mouth and took it into his mouth, sucking. His free hand came up and caressed the other nipple then pinched it between his thumb and forefinger. Beth squeezed her legs together, and an intense throb pulsed between them.

Denny paused to look in Beth's eyes for a second before he got down on his knees in front of her to remove the damp clothing from her body.

Beth wiggled her hips from side to side as he pulled the suit down over them. His fingers brushed her bare buttocks as he tugged the material off her, and it dropped at her feet as she stepped out of it and kicked it to the side.

She now stood naked in front of Denny as he was on his knees in front of her.

"You look like a goddess." His breath caressed her skin as he bent to bow down and kissed the tops of her feet.

"Denny, what are you doing?" she asked him. No one had ever done anything like this to her before. She'd never had a man on his knees in front of her.

"Worshipping you like the goddess you are, the way you should be," he murmured. Since he had first seen her asleep on the deck he'd been attracted to her, and he had stolen innocent kisses from her just to get close to her, if only for a

second. Now that she was naked in front of him, he knew he had to have her. With her standing before him naked, her white blonde hair tumbling all around her face and shoulders, he thought Beth could put many of the goddesses he knew to shame with her beauty. He would have told this fact too, but he didn't think she was ready to know everything about him just yet.

Plus there was something else about her. He could read things from her. He knew she was a good person at heart, but she was lonely, and she desired to be loved. He could also see there was a shadow over her. Something from her past haunted her, and she dreaded its return. He wanted to know what it was that bothered her because he wanted to protect her from whatever it was. He wanted her to be his completely, with her whole heart.

Beth took in a sharp breath at the words he'd said to her. He said them so sincerely and with such conviction her heart lurched in her chest. She had gone from little dreams of this man to actually having him in her house, in her bedroom on his knees while she stood naked before him. She could fall for Denny. He was the most gorgeous man she'd ever met, and he knew exactly what to say to make her heart melt.

He bent back down and kissed her ankles, first on one leg then the other. He started up her legs, kissing each shin, each knee, each quivering thigh. Beth had never felt so much like a woman before, so feminine, sexy and wanted.

He gave her a smouldering look before he kissed the curly hair between her legs, inhaling her scent for a moment before moving on to her bellybutton and each breast. Again he

spared a few moments savouring the taste of her skin as he licked and nibbled her stiffened nipples. Finally standing before her, he kissed his way up her neck then finally back to her open mouth again. When their tongues touched again, there was a fiery frenzy between them. There was no denying they wanted each other.

Beth ran her hands down Denny's back, his muscles rippling under his skin. She reached his waist then moved her hands to his front, between his legs and touched him over the swim trunks, and he throbbed in her hand through the thin material.

She pulled back from his kisses long enough to say, "Take these off," as she pulled at his waistband.

Beth stepped away as he took off his swim trunks and left them lying on the floor next to her swimsuit.

Denny stood in front of her, his erection straining against his stomach, the tip glistening. Beth looked at him from head to toe as he stayed still and let her see all he offered her. She wanted him to touch her once more and feel his body, so she opened her arms, and he came to her without hesitation. She ran her hands down his back another time, then over his bare buttocks as he did the same to her.

Denny slid his hand around to her flat stomach, reaching down between her legs and sliding a finger inside her tight wetness.

"You're so wet," he murmured into her ear.

"For you. I'm wet for you," she told him in a whisper, and her voice trembled as she spoke. She had never wanted a

man so badly in her life. There was something about him that drew her, making her want all of him.

Denny took her by the hand and walked to the side of the bed then climbed on, kneeling on the pink floral comforter. "Come here," he said to her, and she knelt on the bed next to him.

He eased her down on the bed then settled over her. He had to be inside of her right now. He couldn't wait any longer, not another minute especially when he knew how dripping wet she was for him. He gently nudged apart her legs with his knee, and she opened them wider for him. Guiding himself, he entered her slowly inch by thick inch, until he was totally inside her. Beth held her breath as her body adjusted to him, and Denny lay still, savouring the experience of her body surrounding him, grasping him tight. He had wanted this since the first moment he'd seen her that first time, and now they were together.

He held himself up over her, his elbows resting beside her head, and he bent to kiss her soft lips as he marvelled that she had been able to take all of him. He started to move slowly inside her as he started to kiss her breasts, his tongue circling an erect nipple, then taking it in his mouth, this time sucking harder than before.

Beth gave a low moan, moving her hips to grind against him, to get him into her even deeper. She grabbed his buttocks and squeezed them in her hands, pulling him closer to her. He continued to gently move, fighting to make this feeling last.

Denny's thrusts grew faster and his breathing became laboured. Beth writhed under him, loving every stroke of his hard cock inside of her. She wanted him harder and faster. She moaned out loud for him, asking him for more as she realised she was reaching her peak, her whole body supersensitive. She cried out sharply as her climax finally burst over her, causing her body to tremble and quiver, while she whimpered and cried out as she came. She pulled him down to her and buried her face against his muscular chest as she gasped for air.

Denny bent his head down and said her name in her ear, groaning and shuddering as his own climax overtook him. He raised his head with his eyes closed, and Beth watched the look of total ecstasy wash over him as his seed spurted inside her. It was then she noticed everything in the room was slightly shaking and the mirror on her dresser rattled. They were having a small earthquake, her first since she'd moved to California. Denny bent down and kissed the side of Beth's neck before rolling off of her onto his back.

"Beth, come here to me," Denny said as he opened his arms to her, his body covered with sweat. He still wanted her in his arms, to touch her, any part of her.

"Did you feel that? That was the first one we've had since I moved here," she said as she slid into his arms.

"What are you talking about?" he asked her.

"Didn't you feel the earthquake just now, while we were..."

"Oh, yeah, I just didn't think it was a big deal," he shrugged. He'd lost control of some of his power while he had his orgasm, and he had caused the earthquake. Denny made

a mental note to be more careful next time, desperately hoping that there would be a next time. Making love with her just one time wasn't enough for him, he needed more of her. He couldn't think of any other woman, mortal or goddess who made him feel the way she did.

"You were amazing, Beth," he said as he played with her hair, twirling blonde strands around his fingers.

She looked over to him surprised he had said just what she had been thinking about him. That was the second time today he'd echoed her thoughts. It was as if they were really connected, and Beth liked the feeling of closeness.

"I'm going to take a shower. Saltwater is killer on my hair," she told him as she sat up. "Wanna join me?" she asked as a smile came across her lips.

"Sounds good. I'll help you wash your back," he replied, getting up to follow her to the bathroom.

