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Believing is Seeing

Corinne Davies

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DEDICATION

Tiffany, Maureen, Melissa and Paula. Thank you so much for your encouragement and friendship.

For my Chris. Thank you for all your support and encouragement and for doing *almost* all the cooking in our house. I love you, honey.

BELIEVING IS SEEING

CORINNE DAVIES

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Prologue

“He's going to destroy them.”

Hera, queen of the Olympian gods, rested her forehead against the cool windowpane. A delicate hand gripped the marble edging the opening. The other lightly touched the enchanted image next to her face, a single tear sliding down her pristine cheek. The vista beyond the window had been magically altered to overlook the war between the Trojans and her beloved Greeks. Death cries filled the air, as her faithful begged for the intervention she had been forbidden to give. Fingers curling into a fist, she forced herself to turn away. Silken, transparent robes fluttered over long, gently curved limbs of flawless peachy skin.

"If you do not help, they will not survive." Her hair swirled around her hips in a wave of spun straw as she strode across the marble floor toward her only hope of saving her favorite humans.

Reclining on a padded, ebony lounge Hypnos, the god of sleep, rested his hand on his bent knee. Jet-black hair curled over golden shoulders, stopping above a bare, sculpted chest. His coffee brown eyes narrowed, glaring at his queen. “And why is that my problem? I ensured his slumber once before so you could torment his son Herakles. As a result, I came much too close to being sodomized by a

lightning bolt.”

Hera flexed her fingers to stop from clenching them again. She refused to expose her frustration at his defiance, turning instead to the cloaked form leaning against a nearby wall, his form shrouded in darkness.

"Thanatos, talk to him!" Her icy facade of calmness slipped when she stomped her foot. "You're the only one he listens to. Tell him to do as I say."

Despite her demands, the large shadow didn't stir from his position. The chilling sensation of his black gaze sent a shiver along her spine, a silent refusal to her demand.

Hera growled in frustration, spinning on her heel to pace back and forth between the two men. "I told you I will wear him out. All I want is for you to make his sleep deep enough that he will not wake when I have Poseidon rally the warriors." Stopping her exasperated pacing, she turned back to Hypnos. "This time, I promise, he will never know you interfered."

Thanatos stepped away from the shadows, the darkness that concealed him melting away to reveal a god of heartbreaking beauty, except Death carried an aura that could unnerve even her.

"It's not worth the risk." Hypnos spoke quietly as Thanatos moved behind him and placed a hand on his shoulder. "To knowingly betray him a second time is suicide."

Thanatos's voice was deep and calm, but she knew he would protect Hypnos from even her. "If Zeus were to find out, there would be no hiding this time. He would do whatever he could to destroy Hypnos. What effect do you think that would have on the humans?"

"Fine then." Hera watched Thanatos lift a grape from a nearby dish and feed it to the other god. The energy such a simple act created vibrated the air around them. She knew the way each cared for the other. To gain the agreement she desired, both would have to be convinced.

Standing in the middle of her temple, hands on her lush hips, a smug smile curved her lips as she played her trump card. "I will give Pasithea to you. Will you do my bidding then?"

The men turned their heads simultaneously, both wearing an astounded look on their faces. "You swear?"

"Of course." Assuring them with an arrogant wave of her hand, she drifted back toward the open window. The winds of change gently lifted up the feather-light draperies, causing them to flutter softly before drifting back down into place.

"Swear on the Styx." Thanatos's low voice cut through her confidence like an icy knife.

As she wasn't looking directly at them, she curled her lips in frustrated anger. The audacity of him to demand an oath on their sacred river, ruining any opportunity for her to change her mind later. She dearly wanted to make their lives miserable for daring to defy her, but today desperation clouded her judgment. They knew it too.

Clenching her teeth together, her lips thinned as she forced a smile she did not feel. With a wave-like curl of her fingers, their surroundings melted away like hot wax, revealing the bank of the mythical river. She gracefully stepped from the marble floor of her sitting room onto plush green moss. The damp ground dipped with each footstep as she walked to its bank and lowered herself to her knees.

"As your queen, I swear that Pasithea, youngest of the Kahrites, goddess of relaxation and my daughter, shall be given to you for eternity upon your completion of my task."

Cupping her hands together she pierced its cold, black surface and scooped up the dark fluid, allowing it to trickle through her fingers as she spoke. A small pomegranate seed sat in her hand as evidence of her vow.

"Done."

Chapter 1

"Are you listening, love?"

Amaryllis Bitonu looked over her shoulder in the direction the gentle voice had come from. Her granny, Flora Daniel, had been in and out of consciousness for the last few days, drifting off mid-conversation only to wake up later not realizing that she had fallen asleep.

"Of course." Amy didn't want to upset her so she pretended never to notice. She turned from the hypnotizing view of sunbeams dancing along the lake's surface outside the window. Uncrossing her arms, she moved across the room to perch on the side of the hospital bed. "I'm listening. You had reached the part when Hera's plan to use Thanatos and Hypnos changed the outcome of the Trojan War. The goddess vowed on the Styx at the god's insistence." She gently patted the frail hand she had picked up off the emerald green blanket. Thin fingers, covered by transparent skin, so delicate compared to those that had cared for a huge vegetable garden for all those years.

"Oh, yes." Flora's expression softened. Shifting slightly, her arms shook with the effort to move. Amy got up and slipped an arm behind the older woman's shoulders, assisting her into a sitting position. After fluffing the pillows behind her, Amy helped her rest back against them.

"So Hypnos did what Hera wanted. The goddess led her husband to a mountain, and true to her word, she seduced him. When Zeus fell asleep in her arms, Hypnos arrived and sprinkled water from the Lethe River in his eyes, causing the king of the gods to slip into a

deep slumber. Poseidon then marched up and down the ranks inspiring the Greek warriors with his battle cries. By the time Zeus woke up, the tide had turned, so to speak, and his mighty Trojans defeated."

Flora paused, reaching a trembling hand for a drink. Amy quickly grabbed the glass of juice from the night table and held the straw still for her to drink from. Once finished, Flora leaned back with a sigh.

"Would you like to rest a bit?" Amy returned the glass to the side table. If only she could do more to help her with the pain. She had left her job as a nurse to come home and take care of the most important person in her life, a fact she had allowed herself to be sidetracked from. She wished she had never chosen a medical career because then she wouldn't completely understand what little could be done at this point to help.

She tried to keep Flora in her own home as long as possible but knew when she could no longer take care of her by herself. After her first tour of Elysian House, Amy knew it would be perfect. The rooms in palliative care were cheery and bright, with large throw pillows and chenille blankets in rich jewel tones on the beds. All medical equipment was hidden behind warm oak cabinets, making the room look more like a bedroom than a hospital.

"No, not yet, sweetheart. As you well know, the story ends there or makes a comment to the effect that Hypnos escaped Zeus's notice. What I've never told you before is that there is more. Zeus is the god of the gods. Of course he found out and his fury was directed at Hypnos for betraying him again. He wanted to make an example of him for what he considered the ultimate wrong, by forbidding the union that Hera had promised. Thanatos stepped forward, stating that he had nothing to do with their plotting, demanding that Hera's vow be honored."

Flora's words painted an ominous ending to the tale.

“But even Zeus can’t break a vow sworn on the Styx. Can he?” Amy had never been told this ending to her favorite bedtime story and wanted to know more.

“A vow on the River Styx is one that cannot be broken. Knowing full well the men were close, Zeus wasn’t about to willingly hand her over to Thanatos. He had to allow his wife to give the men the one creature that they had wanted since the beginning of time. Only after, he delivered a crushing punishment. Poor Pasithea paid for Hypnos’s crime. Zeus pushed her into the Lethe River, erasing her memory of everything, including the men who loved her. And with a blast of one of his lightning bolts, he destroyed her.”

A chill scuttled over Amy’s shoulders, sending a rush of goose-bumps down her arms. She shivered looking around the homey room wondering where the breeze had come from. The dark, solid door to the hallway remained closed, and the large windows had been opened a bit to let in some fresh air. That sparked a memory that made her smile. Growing up, there was always a window open somewhere in the house. It could be the middle of the winter and Flora would insist on letting in some fresh air.

“What happened then?” Amy gently pulled the soft, airy chenille blanket up a bit higher on the old woman’s chest. Not all of Granny Flora’s stories had happy endings. Like life, sometimes the lessons are learned through death. But this one she found particularly disturbing.