Beth turned on the water inside the shower as Denny entered and closed the glass door behind him. As Beth turned around with a bottle of body wash, she saw Denny was ready to take her again, and she was ready to let him.

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## Chapter Two

Beth was in the kitchen cooking while she waited for Denny to come over. She was a bit uneasy today because when she woke she couldn't help noticing the calendar and the date had jumped out at her. This was the day her stepbrother was supposed to be released from prison. She figured he'd find out she wasn't in Chicago anymore within a few days.

They hadn't communicated for almost a year, and Beth really hoped he'd just accept her leaving. The thing was, with Michael, she never knew how he'd react, and sometimes that could be dangerous.

Beth's mother had married Michael's father Robert three years ago, and she was happy that her mother had found someone new to love. Beth's own father had passed away when she was quite young so Beth didn't even remember him.

Her stepfather was a really nice guy, but her stepbrother Michael was nothing but trouble. He had a rap sheet longer than his arm and was always calling his father to bail him out of jail. After a while, he'd started showing up at Beth's job to ask her for money or at her apartment to beg her to let him sleep on her sofa after his girlfriend had thrown him out again. Beth knew he was violent towards the girl at times and had seen the bruises on her.

She disliked Michael, but she'd put up with him because of her mother. Then her mother and Robert had gotten killed in

a car accident, and Michael had started calling Beth in his father's place. There were a few times she'd gotten up early in the morning to bail him out of jail and had lent him money she knew she'd never see again.

A few months after the double funeral, Beth realised Michael thought he'd be able to call her and borrow money for the rest of their lives. After her mother was gone though, Beth just wanted to break off her relationship with Michael. He wasn't the type of person she would normally associate with, and after their parents' deaths, his problems kept getting bigger and bigger.

Beth had hoped to slowly wean him away from her, making it easier to disappear. She didn't want anything to do with him. When he'd been sent to jail and she'd inherited this house and money from her aunt, Beth had taken advantage of the timing.

Beth was confident Michael wouldn't be able to find her. It would appear that she had just moved on after her mother's death while he was in jail. She hadn't left any forwarding information. He would just find her gone, her old apartment rented to someone else by now.

She checked on her garlic bread, telling herself that part of her life was over, that she had no obligations to him anymore now that her mother was gone and to concentrate on the present. As Beth drained the pasta she'd cooked, she thought instead of Denny and how great the past two weeks had been. She had fallen hard for him, and from the way, he acted she thought he felt the same about her. She was happy

things had turned out the way they had. Moving here to California was the best decision she'd ever made.

Beth was stirring the pasta sauce when Denny came into the kitchen. When she saw him, she immediately smiled, and he came up behind her to hug her, breathing into her hair. She leaned back into him, his body enveloping hers.

"I missed you today," he told her.

"I missed you, too, Den. I hope you're hungry. I made the sauce from scratch today," she told him as she turned off the burner then turned to face him.

They leaned into each other to kiss hello, then she moved to the oven to take out the garlic bread and turn off the oven.

"Beth, come over here a second. I brought you something I want to give you."

She went over to him and noticed he was sexy even when he was wearing a plain white t-shirt and khaki shorts. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a gold chain with a pendant hanging from it.

"This has been in my family for a long time, and I want you to have it," he explained to her as he moved behind her and reached around her neck to work the clasp on the chain securing it around her neck.

Beth fingered the pendant that looked like a pitch fork to her.

"It's beautiful. What is this? Are you sure you want me to have it if it's been in your family for so long?" She couldn't believe he'd give her a piece of jewellery that was a family heirloom. His giving her this necklace confirmed how his feelings, and her heart jumped with happiness.

"It's actually a trident. It's the spear that's the symbol of the Greek god Poseidon," he explained. "Let's just say my family is really, really into Greek mythology."

"It's beautiful, Den, and I promise to guard it with my life," she told him, her fingers still touching the trident hanging around her neck. She turned around to give him a kiss to thank him.

As she was just about to touch her lips to his, he whispered to her, "I love you Beth."

Beth froze at his words and looked at him in amazement, seeing the love he spoke of reflected in his eyes. When he had put the necklace on her and explained the significance of it, she had realised she loved him as well. Once again, he had beaten her to saying out loud what she herself felt.

"I love you too, Den." With her eyes, she showed him how much she felt for him, bringing her lips to his, finally touching. Beth hadn't known her heart could soar so high, that she could be so truly happy.

"There's something else I have planned for you," Denny told her as he took her by the hand and led her outside onto the deck. There was a blanket spread out on the sand just a few feet away.

"What is this?" Beth asked as she followed him down the stairs and to the blanket.

"Remember our conversation the other day when you told me you've never made love outside? Well, I thought tonight was the night we change that," he said with a wicked gleam in his eye.

"Oh, really, did you now?" she asked as he pulled off his t-shirt and unbuttoned his shorts. Every time she saw him undressed, she was amazed at his fantastic body and how her body reacted to just seeing him. She pulled off her t-shirt and unzipped her shorts, wiggling out of them. Denny was already naked on the blanket waiting for her, and she sat next to him still wearing her bra and panties.

Denny laid back, and Beth reached down to touch his chest. She was always fascinated by his chest and abs, how chiselled and defined the muscles were. She ran her hand down his abs, feeling each contour, every ridge of muscle under her fingertips.

Beth grazed her hand down his stomach to the dark curly hair between his legs and his rock hard erection that moved when she got close to it. She took him in her hand and wrapped her fingers firmly around his shaft. With him in her hand, she stroked her hand up and down a few times, and he groaned in approval at her actions.

Beth leaned down over him and gently kissed the side of his erection then ran her tongue down its length. She took him into her mouth, her lips soft and gentle and she relaxed her throat so she could take as much of him as she could, moving her head up and down to move him in and out of her mouth. Denny moaned, and his hips moved, telling Beth how thoroughly he enjoyed what she was doing to him. She started sucking on the head of his penis as she stroked his cock with her hand.

Denny moved to sit up, and Beth stopped her stroking and sucking. Denny reached out and unhooked her bra, freeing

her breasts from their confinement and throwing it on the sand. He palmed her breasts, and the nipples turned hard under his touch like pebbles under her skin.

"Lay down for me, Beth. Look at all the stars out tonight, and just relax," he whispered as he assisted her in moving.

Beth lay back as he'd told her to, raising her rear off the blanket as he slid off her panties, her arms moving above her head, stretching out for him on the blanket. Denny was right. It was a beautiful cloudless night, and there were tons of stars twinkling and blinking down on them.

Denny parted her legs with his hand, kneeling between her legs. He leaned down and put kisses in her curly hair between her legs then reached over to bend each of her knees up and parted her legs even further. He scooted his entire body back before lowering his head between her legs. His tongue moved slowly over her slit, and her body trembled in anticipation of his tongue entering her.

When his tongue finally did enter her, gently probing at her inner folds, her thighs quivered out of control. He used his hands to open her wider and his tongue wiggled inside her, sending delicious ripples of heat throughout her body. She couldn't help but writhe under his touch, losing control of herself, giving herself to him yet again.

Denny's tongue found her sensitive nub, and gripping it lightly between his teeth, he quickly flicked his tongue back and forth over it. Beth moaned loudly, not caring that she was outside. As he continued his tongue's assault on her, she saw a shooting star go across the sky. This was the most amazing night of her life.

She gasped when he slid a finger in her, still laving her with his tongue all the while. She teetered on the edge of her orgasm.

"Denny! Right there. I'm going to come," she cried out to him, her breaths coming heavy and fast.

He stopped the movement of his tongue long enough to tell her, "Come in my mouth. I want to feel you against my tongue."

His answer made her head spin. He knew exactly what to do and say to drive her crazy, and she loved him for it.

He continued with his tongue and finger inside her and when she climaxed, she heard him moan between her legs as her juices flowed into his mouth. It almost was more than she could bear. When she finally started coming down from her incredible release, she became aware of Denny leaning over her, his eyes locking with hers as he lowered his lips to hers. He kissed her and probed her mouth with his tongue so she tasted her own juices, and she thought it was sweet, like the nectar from an exotic fruit.

Denny's erection pressed into her stomach, and even though she'd just had an incredible orgasm, she wanted to feel his cock inside of her. Tongues and fingers were fine and the sensations incredible, but she wanted his hot, hard sex inside her. Nothing could compare to the real deal.

As he held himself over her, he took his erection in his hand and stroked himself before he guided himself into her. He filled her slowly and her silken heat surrounding him, taking all of him into her sheath.

"Why is it I can never get enough of you Beth? You're all I think about. Even when we're not together, all I think about is when I'm going to see you again. And when I'm inside you I feel like I can lose myself in you. I've never felt this way with anyone, ever."

His passionate words struck deep inside her. Beth reached up and touched his face, staring into eyes that bared his soul to her. She felt the same way, loved being with him, loved him being inside of her, together they were complete, separated they were only half of what they should be.

"Denny, there's nowhere else in the world I'd rather be than with you. You are the most amazing man I've ever met, and sometimes, I'm shocked you even want to be with me."

Denny started slowly moving his hips against hers, sliding himself in and out of her. He'd ease himself back, so he was almost at her entrance, just the head of his penis still inside her, then he'd slide himself back inside of her to the hilt in one seamless motion.

"There's only you for me, no one else Beth. Only you," he murmured to her, his eyes darkening as he continued thrusting.

Denny pulled himself back from her, bending her right leg at the knee and turning her to lie on her left side. With her leg bent, he was able to penetrate her even further.

"Oh my..." Beth sucked in her breath at Denny's intense thrusts into her. Her mind reeled at the sensation as he held her thigh as he moved in and out of her. Denny then leaned over and with one hand touched her clit, and she let out a hard breath.

With one hand on her thigh and the other stroking her swollen clit Beth gasped and moaned under Denny's touch. It wasn't long before she felt another orgasm start again in the centre of her body and spread through her, her body shivering and twitching with the intense reaction to his movements deep inside her. She held her breath for a second then released a cry of extreme pleasure as her second climax washed over her.

Denny moved his hand from between her legs and held her thigh with both his hands. He squeezed her thigh as he came, spurting his seed inside her, his body shuddering until his orgasm finally abated.

Pulling himself out of her, he lay down behind her, his chest to her back. He wrapped his arms around her and held her close to him, kissing her neck, the tender skin soft under his lips.

He wanted her in his life always and he would do everything in his power to give her all the love she deserved. He didn't want to think about existing without her beside him. He brushed back her hair and leaned over to see she had fallen asleep with a smile on her face. He hoped he was the reason for her smile.

A little while later, Beth woke up still on the blanket outside her house, her legs wrapped around Denny's and his hand over one of her breasts, gently covering it. She untangled her limbs from his and cuddled closer against his side, where she perfectly fit to the contours of his body.

"Beth," Denny said as she settled against him. "Please tell me about why you moved to California. I know you've

mentioned getting away from someone, but I'd really like to know from who. Did you have to get away from a boyfriend? I'm curious why you had to move all the way across the country. You don't have an old boyfriend after you, do you?" he asked, hoping she'd say no and bracing himself for her answer.

"Oh no, I didn't move because of a boyfriend. There wasn't anyone special in Chicago. I actually left because of my stepbrother. I just don't like talking about him much. Our parents were only together for two years, so I never really felt close to the guy, really. It's like we ended up related because our parents were together. Michael is always getting in trouble with the police, and he's just bad news. He has a terrible temper, and no one ever knows what will set him off. When I first met him, he seemed okay, but as time went on I started to see more and more of a violent streak in him." She shivered, remembering the times he seemed to get more violent.

"One year at Christmas he got angry and started throwing presents at us, and his father made him leave. I know for a fact he'd hit his girlfriend a few times. He would always get arrested, and his dad would always run to bail him out of jail." Sighing as she shifted closer, almost burrowing into his side. "Then when our parents were killed in the car accident, he started calling me all the time and showing up at my apartment. Part of me felt bad for him because he doesn't have any other relatives, but I really don't want anything to do with him anymore."

"Did he ever try to do anything to you?" Denny was angered thinking of anyone laying a finger on Beth. He didn't even know this guy Michael, and already, he didn't like him.

"No, he never did anything to me. I saw him blow up a few times at our parents' house, throwing things, yelling, and one time he broke a window. But he never did anything specifically to me, but I never wanted to be put in the position where he could. I've tried to stay away from him for the most part." She shook her head as she explained. "So he ended up getting into a fight at a bar and beat up a guy so badly he was arrested and sent to prison for a year. When I found out, I was really relieved because I thought I wouldn't have to deal with him or his problems anymore. I was a little scared to break things off with him because now he sees me as his family. His going to jail was the perfect way to end our relationship. I'd planned on moving while he was gone, then I got the letter saying an aunt had left me this house. It was perfect timing, like my aunt knew I had to get out of this bad situation. So I quit my job and packed up my stuff and came out here. My aunt left me some money, too, so I figured out how much I needed to live on, and as long as I don't hit all the boutiques, I can afford to not work for a while."