“Thank you, dear.” Flora patted the blanket before resting her arms on it. “Oh, um, nothing I’m afraid. Poor Hypnos and Thanatos were devastated but by then nothing could be done. I’ve often wondered if that heralded the beginning of the end of Zeus’s relationship with Hera. If a man ever destroyed one of my children, you had better believe I would have his guts for garters.”

The sudden flash of life that sparked in her eyes faded, and she glanced warily around the room before fixating on a spot over Amy’s

left shoulder. “I’ve known for a while that it’s time, but I had hoped to spend some more time with you. He’ll be coming for me soon.”

“Who?” Amy looked back behind her, trying to figure out what caught her granny’s attention. Nothing that she could see other than the poster of Monet’s *Water Lilies* that she had hung on the wall at the end of the bed. It had always been Flora’s favorite painting.

“Thanatos. Death. I don’t think I am ready. Now is not the best time to be second-guessing myself, but what if my beliefs were wrong? What if I end up damned for something that has felt right all my life?”

Amy leaned forward to brush a soft curl off the old woman’s forehead. “I honestly do not believe that there is one true religion. I believe that it all has to do with faith. If you believe, then you are right. No one can tell you different.”

A pair of shrewd eyes took her measure before deciding whether to believe her or not. That look, Amy had learned over the years meant her granny had listened to her and would decide for herself. This is why she had left her job as a nurse to be here. Amy would walk through fire if it meant she could help her granny.

She had no idea how much her life would change the day she stood on this woman’s doorstep so many years ago. Amy could still recall looking up at the door of yet another foster home, a sick feeling in her stomach, as her young mind formulated another plan to run away. Dull, blonde hair hung limp around her face, and she watched her life being decided for her from behind uncut bangs. The thin, ragged-looking ten-year-old had long before decided to hate the world that she believed hated her, an aura she managed to stubbornly maintain for all of about two weeks.

Flora had announced she didn’t allow those types of negative feelings in her home, as it threw off the natural vibrations inside and made the house terribly nervous. The only cure, homemade baklava made from a secret recipe. According to the eccentric old lady, it had been handed down to her from a band of Gypsies that she lived with

and she would teach Amaryllis how to make it. Piquing a young imagination created a magic of its own, and by the time they sat down to devour their creation, Amy was hoping that she could stay a little while. From that afternoon on, the older woman became more of an eccentric granny to her than merely another foster mother.

The older woman looked over at the water lily poster and a small smile curled her lips. "My time is coming," she said simply and laid her head back against the pillows, then closed her eyes before quickly opening them again. "You do believe, don't you? Amaryllis? Please tell me you believe."

"Of course I do. We can talk more about it tomorrow if you'd like."

Flora smiled softly, similar to the way a child does when she's fighting sleep. She rubbed her eyes with the back of her hand. "I would like that. I'll miss our talks. Now remember, if something happens, don't let them use all that bloody machinery on me. Much too violent. The last thing I want is to attract the Keres."

"I promise." Amy's voice felt strained by the tears clogging her throat. *This can't be happening already, not yet please.* She had been watching the monitors and saw the declining vital signs. Earlier in the day the nurses had turned down the volume. No one needed to hear the mechanical sound of their own death. She lightly stroked a finger down the side of her granny's face, almost afraid she would hurt the tissue paper skin. Somehow she knew that when Flora drifted off to sleep this time, she wasn't going to wake up. She had thought they would have forever to catch up for the time she wasted while in a relationship with Geoff.

She never revealed the details of her choices with Geoff. Granny Flora never did like him and tried her best to talk Amy out of moving in with him. Too bad she didn't listen. The few times they spoke on the phone, Amy would avoid any questions about him if he came up in conversation.

In the beginning Geoff acted so sweetly, telling her he was concerned for her safety. He didn't want her to make the long drive to see Granny by herself. They would go together, as soon as he got a couple days off work. Soon it was asking why did she wear so much makeup. He loved her as is, she didn't want to get anyone else's attention did she? As time passed he became more and more demanding and controlling. Frightening her on more than one occasion. It escalated to the point where one night he threatened to kill her. That warning bell she didn't ignore and she left him. If only she had done it sooner.

An alarm must have sounded at the nurses' station because the door opened with a soft whoosh. A woman wearing a brightly-colored uniform and silent shoes came in to check the printouts. She gazed sympathetically at Amy. "Is she sleeping?"

Amy couldn't do anything but nod.

"Good. It's better this way. She will never know. She's a special lady."

"Yes, she is. She told me she doesn't want any resuscitation."

The nurse nodded. "She told us that too. Made it very clear, something about it being too tempting?"

"The Keres. They're mythical creatures with a woman's head on a vulture's body. According to Greek mythology they can be the cause behind a violent death." she explained.

The nurse patted Amy's shoulder sympathetically. "It makes sense then. She told me that Thanatos is a hottie and when she goes she wants a good looker to walk with her."

Amy sniffed, a tear escaping out the corner of her eye. "That sounds like her."

She sat there for the next hour and watched her foster mother sleep.

Death did come for her, but Amy didn't see anyone. She wasn't certain when the frail, labored breathing had stopped. The end came so peacefully. She kissed the hand that had cared for her for so many

years. Unwilling to let go yet, she rested her head on the bed next to it. An aching emptiness expanded in her chest, robbing her of the ability to breathe correctly. Tears burned her eyes but didn't fall.

She didn't realize much time had passed before she became conscious of the fact that she was no longer alone. She never heard any telltale whooshing of the door or the squeaking of shoes that always heralded a person's arrival. Her emotions felt muted and she didn't think she had the ability to be concerned about it. It was easier to accept it.

A deep and gentle voice finally spoke from behind her. "You need to let her go."

For a brief, insane moment she thought perhaps Death had appeared and if she fought hard enough, she could bring her granny back. "I don't know if I can."

"Here take my hand." She felt a large hand against her back, and then his open palm came into view. She slipped her hand from her tight hold on her granny's fingers and placed it in his.

He helped her to stand and she moved against him. She noticed the ID badge pinned to the bottom of his white shirt. She wouldn't be able to fight for her Granny after all. Unless, Death had taken a job as an orderly. The tears broke free, making hot trails down her cheeks. He engulfed her in a tight embrace and allowed her to sob all over the front of his scrubs, holding her until the tears subsided into hiccups. She lifted her face from his chest.

"I'm sorry about that," she said, swiping at her cheeks with the heel of her hand before he passed her a tissue.

"Grief is nothing to apologize for."

"But I soaked the front of your shirt." She wiped at her eyes and blinked up at him. The room's shadows prevented her from getting a very good look at his features. "Are you new around here? I thought I knew everyone."

"I just help out here when I'm needed, Pasithea."

"It's Amy."

“Sorry, Amy. I overheard it earlier and thought it was yours.” He wrapped an arm around her shoulders and led her out of the room.

“My granny used to tell me stories about Olympus.”

“They have always been my favorite as well.”

One of the night nurses came up at that point and Amy found herself wrapped in a warm embrace while soft murmurs of condolence echoed around her. She thanked the nurse for everything she had done and then turned to thank the man who allowed her to make a mess of his shirt, but he had already left.

* * * *

Dressed in a white shirt and black denim jeans, baseball cap on backward, Hypnos, the god of sleep, shifted his weight to his back foot and glared at the creature standing before him. He swung a large aluminum bat. A split second later the ball thunked into a mitt behind him.

“Fuck, they make it look so easy. What am I doing wrong?” For a brief moment, he almost gave into a childish display of temper and whipped the bat into one of the poppy bushes that decorated the grounds around his home.

“Missssssing the ball?”

Hypnos glared at the oddly-shaped demon in front of him and resisted. Forget the poppy bushes. He would launch this thing into the Lethe River.

“I found her.”

A perfect distraction. He turned to admire the god who strode toward him. A shiver of awareness danced over his skin. At times it amazed him how much attraction he still felt toward Thanatos. Considering most creatures shied away from the god of death, he couldn’t get enough of him.

Thanatos gave the snake-like creature a pointed look. “Leave us.”

It bowed and then disappeared in a puff of sulphuric smoke.

“Found who?” Hypnos adjusted his footing and practiced his swing again, rolling his hips with a bit more enthusiasm. If he couldn’t connect with that damn ball then he would try to encourage a more pleasurable connection. Before he could swing a second time, the other god grabbed the bat away and embraced him. He felt the uncharacteristic trembling to Thanatos’s arm and that grabbed his attention.

“Pasithea. She’s alive,” Thanatos whispered against his ear.

Hypnos blinked in surprise, and he gripped the arms around him. “She can’t be. Zeus destroyed her, remember?”

Fearing for his lover and best friend’s sanity, Hypnos gripped his hand and led him to a nearby bench. “Sit down”

“I don’t want to. Let’s go get her.” He tossed the bat toward a poppy bush. It vanished like the briefest of thoughts.

Turning, Hypnos laid his hands on Thanatos’s upper arms, resting his forehead against the other man’s. “Than, Pasithea’s long gone. You know that.”

“I thought so too, but tonight I saw her. She’s alive. I know it’s her.”

“Okay, start from the beginning.” Hypnos pulled the ball cap off and tossed it aside, concerned that his companion had done something drastic. The worst would be if Thanatos had decided to do the backstroke in the Lethe. Except, the river would have stripped him of every memory, not just a select few.

“Before you ask, no, I haven’t lost my mind. There was a soul that needed my attention tonight.”

“Personally?”

“Yes, an old woman. Flora Daniel. She’s one of the few humans who still believe in us.”

“All right. And you think she is Pasithea?”

“No, Pasithea sat with her when she died. When I arrived to escort her soul, there’s our goddess sitting next to her bed. I don’t know

how, but she's human now. You should have seen her. She looks exactly the same."

"Than, I can't see how it could be possible. What did the old woman say? You did ask about the girl, didn't you?"

"Of course. Pasithea was adopted as a child. She made me promise to keep an eye on her."

"Well, I guess it's possible that somehow Zeus didn't destroy her." Hypnos backed up, needing the space to think. Even after all the centuries together, Thanatos could still sidetrack him, even at times like these.

"She's alive. All these centuries, he's been fucking with us."

"That I can believe."

"Good. Then let's go get her." Thanatos stepped forward and slid his arm around Hypnos's shoulders. "I don't want to wait another minute."

"Thanatos, if she doesn't believe in us then she won't be able to see us."

"Then make a suggestion. Don't stand there contradicting everything."

Hypnos didn't like the look of desperation in Death's gaze. Why all of a sudden did this mean so much to him? Pasithea? After all this time, he could see the situation more objectively. The goddess they'd lost had been a bitch most of the time. Pampered and spoiled like the rest of them.

At the time, she had been a means to conquer Zeus. Their joined powers would have had a multiplying effect, each complimenting and supporting the other. The whole would be stronger than the self. Pasithea, the goddess of relaxation, acted as a natural bridge between sleep and death.

"Thanatos, just think about this for a second. Do you want her, or the power that it might bring us both?"

"You don't like that idea? Nos, you loved her."

“But she didn’t love you.” He cupped the other man’s face. Yes, he had loved Pasithea, but nothing came close to how he felt about this man.

“We’ve changed since then. She might have as well.” Thanatos stepped closer and Hypnos slipped his hands from his jaw to his chest.

He didn’t have anything against inviting a third into their bed, but into their relationship? He wouldn’t allow anyone to hurt Thanatos, any more than he already hurt. Being the embodiment of death meant that every living creature took a wide berth when he was near.

“Why now? Tell me. What is it you’re looking for?”

“I’m tired of being feared.” Thanatos avoided making eye contact.

Hypnos long suspected that the human race’s ongoing desire to cheat death would have an effect on Thanatos. He had never heard him admit it before. He gathered Thanatos closer and kissed him, doing his best to remind him how much he cared for him.

“How do you think we are going to get her to see us? Ask for help?”

Thanatos brightened and a rare smile curled his lips. “She saw me tonight, spoke to me, allowed me to hold her as she grieved.”

“She saw you as you truly are? Death?”

“No. She thought I worked at the hospice.”

“Damn. You know as well as I do if she doesn’t believe that we are gods then she won’t see us as such. We would be the same as any other man who approached her. Only, if we try to tell her who we really are she’ll think we’re crazy.”

“What about her dreams?”

“What about them?”

“What if we enter her dreams? If we tell her there who we truly are, would she recognize that in the living world?”

“I’ve never thought about it. Depends, if she believes in her dreams.”

“Fuck. Why does our existence depend on the belief of humans?”

“Because without their faith, we never would have come into being in the first place.”

Thanatos shot his friend a withering look. “I know that.”

“I guess we should be thankful that the human race still needs sleep and death.”

* * * *

Amy convinced herself that she had prepared for this moment. It had been three months since the day Granny had called and told her she was sick. Everything had been taken care of. Unfortunately, she and Granny Flora had less time together than they originally thought. A sharp, panicked pain radiated in her chest. She had reached a turning point in her life. *Which way to go now?*

This question had been in the far reaches of her mind for the last couple months but now had rushed to the forefront, followed swiftly by a wealth of insecurities. Alone, an orphan again, her only sense of security was the house she had grown up in. She could try to go back to her ex but that would be a giant step backward. Having jumped from bad relationship to bad relationship, afraid to be alone for any length of time when she was younger, Geoff had come into her life and had completely taken over. Because of that she had lost years she could have shared with Flora. She might have broken from that destructive habit, but the insecurities never went away.

Kicking off her heels, she wandered through the house, touching the small knick-knacks, the ethereal and romantic pictures, and anything that reminded her of her granny. She ended up in the living room next to the wall of books, old musty first editions and clean, crisp, new stories of wizard children. She pulled out an antique copy of Homer’s *Iliad* and held it close to her chest as she automatically locked up before heading up to bed. This little volume had been one of Flora's favorites. Now, worn and dog-eared with little notes written

in the margins, it was a small important piece of someone she loved. Amy left the book on her night table before heading to the bathroom.

She was emotionally exhausted, but mentally she still rode a rollercoaster. The shower's hot water pounding down on her shoulders helped relax her a bit but hadn't eased her thoughts any. Glancing in the bathroom mirror revealed, to her surprise, many similarities in her reflection to the ragged ten-year-old that first moved into the house. With her makeup washed off the delicate skin beneath her eyes looked bruised from lack of sleep. She appeared and felt bone-tired. The straight, dirty blonde hair of her youth had matured into a darker shade. Her dark, curly hair emphasized her pale skin, and angular bone structure. Stepping on the scales proved that she made it down to the weight she had always thought she wanted to be. Now she wished she had it back. All the time wasted on worrying about her physical appearance, yet she would trade it all for family. Disgusted with herself and her self-centeredness, she went back into her room and crawled between crisp, cotton sheets. Lying in bed, Amy reread the parts about Hypnos's deal with Hera. In this edition Hypnos and Pasithea lived happily ever after. That didn't really exist. They were fairy tales like any other.

Flora's earlier concerns filled her thoughts as she settled down under the covers, the small book clutched tightly to her chest as if to protect herself from heavy feelings of guilt. She had told Flora what she wanted to hear, but in truth, Amy didn't believe in anything, and hadn't for a very long time. How could there be gods and goddesses if nothing changed, if life went on in the technological wonder they lived in? There wasn't any real magic left in the world anymore. It was all sleight of hand, smoke and mirrors.

Amy tossed and turned for what felt like hours, staring at the ceiling between bouts of sobbing at the profound sense of loss that hung heavy in her chest. Flora had been so sick Amy couldn't help but feel relief that she had passed on. Waves of guilt due to insensitivity battered at her. What kind of person felt happy to see her

granny die? But then, how could she not be, knowing that Flora had escaped the pain of her disease?

The dawn started to color the sky a dark purple when she drifted off into slumber, seeking solace from her pounding headache and sore eyes. Unsettled emotions followed her into the dreaming. Obscure and garbled images overlaid with splashes of violent color pulsed through her dream world with frightening intensity. Faces loomed out of corners, objects grew to immense proportions, fear and terror clutched at her heart and throat. It all started to whirl around her. Abruptly, she found herself next to a velvet curtain, watching it be pulled aside by an invisible hand.