"So when does he get out of prison?" Denny asked, still curious about her stepbrother. Beth had told him last week about both her parents being gone, but she never even mentioned Michael at all. From everything she'd told him about the guy, he couldn't blame her for wanting to forget him.

"Funny you should ask. Actually, he should be getting out today. He never even knew about my aunt or this house, so I'm hoping I won't hear from him ever again. I didn't leave any forwarding address or anything, I just kind of disappeared. Plus he'll still have to report to a parole officer, and he won't be allowed to leave Illinois. I don't think he would risk breaking his parole. My only concern is if he finds out I'd inherited this house and the money, he might come here trying to get some from me. He was always broke and always hitting his father and me up for cash."

Denny wasn't as confident about Michael leaving her alone as she was. The guy had no other relatives except Beth, and if he knew she had come into money, he might very well show up at her door looking for a handout, parole officer or not. If this guy was desperate enough, he might not care what laws he broke to find her and her inheritance. Denny finally understood the darkness he sometimes sensed around her. It was her stepbrother Michael.

Denny thought that this was the perfect time to tell Beth the truth about himself. He also needed to tell her how she could use the necklace he'd given her in case she needed him in a hurry, especially now that he knew about Michael.

Denny had put off telling Beth the truth for long as possible because he was pretty sure she wouldn't hit him and she would think he was out of his mind. He had no doubt she loved him. He could see the love in her eyes every time he touched her, every time she undressed for him, or when he was naked in front of her. He saw it all, her love, her desire,

Nectar of the Gods  
*by Sascha Illyvich, Annmarie Ortega, Ashlyn Chase*

her raw passion for him. But he'd be asking her to believe a lot, and he knew it wasn't going to be easy.

He tried to think of the best way to tell his mortal girlfriend that he was the ancient, Greek god Poseidon. This was most definitely not going to be easy.

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## Chapter Three

Poseidon stepped from the water onto the beach in front of Beth's house. Looking up and down the beach and not seeing anyone, he made his clothes appear onto his body. Today he wore jeans and a t-shirt with flip flops. No one would know he had just seconds ago stepped from the ocean.

The night before he thought he was going to tell Beth the truth about him, but then he hadn't. Part of him was still concerned about how she was going to take the news about him being a god. He took a few steps towards Beth's house when the goddess Selene appeared in front of him.

"Good gods, what are you doing here?" Poseidon demanded, stopping dead in his tracks. She was the last goddess he wanted to see right now, and she always had the absolute worst timing.

"I saw you last night Si, and if you were trying to make me jealous, it worked," she said as she leaned towards him, playing with his hair. So she'd seen them make love outside under the stars ... Poseidon sighed and shook his head at the thought of Selene watching him and Beth and thinking he was trying to make her jealous. Selene was the goddess of the moon and had been after him relentlessly for at least a hundred years. No matter how he told her, she wouldn't believe he wasn't interested in her.

He looked at her and shook his head. "Listen, Selene, last night wasn't meant to be a show for you. It had nothing to do with you at all. I've told you a million times, I'm not

interested in you. I'm in love with Beth. And stop calling me Si. You know I hate that," he complained as he tried to step away from her and swatted her hand from his hair.

Still not getting his message, she leaned over then kissed his cheek and placed her opened hand with long red fingernails on his chest over his pectoral muscle. She grazed her nails down his chest to the waist of his pants.

"Don't tell me it's true what I've heard, that you're in love with a mortal woman?" She said the last two words as if they were the vilest she'd ever spoken, and she took a step up closer to him.

Selene half turned to look to the beach house in disgust. "This is where she lives? Here?" she asked incredulously, as if the beach house were the most squalid hovel she'd seen. "You must be joking, or slumming, or have you just lost your mind? You can't be serious."

Poseidon grabbed her by the arms, jarring her hands from his waist, fighting the urge to shake her senseless and knowing it would do absolutely no good anyhow.

"Selene, get out of here. My love life is none of your business. The last thing I need is for Beth to see me out here with you. I have enough to do telling her who I am. I don't need you to make things any more complicated than they already are."

"She doesn't know you're a god yet? Are you kidding me?" She laughed, tilting her head back. "Can I stay to listen, please? I promise I'll be quiet, and you won't even know I'm there."

Poseidon let go of her, and she slid an arm around his waist in one fluid motion as if it were something she did all the time.

"Selene, please just leave," he begged trying to get her to stop hanging on him. He looked towards Beth's, and he thought he saw her curtains at the back sliding door move. He let out a heavy sigh, and thought about what Beth must be thinking, seeing him on the beach, their beach, with another woman hanging all over him, especially after all they had said and done last night. Damn Selene, he had asked her to leave but now the damage was already done. He felt the ground start to tremble as he became angry, and Selene mumbled a quick apology before she turned from him and disappeared instantly from the beach.

\* \* \* \*

Beth had just finished getting dressed and was waiting for Denny to come over. He had told her he'd be there sometime after one, and as she looked at her clock, she realised he should be there at any time now.

She had gone shopping earlier that day and bought herself a new dress, nothing fancy, because she wanted to look nice today after they had spent such an awesome evening together last night on the beach. She couldn't remember being so happy in a long time and touched the pendant around her neck as she thought of Den telling her he loved her.

She went to the fridge and got a bottle of water then went over to the back door to look out at the beach and reminisce.

When she looked out the sheer curtains covering the window, she couldn't believe her eyes, and her stomach dropped making her feel sick.

Standing almost exactly where the blanket had been last night, Den was with the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. She had long dark hair that stopped at her waist and was dressed in the tiniest of sundresses and high-heeled sandals. Even from the distance between them, Beth could make out the bright red nail polish on the woman's fingers. She was touching Den like someone who was familiar with him, and the woman had her hand on his chest as she whispered in his ear and kissed his cheek. Beth watched her hand slowly go down to the waist of his pants.

Beth couldn't believe he'd be with another woman here. The woman half-turned and pointed to the house, and Beth felt her cheeks turn red. She knew even without hearing the conversation the woman was talking about her. Denny grabbed the woman by the shoulders as he spoke to her passionately, and the woman threw back her head and laughed at whatever he said.