Expecting the worst, she tentatively stepped through, only to discover a beautiful meadow on the other side. The grass, an incredible rich green, felt soft and springy between her bare toes. The sun blazed high in the sky as puffy, white clouds drifted across it every once in a while. She didn't feel overheated or the tingling on her skin that warned of an impending burn. Quite the opposite. It felt warm and washed a peaceful feeling straight through her. She took a few tentative steps before turning around. The darkness she escaped had disappeared. Patches of wildflowers dotted the green horizon like splashes of paint, and in the distance a soft flute and harp played a lively tune. The music seemed to float on the floral breeze, making it almost impossible to figure out from which direction it came.

Amy stood there for a moment, taking in her surroundings, while wondering which direction to go. An extraordinary sense of awareness prickled over her skin, and with it came the surreal realization that she stood within a dream. In a few hours she would wake up. All her trials of real life would then flood back, but for now she knew she could enjoy this bit of paradise guilt-free.

Reveling in the sweet feeling of freedom, Amy twirled around with her eyes closed until she felt a bit dizzy and disoriented and thoroughly confused as to which direction she faced when she started. She opened her eyes and walked in the direction she now looked. Her

steps were a bit faulty until she regained her equilibrium. Stopping here and there to pick wildflowers, she braided them as she walked. Another quick look around reassured her that this playground remained hers alone. She placed the floral wreath on her head and continued on her way, occasionally skipping, other times walking serenely. She couldn't remember feeling so at ease, a peacefulness that came from a lack of worry or pain. A light breeze danced over her skin bringing with it the scent of forests and wildflowers.

"Now this is how I remember you."

Startled, Amy jumped and quickly turned in the direction of the voice. From out of nowhere, a large bed made of grape vines and curled branches had appeared in a crop of trees. The sunlight dappled over emerald sheets and the body of the large man lying across it. His head was supported with one hand while the other hung off the edge of the mattress.

"Hello, Pasithea." A deep voice and grin, the most sensual she had ever seen. Broad, tanned shoulders tapered down to a narrow waist. From where she stood she could see the muscles hugging his torso. The silk sheet rustled softly as he shifted to his side, giving her a peek at his mouth-watering washboard stomach. He wore nothing but a pair of white satin sleep-pants. Her gaze followed his torso up his smooth chest and flat nipples to a strong jaw and a pair of full lips that curled up in a sensual grin. She blinked and met a pair of eyes, a deep warm chestnut brown, twinkling with mischief. Hair like black satin with a hint of silver that glinted when the sun hit it, curled around his face and draped over a shoulder.

"Did you miss me?"

"Miss you? I don't even know you." She laughed softly, still amazed to have a man that looked like this in her dream.

"I believe you mean to say you don't remember us." Another masculine voice sounded right behind her. Amy whipped around. She suddenly found herself only steps away from the bed and couldn't remember walking toward it.

Another man stood behind her, dressed in black with a loose robe that hung open. Taller than she, he had a strong jaw and angled features. He looked like the kind orderly who had held her as she sobbed. His features were more angular than the man lying on the bed. His straight black hair ended below his jaw, the sun creating blue highlights around his face. He, too, had wide shoulders and a muscular chest that tapered to a rippled stomach. She remembered how safe she felt in his arms, her cheek resting against his chest. A soft dusting of dark hair trailed under a pair of black satin pants hanging low on his hips, low enough that she could make out the satiny skin where it dipped from his hip to the top of his thigh. A slight twitching beneath the material had her gasping in shock that he'd noticed her staring. She could feel her cheeks heating up, the warmth spreading down her neck. Her gaze flew to his face.

"You never used to blush. I like this change." His voice slid over her skin like a caress, crinkling her nipples beneath her nightgown and making her tummy clench.

"I've always blushed." At the moment, as though she stood in front of a huge bonfire, her blush might expand to her toes. Perhaps she should get a few steps away from the bed. Too bad her legs had declared mutiny against her common sense.

"By the Styx, we have missed you," the man on the bed commented as he gracefully rolled into a sitting position. Slipping off the edge, he stepped closer to her.

Her heart pounded faster in anticipation. A shiver danced across her shoulders and down her arms. The intense look he wore on his face had her moving back. Not out of fear, out of uncertainty. A large hand pressed against her lower back, preventing her from retreating more than a step. She jumped nervously and looked over her shoulder.

The man behind her slid his hands around her waist, thumbs pressing against her hip bones. His fingers caressed the material of her nightie. "You never used to wear sleepwear either."

Overwhelmed by their presence and the way she reacted to them, she slipped out from his grip. A part of her mentally voiced her objection to moving too far away. Her arm waved in an agitated sweep. “This is a dream. You are part of my subconscious.” Her voice lilted up at the end making the firm statement sound more like a question.

To be truthful, she rarely dreamt of men at all and certainly not men of their caliber. Not from a lack of trying, but the men that she conjured in her dreams never seemed to have sex on the brain. These two oozed it from their dreamy pores. She felt like she was about to be devoured, which made her jumpy and nervous, an irrational feeling since she knew she was dreaming. Why not just relax and enjoy?

The man in front of her stepped closer. He lightly caressed her cheek with the back of his fingers. “Pasithea, we knew you over twenty-five hundred years ago, and it’s been such a long time. Wanna get naked and we’ll show you how much we’ve missed you?”

Chapter 2

A loud sigh and eye roll from the man in black accompanied that outrageous comment. “Nos, you are about as subtle as a Mack truck.”

The man in front of her grinned with a flirtatious wink.

Amy stammered and stepped backward a bit. “What the hell is wrong with me? Besides the fact that going at it with two men has its attraction, it’s much higher on the kink scale than I go.”

Hypnos straightened as if offended. “I don’t do kink. That’s his department.” He nodded his head in Thanatos’s direction.

“Oh, I get it!” Understanding brought a sense of distracted relief. In this dream, her brain had simply interwoven parts of Granny Flora’s story.

“Let me guess. You are Thanatos and Hypnos, the gods of death and sleep, respectively. I am Pasithea, the goddess who took the brunt of punishment for your stupidity.”

“I wasn’t stupid. I had the best of intentions, so we all could be together.” Hypnos glared at Than, whose lips twitched in humor.

“Yeah, and you thought you would get away with it? Making Zeus sleep deeper than he should have, when he would have pretty much controlled the universe at the time?”

A warm hand wrapped around hers and she watched as Thanatos lifted it up to his plush lips. “You do remember. Hypnos and I feared that being pushed into the Lethe destroyed your memory.”

“I remember stories that my granny told me.” She hesitated for a moment and narrowed her eyes at the man holding her hand, which

she snatched away when the realization of to whom she spoke dawned on her.

“Thanatos?” Her eyes flashed “If you are who you say, then you took Granny Flora tonight.” Which explained why he looked like the man at the hospice. The sky overhead filled with darkening clouds. The soft breeze picked up until it whipped around them, ice cold.

“Would you rather she died a violent death?” Hypnos came up behind the man she glared at, standing to the side of his shoulder. He looked angry at her, as if he had a right.

Amy narrowed her eyes at each of them, taking a step back. The feelings of anger and pain she had tried to escape through sleep hammered against her emotions. “I would rather she not have gotten sick. I would rather she not have died at all!”

The darkening clouds above raced over them at a dizzying speed. “This is my dream. I control it. Go away,” she snapped. Tears clouded her eyes as she stepped back away from them. She longed for the calm that reigned when she had first arrived. This could quickly turn into another nightmare, out of her control. The grass below their feet darkened and the colors drained from their surroundings, leaving everything stark and gray.

“We stay.” Hypnos’s white pants stood out in sharp contrast to the world around them as he crossed his arms over his wide chest and assumed a stubborn stance. “You aren’t the one in control here.”

“The closest person to me died today. I am not in the mood for some psycho-induced dream sequence.” That is what this had to be, an erratic dream created by her overemotional subconscious. She would happily wake up now to escape it. “Why don’t both of you leave and I’ll wake up.”

A pair of hands rested on her shoulders as the one who had claimed the identity of Thanatos came up behind her. “Pasihea, Flora had slipped into a deep enough sleep. She never felt her heart stop. She crossed peacefully into my arms. How could I resist escorting such an extraordinary woman to the Elysian Fields myself? She made

me promise we would come to you, to let you know that the pain is gone.”

Amy tried to shake the hands off her shoulders, but they wouldn't budge.

Hypnos stepped in front of her, catching her hands in his. “It was her time.” He leaned down to brush a gentle kiss against her forehead.

“I didn't want her to go yet. I am all alone now!”

“You have us back,” Thanatos commented behind her

“Oh goody, two dream men.” Embarrassed by her bitchiness, she tried to temper her tone. “Thank you, but I would trade the two of you for one real one. One that truly cared about me.”

Thanatos gently eased her back against him, wrapping his arms around her shoulders. Amy reluctantly allowed him to comfort her. It was fast becoming apparent that she didn't have any control over this dream so she might as well go with the flow till she woke up. Hypnos followed suit, stepping forward and joining the embrace. The two of them protected her from the bitterness of the wind around them.

“Pasithea...”

“That's not my name. It's Amy or Amaryllis.” If her dream kept going this way, she wanted to hear her own name, not that of a long gone goddess.

“Little flower, one would never be enough for you.”

Amy stood between the two men feeling petite. At five foot ten, she hadn't experienced such an unusual feeling before. The hands on her shoulders gently kneaded, as another pair slid over her ribs and down her back in soothing circles. Sighing, she could feel the anger and sadness drain out of her. The winds calmed down and the clouds dissipated until it seemed as though the storm had never happened. Color flooded back into the world around them, seeming so much more intense after her eyes had become accustomed to the gray.

She would have commented on the weather, but when she lifted her face and opened her mouth to talk, a pair of lips gently brushed against her own. “Let us take care of you.”

“This is a dream.” The thought floated down to subdue the rising nervousness.

“If you would just believe, it could be so much more,” Hypnos gently kissed her shoulder, his words a soft caress against the sensitive skin under her ear.

“But I don’t know where to start.”

“Then look at me, Amy.” A finger pressed gently on the underside of her chin, tilting her head. She looked over her shoulder and up into Death’s warm, chestnut eyes. Hypnos took advantage of her arched neck to slide his satiny lips along it.

“A lifetime ago, you called us Nos and Than. Why don’t you start there?”

“Okay, I guess. It does sound more approachable than your full names.”

“You said that before as well.” Thanatos cupped her cheek and brushed his lips across hers.

“I wish I could believe you, but I’m just plain old me.”

Gentle fingers stroked her arched neck, moving up to cup her jaw, and gently turned her head so she could look at her other lover. “Pasithea, you have never been plain. Now please close your eyes and let us take care of you.”

She couldn’t be a goddess. She distinctly remembered her childhood, as much as she wished she could forget most of it. Growing up with an addict for a mother, despite her best intentions, meant that Amy grew up quickly. She had been exposed to too much and had been shoved in closets by her mother and told to keep quiet. She remembered holding her hands over her ears, wishing for silence, wishing that she couldn’t hear the grunting and slaps that went on, wishing she couldn’t hear the male voice making demands for her own young body. Her mother had finally taken a beating that caused her death. Yes, her mother had been an addict, but she had loved her daughter in her own way.

As an adult, Amy understood that it was a matter of time before her mother's addiction would have overridden her love, and that, if not for Flora, she would have ended up a statistic, another child of addiction who grew up to follow in her mother's footsteps.

"Stop whatever negative thought just crept into that beautiful mind of yours." Thanatos was looking right at her when she opened her eyes. *How did he know?* "All of that is for the waking world and has nothing to do with us right now. Worry about it later."

Feeling her heart rate jump nervously and another wave of heat pool in her lower tummy, she agreed. Flora would never have begrudged her a bit of guilt-free dream sex. She laid her head back against Thanatos's chest with a gentle sigh and lifted her hands so that they rested on Hypnos's shoulders. Her simple gesture drew a matching growl out of both men. The sound vibrated through her body, crinkling her nipples. Hypnos's hand slid up her body and lightly pinched them through the material of her nightgown.

Hypnos lowered his head, his breath heating her flesh as he spoke. "Oh, sweet goddess, they feel perfect. Tell me, Amy, are they bright pink, or a dark rose? Do they taste as good as they feel?"

She shivered and gripped Hypnos's shoulders, her knees feeling slightly weak.

Thanatos's hand tightened around her waist, giving her the support she needed. She felt herself wrapped in a cocoon of male strength and then lifted from the ground.

Her eyes fluttered open at her sudden change in position, but Thanatos's deep voice crooned in her ear. "Shh. You are safe, our goddess."

He laid her down on a pillow-soft bed. A pair of lips brushed hers, teasing before gently nipping at her lower lip, begging entrance. Amy hesitated for a moment. Despite her earlier predictions of this being a complete nightmare, this was the most erotic dream of her life, and she didn't have a clue what to do.

“You don’t need to do anything. We’ll take care of it all. Lie back and relax. Feel again, Amy,” Thanatos’s deep voice whispered in her ear and reassured her.

Did she speak out loud? She didn’t remember speaking. The confusion drifted away, her lips treated to a deeply erotic kiss. The fabric of her nightgown tickled her skin as she felt it slowly dragged up her legs. Every satiny inch bared preluded a soft kiss to her heated skin. Uncertain, she pressed her legs tightly together.

“Shh. Close your eyes again. Trust yourself. Trust us. You know you’re safe.” This time Hypnos’s voice lulled her. Her eyes fluttered closed and she took a deep breath trying to relax. The delicate touch of Hypnos’s breath caressed her cheek before his lips traced the length of her jaw and down her neck. He slowly began to unbutton her nightgown. He pressed his lips against every bit of flesh he uncovered pausing his explorations when he exposed her breasts.

She automatically moved to cover herself, but he caught her hands in his larger ones and gently pressed them back against the bed.

“Let us see you. You’re so beautiful, Pasithea,” Thanatos urged.

She looked up to find Thanatos’s face above hers. Heat and lust echoed in his direct gaze, reassuring her he believed her beautiful. A quick glance downward and she found herself treated to the sight of a gorgeous man licking her nipple before drawing it into his mouth. She gasped, blushed, but couldn’t tear her eyes away from such an erotic view.

“Voyeuristic tendencies, sweet flower? That’s good to know,” Thanatos whispered into her hair. She could feel herself blush at the truth in his words. It didn’t stop her from watching Hypnos caress her breasts. “But not today, my sweet. We would rather you concentrate on your own feelings for a while.”

Thanatos pulled a black silk scarf out from behind a pillow. He didn’t say anything as he waited for her decision. She glanced down and looked at the man currently resting a cheek against her naked breast, waiting.

She bit her lower lip as she thought about it, then nodded, amazed at what a simple gesture could do to them. Both men's eyes darkened with passion. Thanatos sucked in a sharp breath. He slowly unraveled the scarf and draped it over her eyes, securing it behind her head.

She lay there, a mass of nerves and emotions. Blinded by the silk, she was much more aware of the sensations that she felt as each man took turns nipping and kissing her lips as the other played with her breasts. Her body had never felt so alive, as if the men knew exactly what would increase her heartbeat, make her moan, flood her body with tingling heat. Soon she writhed beneath them, making demands of her own.

They shifted positions and she was pulled back against a hard chest, her hands rested on the thighs bracketing her own. She felt a hard penis pressing against her spine. By the feel, thick and long and larger than any others she had been in contact with. A spurt of nervousness fizzed, then disappeared as arms wrapped around her, pressing and kneading her breasts, kissing her neck, whispering hot and erotic things in her ear.

One of them pressed hot, damp, kisses against her skin, trailing his way up her inner legs, interchanging his lips with soft pinches that heightened her nerves and feelings. She allowed him to nudge her legs apart as she pressed back against the torso supporting her. Strong hands gently urged her legs over the pair she sat between. She could feel the heat rush to her face when she thought of how she must look to them. Her legs wide open and draped over another man's gave them both a clear view of every part of her.

A hot breath on her curls, her only warning before a broad tongue pressed against her aching clit. The creamy flesh swelled and throbbed. She gasped out loud. Her fingers gripped the thighs on either side of her hips. Her embarrassment burned away as white hot pleasure traveled along every nerve.

"Oh my gods!" she cried out with another pass of his tongue through her slippery folds.

A low chuckle in her ear caused shivers to run along her limbs as they increased the attention to her breasts and nipples. At the same time a long finger pressed inside her and she bucked her hips in response. Her body was being played like a finely tuned instrument and she couldn't help but react as they wished. A passion she never knew existed swelled within her, as another digit joined his first. He stroked deeply, pressing against her tight passage with each pass. His tongue swirled around her nub and teased the sensitive flesh with his teeth and tongue. He pumped his fingers within her in rhythm to the massaging of her breasts.