Beth decided she had seen enough and left the window, brushing against the curtains as she moved. Her thoughts raced to digest everything she had seen, her mind telling her things her heart didn't want to hear. She couldn't understand why he'd be with another woman by her house, especially after last night. He had given her the necklace and told her he loved her. She had told him she loved him too, yet he was right outside with this gorgeous woman hanging all over him. Beth knew there were many things she didn't know about

Den, but she'd never thought she should be concerned about another woman.

She walked to her bedroom to take off the dress and put on her pyjamas instead. After she changed her clothes, she sat on the end of her bed and allowed the tears she'd been holding back to flow.

\* \* \* \*

Poseidon stood on Beth's deck, knocking on the door for the third time, a steady stream of curses towards Selene running through his head. He knew Beth was home because he had seen her brush against the curtains. She just wasn't answering the door. He told himself he wasn't going to leave until he spoke to her and explained to her what she had seen and fixed everything between them. Things had been perfect between them, and now it was ruined.

Beth pulled herself off the bed to go to the door, knowing Den wouldn't leave until he saw her. She was tired of hearing him knocking on the door. She reached the door and moved the curtains aside, making no attempt to unlock it or let him inside.

"Yeah?" she asked him through the glass, hugging herself. It hurt her being so close to him and not be able to touch him or go into his arms, but what she had seen behind her house had really upset her.

"Beth, are you going to let me in?" Poseidon asked softly, cautiously. He knew as soon as she'd come to the door that he had been correct. She'd seen him with Selene. Beth's eyes

were red-rimmed from her crying, and Poseidon felt guilty that he was the reason she was hurt and crying.

"Beth, please let me explain what you saw," he begged, trying to think of where to begin his explanation.

"You know what? I don't want to know. Why don't you just go find your friend? You two look very close," Beth spat, demanding herself not to cry in front of him even though she knew she looked like hell and he could surly tell she'd been crying.

"Look Beth, she's not even a friend, just someone I know. Please, I really need to talk to you," he pleaded.

"Well, I really don't want to talk to you right now so I'll see you around, okay?" she said and let go of the curtain letting it fall back over the glass as she walked away from the door and back to her room.

Poseidon didn't even bother looking around for other people before he disappeared off the deck in a flash.

\* \* \* \*

Beth sat on her living room sofa, in the dark, eating ice cream directly out of the container. Right after Denny had left, the sun had set and it started to rain steadily getting worse by the hour. She'd lost electricity around an hour ago, so now she sat in the almost pitch black drowning her sorrow with a spoon and ice cream.

The lightning flashed through her sheer curtains and the thunder was so loud her windows rattled in their frames. It was extremely windy out, and she'd stood at the back door

earlier, marvelling at how high the waves were during this storm.

She hated sitting in the dark by herself, and all she could think about was Denny. She was so confused by what she had seen and wondered if she should have let him explain his side of what she had seen. He had never mentioned another woman or involvement in any other relationships. And the woman she'd seen was so amazingly beautiful, Beth had felt like she could never compete with someone who looked like her. That woman was supermodel stunning, and next to her, Beth knew she'd be Plain Jane. Put side by side, Beth had no question which one of them would be picked by any man.

Beth sighed and dug her spoon back into the now soft ice cream, her stomach and mind telling her she'd eaten more than enough. She leaned over to the coffee table to pick up the ice cream container's lid when lightning flashed, and she saw a woman appear from nowhere in her living room.

Beth screamed, scrambled off the sofa and ran to the back door, dropping the spoon and ice cream carton.

"I'm not going to hurt you. Please listen to me," the woman pleaded, following her to the door.

Beth turned to look at her and immediately recognised her as the woman who'd been with Den on the beach.

"How did you get in here?" Beth demanded, thinking all she needed was some psycho girlfriend of Den's breaking in.

"Beth, please calm down and listen to me. I have a lot to tell you, and I need you to stay sane and listen to me. If Si finds out I'm here, oh wait, you call him Den, I keep forgetting. If he finds out I came here, I'll have hell to pay,

literally." The woman shuddered as she thought about the repercussions for coming to Beth.

"You have two minutes before I call the police," Beth said not even sure if the phones were working and realising she had no idea where her cell phone was or if it would even have reception during the storm.

"Okay, then. Why don't you sit? Please," she requested as she waved to Beth's sofa.

Beth slowly walked back and sat down, waiting to hear what the woman had to say. Her stomach twisted in a knot before the woman begin, but she didn't want to appear nervous to the woman.

"You're wasting your two minutes," Beth snapped, hoping she sounded angry and not half as frightened as she was.

"Ah, bitchy, I like that. I can even respect that. Okay ... my name is Selene. I'm going to tell you a lot of things you're not going to believe, and I need you to keep an open mind. But first of all, I want you to know I am nothing to Si—I mean Den." Selene shook her head, looking annoyed. "Believe me, I've thrown myself at him more times than I want to admit, but for whatever reason he just isn't interested in me. I think you may have seen my last attempt at him right out there on the beach, but he told me he loves you and to leave him alone. And now he is so angry at me for messing things up for you two. I had to come here and straighten out this mess."

Selene looked at Beth in her pyjamas, and the ice cream and spoon lying on the floor still where Beth had dropped them when she had first appeared.

"I would guess from the amount of ice cream you've consumed, you're upset too," Selene observed.

Beth looked on the floor and went over to pick up the spoon and ice cream carton that had fallen and put them on the coffee table. When she bent over, the trident pendant Den had given her came loose from under her pyjamas and swung in front of her.

Selene caught her breath when she saw the pendant. She moved over to Beth and grazed the trident lightly with her fingers as Beth stood up.

"He gave you his trident," she murmured in amazement.

Beth touched it and took a step away from Selene.

"He told me it was in his family a long time. It's supposed to be a symbol of Poseidon," Beth explained.

"Honey, that isn't just a symbol of Poseidon. That actually belongs to Poseidon, and it has magic in it. For him to give that to you, that's incredible. Do you know how many women throughout time have wanted to have him give that to them?" Selene asked as she still shook her head in amazement.

Beth was confused by what Selene said. She sounded like she believed Poseidon was real, and that he was Den. "What do you mean 'belongs to Poseidon'? You mean as in the Greek god Poseidon?"

"Exactly. The Greek god Poseidon. Of course, I've always called him Si, and his brother Hades always called him Denny."

Beth thought Selene must be insane. She thought Den was the Greek god Poseidon and he had given her his magical

necklace? Beth started to think of how to get this psycho woman out of her house.

"Beth, if you don't believe me, let me show you," said Selene, then she disappeared. Beth looked frantically around her living room, But Selene had vanished. Beth sat back on the sofa, shaking at what she had just witnessed.

"Now do you believe me?" Selene asked Beth, sitting right next to her on the sofa, when a second ago she hadn't even been in the room.

"Holy crap," Beth exclaimed looking at Selene. "Who are you? Really?"

"I am the goddess of the moon. Here, I'll show you. Watch this," Selene instructed as she stood in front of Beth and held out her hands as if she held an invisible ball. Slowly, an orb formed between her hands, glowing first then lighting up the room. It shined so brightly Beth had to squint here eyes and raise her arm to shield her eyes from its brightness. Then as quickly as Selene had made the moon appear in Beth's living room, it disappeared.

"Den is Poseidon," Beth mumbled out loud, to no one in particular.

"Exactly," Selene responded, relieved Beth had finally gotten it. "Now let me tell you about the trident."

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## Chapter Four

Beth pulled up to her house, her car loaded with groceries. She'd had to go to the store finally, since she was out of everything. She just didn't want to go outside. She'd wanted to stay hidden in her house since she'd found out the truth about Den being Poseidon.

She kept replaying her conversation with Selene over and over. What the woman had said to her was crazy, but since she'd shown Beth some of her powers Beth knew the woman wasn't human.

At first, Beth had been angry at herself for falling for someone she didn't really know. She'd never been to Den's house or met any of his family or friends or even knew what he did for a living. She had just let herself get swept away with him, she had never realised he wasn't even human.

And after Selene had explained everything to Beth, things that had seemed strange in the past started to make sense, like the dreams of him before she actually met him and the day she'd seen the footprints that disappeared on the deck. She hadn't been seeing things. They had actually been there. The day she'd almost drowned, he had appeared out of nowhere. Before she had started swimming, she hadn't seen anyone on the beach or in the water. Then there were the earthquakes that sometimes happened when they had sex. Selene had explained that Poseidon was the god of earthquakes, and even that made sense.

When Beth thought of the first time they had made love and how he had knelt at her feet and kissed them, it meant even more to her. Knowing he was an immortal god, kneeling at a mortal woman's feet, made a lump in her throat that he cherished her so much.

So she'd stayed home for the past week, thinking about Den really being Poseidon. She was in love with a real Greek god, and part of her couldn't believe a god would choose her, but he had. Selene had explained how to use the trident that Beth still wore. Even though they hadn't spoken lately, she couldn't even think of taking it off. The idea of being a mortal in love with a god terrified her. Den would stay the same, and she would grow old. But Beth knew despite it all, she still loved him and wanted him. She was just nervous about summoning him to her. What she should say to him? Part of her felt foolish she hadn't let him explain himself, and she was trying to figure out what to say to make things better between them. Would he still have her?

Beth made two trips, carrying groceries from the car to the kitchen counter. She went to the refrigerator to put away her half gallon of milk and a couple containers of yogurt. When she was finished, she closed the door and turned to get more groceries. Standing right in front of her, mere inches away, was Michael. She hadn't even heard him come up behind her.

Beth jumped in surprise with a small yelp. She couldn't believe he was here in her kitchen. Her blood turned cold in her veins, and her stomach dropped, the hair on the back of her neck bristling while fear washed over her. Her mind raced

at how he could have gotten into her house, but she knew if he wanted to get into anywhere badly enough, he could do it.

"Hey sis, I never got your change of address card," he said to her with a snarl. "I guess you forgot I was getting out and didn't know about your new fancy place," he said, looking around her place. His voice dripped with sarcasm, and he had that angry look in his eyes Beth recognised only too well.

She took a step back from him, trying to appear calm, but secretly searching for something close to her to use as a weapon, just in case.

"This is a really nice place you've got here, but what I'm really here for is to make a loan. You know I've been gone for a while, and I could use some help. I'm sure you understand, Beth. Rumour has it you've had a little windfall," Michael told her. "So, where is it, Beth? Where's the extra cash? I know you always keep some somewhere, and it would be a lot easier if you just told me."

"I've really got to put all this stuff away," she said, pointing to the bags of food on the counter. "I have food that will melt," she explained, trying to buy herself more time to think of some kind of plan while damning whoever had told him where she was.

Her answer infuriated him, and he was upon her in an eye blink, knocking her against the refrigerator, his hand around her neck, squeezing it, cutting off her air.

"I don't think you understand. I want you to show me where you have your money. I'm kind of in a hurry," he commanded, finally letting go of her neck.

Beth rubbed her throat, gasping for air and coughing, amazed that Michael had put his hands on her. He had never touched her before, and she was terrified of his newly found violence towards her, but an idea came to her.

"It's this way," she said to him, leading him down the hallway towards her room. Her bedroom door had a lock and a phone inside. She'd only need seconds to call the police. She felt him a few steps behind her, and she ran into her bedroom and pushed the door closed behind her. It was almost closed when he started pushing it to open it.

Beth dug her heels into the rug, using all her weight to try to close the door, praying for the strength to do it. She knew her actions had only made him angrier, so she couldn't fail.

"Beth, you really messed up, man. Wait 'til I get my hands on you," he roared from the other side of the door, then he pushed it so hard Beth fell to the floor.

"Get up. Get up!" he screamed at her, and she stumbled to her feet, crying. He slapped her across the face, so hard she literally saw stars, then grabbed her by the arm and threw her onto her bed.

Beth closed her eyes and burning tears escaped running down her cheeks and into her ears. She was scared, terrified at what he was going to do to her. She remembered his girlfriend's battered face after a fight with him and closed her eyes.

She heard Michael opening her dresser drawers, throwing her clothing on the floor looking for her money. He knew that she always kept extra cash hidden in her dresser, and he let out an exclamation once he found what he was looking for.

"Wow, Beth, there's more here than I expected. Very nice," Michael said, approving of her hidden cash.

"Just take what you want and go," Beth said to him her eyes still closed.

"Oh, don't worry, I'll be taking it all. And from what I've heard you should have more so I'll have to come back for another visit," he said.

Beth was sick, knowing he planned on coming back. She knew she would never be free of him, and he'd always find her, no matter where she went.

She lay on the bed crying and gently touching her neck that was sore from his choking her. She felt Denny's pendant under her shirt and fumbled to pull it out, remembering everything Selene had told her. She didn't like summoning him to help her. She would have liked to have been able to talk and make up first, but she was terrified of Michael and wanted Poseidon with her now.

She held the trident in her fist and opened her eyes, staring at the ceiling and whispered, "Den, Poseidon, help me. I need you. I'm in trouble, please." It felt strange to her to use his real name, but it felt comfortable on her lips.