Her hips jerked. Her body demanded more. She no longer knew whose hands belonged to whom, or where she ended and they began. It was all a swirling vortex of feelings that whisked her away in its power. She couldn't fight it, nor did she want to. "Please. Please." She cried out. Her pelvis jerked up and she trembled. Demanding. Pleading.

She wildly reached out for the head between her legs, tangling her fingers in his hair. With her other hand she pulled the blindfold from her eyes. She didn't want to only feel, she wanted to see what they were doing to her. After throwing the silk off to the side, she reached behind her and gripped Thanatos's shoulder. A low chuckle vibrated along her neck just before he nipped at the delicate skin beneath her ear. She could feel him stroking himself behind her, the hot tip of his cock pressing up between their bodies.

A mass of black hair lay scattered over her lap and tummy. Her hips pumped against Hypnos's face. His fingers held her nether lips apart, allowing his tongue easy access to her clit. He flicked the sensitive nubbin, sending white hot flashes through her. Between her legs, Hypnos also stroked himself.

They both gained as much pleasure out of her reaction as she did theirs. The musky tang of their combined arousal hung in the air. The sounds of panting and groaning and her higher pitched moans created a symphony. Her entire body seized up, and she screamed out in

pleasure. Hypnos pinned her legs down and Thanatos hugged her tightly as they rode out her orgasm. Hypnos continued his attentions to her body and ignited another intense rush from the depths of her soul. She vaguely felt a warm wetness splash up her back.

Falling back in a boneless, exhausted heap, a pair of strong arms caught her. She felt lifted and shifted, a warm cloth cleaning her gently, and then snuggled between two hard bodies. Cocooned in warmth and safety, she drifted off.

* * * *

The sun's rays felt warm on her face as Amy slowly climbed her way to consciousness, and reality. With a sharp intake of breath, she opened her eyes and surveyed her surroundings. Instead of the magical forest, or flower-filled meadows, she found herself in her bedroom, sensible and serene, except for the small touches of whimsy. Knobby fairies resided on windowsills and miniature gnomes sat in potted plants.

Fragments of her dream filtered through her foggy thoughts, making her chest tighten and deep warmth coat her nether lips. Damn, her body felt like it had come hard and multiple times. A hell of a dream, and she thought she didn't have control of it? She must have though because those two knew every one of her buttons to push or stroke, as the case may be. It wouldn't take much to figure out all the symbolism behind this dream. The fact that Thanatos looked like the man she had cried on at the hospice was obvious. If that is how her subconscious wanted to deal with her emotions, why would she want to complain?

The small clock on her night table showed it to be after lunch. She panicked for a second, thinking that she should have been to Elysian House hours ago. Reality pushed aside the highly energetic, arousing dream and left behind a crushed heart.

She didn't have to go there this morning.

Getting out of bed took a mountain of effort when she would much rather pull the comforter over her head and cry. However, hiding now wouldn't get the phone calls done to make the final arrangements for the funeral. It seemed she had no choice. The phone started ringing and she spent the rest of the morning fielding offers of sympathy and help. Knowing how many people cared about her granny comforted her. If only Amy had come home sooner.

She needed a good bit of fresh air to help dispel the depression that threatened to drag her under. A quick glance at her self in the mirror gave her pause. Her eyes looked haunted. Her dark, honey-blond hair curled wildly around her face, whirling over her shoulders.

Amy pulled on her Old Navy peacoat and trudged out the cottage door. Her hair whipped around her head when she stepped outside. She turned the collar up against the bitter wind and held on to her hair to survey the yard. The winds picked up piles of leaves and threw them about like snowflakes. Off in the distance, lightning streaked through the sky. Its flash reminded her of white satin in a colorless sky. The mental image of two sets of lips on her body burned through her mind, lighting her blood, making her breasts ache.

Shaking her head, she allowed the smallest of smiles. If she knew a repeat of that dream awaited her, she might stay in bed forever. But it wasn't real, she could no longer go through life with her head stuck in a fantasy. She lived in real life and that's where she would stay.

Amy strode to her car with more confidence than she felt, unable to shake the feeling that someone watched her. She looked over her shoulder a couple of times, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary. Later as she slowly walked the aisles of the grocery store, it happened again—a slight tingling at the back of her neck, the creeping between her shoulder blades. She darted a look over her shoulder but didn't see anything other than the fourteen different types of cereal on a display. *I'm getting paranoid.* With the stress of the last few months and Flora's death yesterday, what if she had come

to the point where she was losing her mind? But if she were, would she wonder if she had, or would her brain accept it as her new reality? Maybe she should not have pushed herself. Perhaps she should have stayed in bed after all? Mechanically, she wandered up and down the aisles till she came to the fresh produce, carefully stacked on tables against the wall and backed by mirrors to make the room feel bigger. A pile of vibrant oranges looked particularly good. The automatic misters came on, making her jump. She laughed lightly at her own nervousness when she glanced up at the mirror. There, in its reflection, slightly smudged by the falling mist stood, Hypnos, one of her dream men.

He leaned back against a support pole, hands on hips, his hair pulled back and tied at the nape of his neck. A soft looking sweater hugged his chest and emphasized the width of his shoulders. Dark jeans outlined the length of his legs, feet encased in heavy black boots. Very different from the silky pants she remembered. Her gaze traveled back up his body until locking with his. Even from where she stood she could feel the intensity. He smiled at her and winked. She gasped and twirled around with every intention of demanding he explain what was going on here.

No gorgeous god leaned back against a pole. People quietly went about their business of picking out produce. She looked back at the mirror but her dream man had disappeared, dream man being the fact that she had to keep reminding herself. He wasn't real, but she was certain that she had seen him there, which only meant that she must be having some psychotic episode. Seeing one's dreams standing there in real life couldn't be healthy. Fear gripped her by the throat. The orange she held slipped from her fingers. She watched as it hit another, as if in slow motion, and then suddenly a citrus landslide headed toward her.

"Oh, shit." She lunged forward, stretched into a spread eagle position over the fruit-slide in an attempt to stop all the fruit from hitting the floor. The strong scent of orange peel assailed her senses,

tickling her nose to an unbearable level. Horrified at the thought of spraying the multitude of fruit below her, she turned her head and sneezed hard against her shoulder.

“Here, let me help.” Another pair of hands appeared next to hers. Amy jumped nervously, jarring the tentative pile. A couple more oranges escaped. They rolled down the incline and over the edge to bounce across the floor.

The woman next to her laughed lightly, her voice airy and bright. “Wow, you okay? You’re jumpy. Too much coffee?”

Amy grinned sheepishly, relieved when she recognized the voice as a friend. Doing her best to push her concerns away she tried to respond as normally as possible. “No, I’m just tired or having a panic attack. I don’t know. Help me with this, would ya?”

Her friend Deedee could only be described as pixieish. Keeping her blonde hair cut fairly short created a soft, spiky mess around her heart-shaped face. Her eyes looked a bit too big, but then she had a big smile as well, so for some reason it seemed to balance out.

The woman quickly moved all the oranges teetering on escape and surveyed the scene. “Okay, I think you’re safe.”

Taking a deep breath Amy slowly lifted herself and the two of them caught the few that still attempted to escape.

“Thanks for your help. I don’t think anyone saw.”

“Yeah, well, if they’re that worried about their produce then they shouldn’t booby trap them like that. I mean, that asked to collapse as soon as someone sneezed near it.”

“Very funny.” Amy rubbed her forehead with the palm of her hand. At least Deedee’s presence seemed to ground her a bit and make her feel less insane. It must have been some guy who bore a close enough resemblance to her dream. That’s all.

“I tried to call you earlier.”

“Yeah, I turned off the phone. I couldn’t...” She swallowed and fought the burning behind her eyes.

“You don’t have to explain anything. I’m more worried about you right now.”

“I kinda feel like I’m going nuts.” A quick glance at the mirror again revealed that, for the moment, she was delusion-free.

Deedee ran her hand up and down Amy’s arm, rubbing it lightly. “Hun, you have a lot to deal with right now. Cut yourself some slack. Why don’t you come stay with me for a few days?”

“Thanks, but I’ll be okay. I’m going to finish up here and head home.”