Michael had started counting the money when Poseidon appeared in Beth's bedroom. She sat up, amazed that he was suddenly there even though she had known it would work.

He came to the bed and bent down, taking her hands in his. "Are you okay?" he asked, his eye full of concern. He lightly touched her jaw, and she flinched, pulling back from his touch. His jaw flexed as he ground his teeth together as he stood up. He was upset she was hurt, and she knew even

though they'd barely spoken his feelings for her hadn't changed, and she was relieved.

"I'm so sorry I didn't talk to you that day," she said to him. Poseidon touched his fingers lightly to her lips, nodding his head in understanding.

"Who the hell is this asshole?" Michael asked Beth. "Is this your new California boyfriend, Beth? Are you kidding me?"

"You're going to leave now. Beth doesn't want you here," Poseidon said standing tall in front of Michael. "You can walk out yourself or I can throw you out on your ass. It's up to you."

"I don't know who the fuck you think you are, but Beth is my sister," Michael spat at Poseidon.

"I'm waiting for you to leave. I don't want to hurt you," Poseidon told him, trying not to lose his patience, which was very difficult for him. He would take great pleasure in throwing Michael out on his ass.

"Come on, let's see what you got," Michael challenged, raising his fists to fight.

Beth couldn't believe that Michael actually wanted to fight. Beth knew Michael was strong, but any normal person who saw Poseidon would try to get out of a fight with him, not challenge him to one. And Beth knew since Den wasn't even human, Michael didn't stand a chance.

Michael lunged, swinging at Poseidon's face, but he moved before Michael could even make contact. Poseidon grabbed Michael's arm, twisting it, and Beth heard the bones break. She winced as Michael screamed out in pain then Poseidon

turned him around, landing a punch on his face that slammed him unconscious to the floor.

"Is he alive?" Beth asked, not entirely sure what Poseidon had done to him, but grateful he wasn't moving anymore.

"Oh, yeah, he's alive," Poseidon said as he lifted Michael's limp body with ease. "I'll be right back," he told her as he carried Michael out of the room, returning a few moments later. "He's on your couch, but he's not going to wake up for a long time. I'm guessing that is the stepbrother Michael. He found you somehow, huh?"

"I don't know how. I came home, and he was in the house. I was so scared," she confessed. Her eyes filled with tears.

Poseidon walked over to her and held her by the arms. "It's okay. I'm here, and he can't hurt you. I'm glad you called me, and I got here in time. I never got to tell you how to use the necklace, but Selene told me she'd explained to you how to use it. I've been waiting and hoping that you'd call for me and just now when I heard you use my real name ... I've missed you terribly, Beth."

"I've missed you, too. After Selene explained everything to me, I needed some time to think about everything. It's a lot to adjust to, and I've been doing a lot of thinking the past week."

"I'm glad you called me. If anything happened to you, I'd never forgive myself. And I am so sorry that Selene was the one to tell you everything about me. Believe me it's not what I had planned at all," he said, stressing his last two words.

"You should have told me. You could have shown me yourself," she said to him, looking into his eyes, realising she'd missed him more than she'd known.

"I was going to. When Selene showed up that day, I was coming to tell you everything. Of course, we all know how that turned out. I should have told you sooner, but I was scared you wouldn't want anything to do with me anymore," he said, smoothing her hair.

"Maybe in some way it was better for me to find out everything from Selene. She explained to me about the trident, and how so many women through time have wanted it from you and that I'm the first woman you've ever given it to. Selene was shocked you'd given it to me and told me it means you must really love me, and how lucky I am to have your love," Beth was still in awe that he was *the* Poseidon.

She reached up and touched his face with her open palm, and he turned his face to her open hand, kissing it lightly with feather-soft lips. Her hand started to tremble just from his gentle caress and feeling his warm breath on her hand.

"But I didn't need Selene to tell me how lucky I am. I knew that already," she said staring at his mouth, longing to press her lips to his. "I love you no matter who you are, what you are, for however long you want to stay with me," she told him, opening herself to him and who he was completely.

"Forever, Beth. I want you forever. And if you are willing, we can have forever," he said to her, putting his arms around her waist and gently pulling her to his chest. "There's a way to make you immortal like me. The decision is up to you."

Beth looked at him, shocked at his revelation. She had no idea becoming immortal was even possible. If Selene knew anything about the possibility, she hadn't said a word. Her mind reeled at the thought being with Poseidon forever. One of the things she had been so scared of was her growing old while he stayed the same. She looked at him and knew she didn't have to think about what she wanted, she knew.

"I want you. I want you forever," she told him as she reached to touch his hair. He was the only man for her. He always would be. She would go anywhere with him, and do anything to be with him.

Poseidon wrapped his arms tighter around her and held her close to his chest, his heart beating rapidly in his chest. He swore he would never let her go, and he wanted to start forever with her now.

He led her to the foot of the bed where he sat down. He pulled her down to him, onto his lap so she was straddling him. He took her arms and placed them around his neck and placed his own hands on her waist.

"If you want forever, then make love to me, Beth. That's all you have to do," he murmured low to her, giving her the sweetest of chills. "Let's just say I had a talk with the other gods, and we struck a deal. If you agreed to make love with me again ... if we do ... you will become immortal like me. Will you make love to me and become immortal?" he asked her. His eyes burned with all the love he felt for her, the want to have her by his side for eternity.

"Yes, I will, yes," she said as she nodded her head. While they had been talking, her body ached for his, and she wanted him now to relieve her ache.

After she told him yes, their clothing was gone in a quick flash. Beth looked down at herself, surprised, and at Poseidon who looked like nothing unusual had happened at all.

"Wow," Beth said, still trying to get used to the idea of gods and magic.

"Pretty convenient, huh?" he asked her, grinning. He ran his hands over her shoulders, down her neck to her breasts. When he touched her nipples with the pads of his fingers, they instantly peaked for him.

Beth purred on his lap and tilted her head back, arching her back so her breasts jutted towards him. He leaned down and licked the nipple on one breast, the tip of his tongue flicking the erect peak, the skin becoming even tauter.

As she eased back and Poseidon licked and sucked her breasts, she became dripping wet, so wet the inside of her thighs were coated with her juices. Her body had been denied his touch for so many days, it instantly reacted to him.

Beth sat back up straight, and Poseidon bowed down to kiss her. Their tongues found each other and danced and caressed each other.

Poseidon's engorged erection pressed against Beth, between her legs and she rubbed herself against him, getting him wet with the liquid flowing from her. He moaned into her mouth, and she wiggled herself against his cock.

Beth knelt up, raising herself, and took his hardness in her hand. She stroked him easily, his shaft coated with her juices.

She took him and guided him to her, his cock ready to enter her.

"Wait," Poseidon stalled, the head of his penis twitching impatiently. "Are you sure this is what you want? If we do this, and I come inside you, it will make you immortal, and you will be with me for all of time."

Beth looked into his eyes and saw his never-ending passion for her that warmed her from the inside out. He would stay with her forever, love her forever, and she would love him just as long, with all her heart.

Beth slowly lowered herself down his erection, inch by glorious inch.

"Forever," she said to him, and he kissed her passionately on the lips.

As she allowed the last inch of his cock into her, she tilted back her head, and Poseidon kissed her neck, then hissed out loud in pleasure as she started to ride him, hips moving slowly enjoying every thick inch of him.

Poseidon laid flat on his back, then held Beth and rolled her over onto her back so he lay over her. He pumped in and out of her faster and faster. Beth thrust her hips up to meet his, and she welcomed the beginning sensations of her climax and revelled in the knowledge that they would be able to have this whenever they wanted, for all time.

Her peak came, and as it covered her with a blanket of ecstasy, she looked at Poseidon, and she knew he was at his climax, as well, shooting his seed inside her. As they both lay together, not moving, letting their orgasms fade away, Poseidon sighed in contentment then bent down and kissed

her. He slowly pulled himself out of her to settle next to her on the bed.

"Feel any different?" he asked as his eyes sparkled with the knowledge Beth was his.

Beth paused for a moment before she answered him. "I don't know if I feel any different. I'm just extremely happy—the happiest woman in the world."

Poseidon was about to answer her when he was interrupted by the sound of someone clearing their throat.

"Ahem. Excuse me there, kids," an invisible voice said.

Beth looked around to see where the voice was coming from, but she didn't see anyone else in the room.

"Hold on," Poseidon said, and suddenly, he and Beth were lying on her bed fully clothed. As they sat up, a man appeared at the foot of the bed dressed in black, head to toe, with short black hair and a neatly shaved goatee. She noticed that even his eyes were pitch black, and when he looked at her, all the hair on her arms stood up.

Poseidon took one look at the man and jumped up off the bed, laughing.

"Hey man, haven't seen you in ages! What's going on Hades?" Poseidon asked as he and the man hugged each other and patted each other on the back.

"Hey bro, heard you had some action here tonight and came to check it out," he joked as he was looking at Beth. "So, she's the one, huh? Rumour has it you called in all the favours for her to make her immortal, right? Gotta tell ya man, she's a pretty hot chickie," Hades teased smiling at Beth.

Poseidon reached for Beth's hand, and she stood up next to him. He put his arm around her waist, pulling her closer to him, and she placed her arm around his waist, her hand in his back pocket.

"Beth, this is my little brother Hades. Hades, this is Beth, and don't get any ideas about her 'cause I'd hate to have to kick your ass all over the place," Poseidon half-joked.

"Don't worry, bro. I've got my eye on someone I've been working on," Hades told him.

"Poor girl," Poseidon chuckled.

"Yeah, another mortal, too. It must run in the family," he quipped.

Beth looked at Hades in amazement. She now had two gods standing in her bedroom, talking about picking up women. Beth knew Hades was the god of the underworld, and death, so it was no wonder he had given her the chills when he'd appeared and looked at her. He was really very handsome and well built, but Beth thought he was scary. She knew she wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley, or a well lit alley for that matter.

"Well, first of all, Beth, welcome to the family," Hades said to her and smiled. When he let himself smile he was a lot less scary and definitely more handsome.

"Ummm, thank you," Beth said, a little nervous to be talking directly to him.

"So, now I take it you got some trash for me to pick up for you?" Hades asked as he looked around the room.

"Hold on a sec," Poseidon said as he moved from Beth and left the room. Beth and Hades just stood there looking at

each other. Beth gave him a nervous smile as they waited for Poseidon to return.

Poseidon came back with Michael flung over his shoulder then let him fall gracelessly to the floor at Hades' feet. Hades nudged Michael with his combat boot. "This is him, I take it?"

"I don't have to tell you, you should be able to sense it. The guy is evil, and all he's gonna do is hurt someone really bad or kill them. The world will be a better place without him," Poseidon explained.

Hades bent down to Michael and placed a hand on him. His expression changed, his brows knit together and he looked troubled. He stood up and looked back to Poseidon and Beth.

"Actually, I can tell you, if he's let loose, I can see he's going to become more and more violent and innocent lives will be lost," Hades told them.

Beth stood shocked at what Hades had told them, but at the same time, she believed Michael would turn to murder. She knew he needed to be dealt with and she looked down at him as he started to move on the floor.

"Looks like Sleeping Beauty is starting to wake up," Hades observed. "I think we should be going."

Hades went to Michael and knelt on the floor next to him.

"Who the hell are you?" Michael asked, looking at Hades.

"I'm your worst nightmare, man," Hades told him seriously then looked up at Poseidon and Beth. "Later on kids. Be good, and don't do anything I wouldn't do," he said with a grin, and he disappeared with Michael.

Poseidon and Beth were alone again.

"Are you okay with Michael going with my brother?" he asked as he turned towards her.

"After what Hades said, it sounds like the only solution," she agreed. She wanted to protect any lives Michael might have destroyed in the future.

Poseidon took Beth in his arms and kissed her.

"I just want to make sure you're okay with where he's going," Poseidon explained. "So, what would you like to do your first night being immortal?" he asked her. Anything she wanted to do, anything she suggested he would agree to, as long as they were together.

Beth turned from Poseidon and climbed back up on her bed and turned to face him as she knelt.

"Well, I'm thinking maybe we could do that clothes disappearing thing again," she suggested as she crooked her finger for him to come to bed.

Poseidon joined her, grinning like a fool, knowing Beth was going to adjust to being immortal just fine.

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## **About the Author**

Annmarie Ortega is a lifetime resident of Chicago, Illinois and loves the big city life. She is a part time student pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Fiction Writing. In the fall of 2005 Annmarie had her first short story published, and since then she has been published numerous times. She is a member of the RWA, along with their Chicago North, ESPAN, and Passionate Ink chapters as well. In her spare time she loves to spend time with her family and friends, read, and volunteer with fund raising at her oldest son's school.

Email: [annmarieauthor@aol.com](mailto:annmarieauthor@aol.com)

Annmarie loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at [www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com).

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