“You call me if you need me. I don’t care what time it is. You need to talk, I’m there.” She gave Amy a hug and rubbed her back for a moment. “I mean it, Amy. You’d be surprise what I would understand.”

“I’ll call. I promise.”

After another hug, Deedee continued her shopping, leaving Amy to wander around and choose what she needed. Left alone with her own thoughts, Amy’s imagination started to run in overdrive, and she glanced at every reflective surface to look for Hypnos. People weren’t usually aware when they start going insane, were they? How did she get to be one of the lucky ones?

It wasn’t until she got behind the wheel of her car and pulled out of the parking lot that she could start to breathe easier. Part of her brain still warred over the odds of a man appearing in the grocery store that looked identical to her dream man. What if this was a type of scam? Why would anyone try to do that to her? Granny Flora hadn’t left behind a large inheritance or cash flow, only the house. Amy’s dangerously low savings account continued to drop by the day. In fact, if she didn’t get a job soon, she would be selling the house and searching for an apartment.

To be on the safe side, she took the long way home, doubling back on herself, making sure that no one followed her. She pulled in the driveway convinced that she truly had stepped over the sanity line. Why would anyone go to the trouble of accessing her dreams,

which was impossible, just to get the house? Not only a strange visual psychosis but paranoia to boot, she was going back to bed.

* * * *

“What the fuck is she doing here?” Hypnos glared at the young woman pestering Pasithea in front of a large table full of oranges.

“Don’t know, but if she is here then you can bet it won’t be long till someone tells Zeus.” Thanatos paced back and forth in front of him. His usual, quiet, controlled nature was conspicuous in its absence.

They both eavesdropped on the conversation. Attempting to seduce Pasithea without her belief in them would be difficult. Attempting to do so with all of Olympus watching and eventually interfering? That would make the task impossible. He had hoped to convince the woman who she was before the risks got too high. Now that might not be an option, especially if the god of gods found out.

“I would imagine that Aphrodite would be on our side in this case.”

“Perhaps but you never know with her. She has a list of private agendas as long as the Aliákmon River and twice as dangerous.”

The pixieish woman skipped away from their prey. They continued to watch as Amy’s demeanor changed to reflect her mood. Amy had already left when her friend appeared around the corner. Thanatos moved first to intercept the smaller woman.

“What are you doing here...*Deedee*?”

“I do not believe the two of you! What do you think I am doing here?” She rolled her eyes and placed her delicate hands on her hips. She glared down both men, regardless of the fact that the top of her head only reached their chests. “I am making sure you do not screw this up. Like last time.”

“That wasn’t our fault.” Hypnos came up behind her. After the centuries of guilt he tired of being blamed for going after the one

thing he had desperately wanted. “You would think paying the price we did would save me from repeated censure.”

Undaunted, she turned her head, glaring up at him, over her shoulder. “If either of you had thought with the head on your shoulders as opposed to the one dangling between your legs, you could have figured a way out of it. Instead you play into,” she pointed upward, “their hands and lost everything.”

“I don’t remember you offering advice then, and yet, you expect us to trust you now?”

“Any other time, no, probably not, but in this case yes. You don’t have any other choice. I considered Pasithea a friend. You know those of us in this position usually don’t trust anyone. I want to see her happy. But there is something vitally important that the two of you have overlooked.”

Thanatos continued to glare at her. Hypnos didn’t say anything, knowing that she would tell them whether they wanted to hear or not.

She waved her hand. An oversized, cushioned chair appeared in front of her, landing millimeters from Hypnos’s bare toes. He hopped back and gave her a dark look before glancing around. Thankfully, the grocery store wasn’t busy. Not that it mattered. Anyone who decided to walk down this particular aisle would find themselves avoiding the additional furniture without realizing it.

“The two of you are on full-fledged horn dog, let’s-bang-her-and-she-will-remember-it-all mode. Aren’t you? I am surprised you haven’t... You have already, haven’t you?” she accused. She leapt up from her seat. “How old are you two? Men your age showing the patience of a thirteen-year-old boy with his first hard-on!”

She stomped back and forth in front of them like a drill sergeant, only she wore dainty, golden sandals and not army boots. “I’m giving you two more credit than I’m sure you deserve, but the woman isn’t going to have a mind-blowing climax and suddenly remember everything!”

She threw herself back into her elegant chair with an aggravated huff and she pinned them with a pointed glare. "It's not going to happen like that and the two of you had better figure it out. Let me guess. You planned to go see her tonight in person, right? That's why you played peek-a-boo with her here."

Hypnos shifted guiltily while Thanatos stood his ground and scowled at their sister. "We wanted to make it easier."

"While your hearts were in the right place, you're terrifying her, dumbass. This poor human girl has lost everything she held dear and I can hardly stand the loneliness echoing around her. There might be some cosmic link to the woman you two loved, but that is all there is. She needs to be cared for, loved, supported, and protected."

"But that is what we want to do," Thanatos argued.

Aphrodite took a good look at him. "I'm surprised, Than. If I remember correctly, and I do, your trio was never completed. Pasithea might have loved Hypnos, but she didn't share that feeling with you.

"That's vicious even for you, Deedee." Hypnos stepped up and wrapped an arm around his lover's waist.

Thanatos gripped Hypnos's wrist and held it there. "Times have changed and so have we."

"Good. Now leave her alone for a couple of months. And I mean it, you two."

"Months!" Hypnos exclaimed. "Absolutely not."

"Let her come to terms with what happened. Let her grieve a bit. You two have waited centuries, what's a couple of months?" Aphrodite arched an eyebrow. "Oh, and stay out of her dreams as well. Don't you dare try to exploit any loopholes."

Chapter 3

Flora's funeral had been a simple affair. Many of the chairs held nurses and doctors from the hospice. Right until the end, Flora had continued to deeply touch the lives of everyone she met. All those kind faces and sympathetic looks reminded Amy of her childhood before Flora's magical touch.

Now the need to get on with life remained, a prospect more and more daunting as the days went by. She stared up at the bedroom ceiling. She didn't know if she wanted to go back to New York. It would be easy to get lost in the crowds and forgotten. At least here she had a nice-sized house and a close friend, opposed to her small apartment and the cockroaches in New York. Enough remained of her savings to get her through a few months of unemployment, but she needed a plan for the future. To hide away in an old house wouldn't help her any either. She hadn't experienced any more dreamlike visions, since the day in the grocery store. Thankfully, her fears in regards to her sanity had subsided.

Amy got out of bed and into the shower. One step at a time, she told herself. She made coffee and threw out the takeout boxes that had reproduced on the counter. Had she eaten that much fast food? No wonder her body felt the way it did. A bit of yard work would help that. The front yard needed a good tidying, since the trees had started to lose their leaves. An afternoon of typical, unpredictable fall weather, the breeze held a chill but the sun's rays beat down on her back as she worked. It wasn't long before she had worked up her body temperature and started to sweat under the warm rays. Knotting

her jacket around her waist offered some relief, leaving her in a t-shirt and pair of jeans and brown hiking boots. Amy leaned against the rake and admired the pile she had managed to accumulate. Raking was tiring work but seeing her large piles gave her a feeling of accomplishment. Years in the city had allowed her to forget. When she first got the idea, she figured it would be easy, gather up the fallen leaves for an hour or so and it would look picturesque. Little did she know that under the windblown piles hid heavier piles of wet leaves that didn't flutter in the fall breeze. They flopped over in wet clumps, sticking to the tines of the rake. Despite her already aching shoulders, she raked the piles, one by one, out onto the curb to be sucked up tomorrow by a city collection truck.

“Good job, Ms. Bitonu.”

Oh crap. The pinch between her shoulders traveled straight up to her temples thanks to the tone and formal greeting called out from the sidewalk. Jack Misner had been a thorn in Flora's side for years, ever since they rezoned the town and he decided he wanted to purchase the property. Amy never did hear exactly what the man wanted to build but she had heard enough rants from Flora that his first step would be to tear down the house.

“Thank you. I wanted to get this done before tomorrow morning.” She kept her head down and hoped to discourage any and all conversation. Apparently he wasn't to be dissuaded, because she could hear his heavy footfalls on the sidewalk as he walked closer. Where many men Jack's size might be likened to cuddly teddy bears, Jack resembled a Kodiak. He always tried to be charming and gracious, but there wasn't an ounce of truth to it. Vicious, unpredictable, he didn't hesitate to use his size to intimidate if he thought it more efficient.

Dressed in a denim shirt tucked into cargo pants, he looked as though he planned to do some yard work himself but she knew better. He hired people to come and do the work for him. He would stand

there and bark out orders and insults, then refuse to pay full price because it wasn't done to his satisfaction.

"So how are things on your side of the fence? So sorry to hear about Flora. She was a good woman."

"Yes, you're right." The rake in her hands swung like a pendulum and increased with her irritation to practically warp speed as she tried to get the heaps moved and away from Jack. He hadn't bothered to come to the funeral, and she knew his concerned tone thinly hid an ulterior motive.

"Poor thing. I often wondered if caring for that big house wore her out."

A pain shot through Amy's chest at her childhood home being maligned or the inference that Flora wasn't capable of handling something.

"What do you mean?" Her tone might have been casual but inside her anger started to simmer.

"A woman her age living by herself in such a big house. Must have taken a lot out of her to keep it up."

"She did just fine."

"But look what happened to her. I expect there will be a 'for sale' sign going up when you go back to the city."

Amy took a deep breath and fought the urge to hit him squarely between his beady eyes with the rake. A horrible disease stole her granny, and it had nothing to do with her wonderful home.

"I don't have any plans to go back." She took much enjoyment when his smug looked to quiver.

"Such a waste of a good house with you living in it by yourself." He turned and surveyed the property with a malicious gleam. "I mean it's not like you will ever need it."

"Excuse me?" she snapped. She mentally kicked herself because she allowed him to get to her like this, but she couldn't let that comment slide.

“You know, with you playing for the other team and all. Now,” he held up a condescending hand as she started to speak, “don’t try to deny it. It’s not like you showed an interest in anyone when you lived here.”

Amy practically quivered with rage. After all these years she still had to put up with comments and none of them complimentary, all because of the narrow-minded outlook of this town. Well, things had changed a lot over the years. Taking this asshole’s word for the whole town’s opinion was not the smartest thing that she could do.

“I take it you are referring to that belief that I am a lesbian, because I had no interest in the knuckle-dragging Neanderthals that inhabited the town’s high school. Including yourself?”

“Don’t go getting your panties all bunched up. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. I thought I’d be neighborly and make you an offer right now. Save your pretty head all the grief of lawyers and real estate fees. Why don’t you think about it and I’ll drop an offer off later on this evening.”

“You know, I feel the need to make something crystal clear since it obviously hasn’t permeated your thick skull in the last fifteen years. Hell will freeze over before you ever own one solid square inch of this property. Flora never sold to you and neither will I. Furthermore if you ever drag a single hairy knuckle over the property line, I’ll have your ass in court facing trespassing and harassment charges.”

“That’s not very polite of you, Amaryllis.” Any trace of false charm had slithered off his features. “Around here, we’re polite to our neighbors. Those that aren’t, learn real quick.” His face turned as red as his balding head.

A couple years older than she, Amy remembered him from school. A bully then and a bully now. The main difference was that when he tried to pick on her one afternoon, she bloodied his nose. She ended up with a three-day suspension for that one. Flora never punished her for standing up for herself, especially against bullies like Jack. True to form, he backed down. The look he gave her assured her

that this wasn't over. But then she expected no less. She stood her ground and glared right back at him.

"I'll be adding an assault charge to my list of your offences. Now get the hell off my property."

Despite her brave front, as soon as he walked back to his house, she went inside and straight to the bottle of Glayva that Flora had always kept hidden behind a copy of Wordsworth. With shaking hands she poured herself a liberal glass, settled down in an overstuffed chair and tried to relax. Her heart pounded and she wanted a cigarette. Three years after quitting, the craving would sneak up on her when she felt overwhelmed. Taking a small sip of the dark amber liquid, she let the honey and heather flavors swirl around her mouth before she swallowed. The gentle warmth radiated from deep in her chest. A couple more sips and the tightness in her shoulders started to loosen. She was a strong, independent woman sitting in her own home. That sneaky creep next door would never get his hands on it.

Reaching for the phone, she dialed a number from memory. It only rang once before a cheerful voice picked up.

"Hello, you have reached the goddess Aphrodite. I cannot make someone fall in love with you. Please call my son for that chore."

"Hey, Deedee. You have anyone fall for that line yet?"

"Oh, um, no. I need to come up with something a bit more unique. Still planning world domination through the used of fruit bombs?"

"No, that's yesterday's news." Amy swirled the liquid in her glass and took another sip. "Today, I plan to conduct caffeine experiments on myself in hopes that I can improve my mental jitters. Interested?"

"Add a couple shoe sales and I am yours for the taking. What's wrong?"

Deedee always knew when something upset her, always managing to get her to talk about it, even when she didn't want to.

“Jack’s being an asshole again. Freaked me out a bit today, though. He’s getting nasty. I’d call the police but I’m sure that would cause it all to escalate.”

“You don’t believe he is going to suddenly leave you alone? At least notify the sheriff’s office so they have something on record.”

“I should. I will.”

“Good, now put the Glayva down and get your coat on. Some retail therapy will do you wonders.”

“How do you do that?”

“Because despite your best introverted efforts I am getting to know you. Now, hurry up. I know of a new shop that you have to come and see with me.”

Chapter 4

“There is something magical about the perfect pair of shoes.” Deedee smiled dreamily. She posed in front of a small mirror at her feet and inspected every angle of the shoes she wore.

“You said that about the last four pairs you tried on.”

“I know and they each felt perfect in their own way.”

Amy stood up in a pair of silver stilettos and earned an envious look from her friend.

“Those are gorgeous on you. Hell, your legs look even longer. I wouldn’t have thought it possible.”

“These should be killing my feet but I feel like I’m wearing slippers.” Amy reached down and straightened the silver lace that wrapped around her calf. “Not that I will ever have a place to wear them.”

“You never know. Besides, if you get them, we will have to shop for the perfect dress to go with.”

“You are a killer on my credit cards, do you know that? I still can’t believe how reasonable they are, especially with the quality.”

“I told you I know the best places to shop.” Deedee slipped out of the heels and pulled her boots back on. “We’ll take them all.”

“As you say, mistress.” The sales girl rushed to collect them and gathered everything up with amazing efficiency.

“What did she call you?” Amy watched the girl ring up the sale.

“Huh?”

“Did she call you mistress?”

“Ah yeah, they’re a bit eccentric here, must be a favorite shop for the local dominatrix.” Deedee leaned closer to Amy. “Did you see how she never met our eyes?”

“Yeah, it’s strange. Things have changed a lot in this town since I left.” Amy watched as the cashier raced through the transaction.

Outside, she slipped on her sunglasses as they walked up the alley. Amy looked around. “You know I never would have found this place. They need a better location.”

“One of the perks to being a business owner around here is I know all the hidden gems.”

A sudden fury of ruffling feathers disturbed the quiet alley. Amy looked up but she didn’t see the expected flock of birds rising into the sky. Did you hear that? Sounded like a bunch of pigeons. Did you see ‘em?”

“No. I thought I saw...let’s get you out of here, okay?” Her friend’s face had paled considerably.

“What...me? You okay, Deedee?”

“I meant us. Come on. I’m fine, just hungry. We’ll stop for lunch at the shop.”

“That sounds perfect.” She had discovered Deedee’s coffee shop quite by accident one afternoon. After Flora had urged her to get out for some fresh air, she took a walk downtown to take in the changes. The population had expanded and so had the downtown core. More tourists, according to her granny. South Hampton’s economy continued on the upswing, when so many other small communities were becoming ghost towns. The smells emanating from the small coffee shop had drawn her in. That is when she met its owner, Deedee, who quickly became a friend.

An old soda shop during her childhood had been transformed into a modern coffee house. The smell of freshly roasted beans hung in the air mixed with the sweetness of the variety cakes displayed in a glass case. Every addiction imaginable or craved could be found here for the indulging. The man working behind the counter wiped down a

large, expensive looking espresso machine. She felt a tightness in her chest and a warmth between her legs as she gazed at one of the best assess she had ever seen encased in soft, worn denim. She had never considered herself a butt girl, usually a man's chest drew her attention first, but this man could make a convert of her. When he turned around, her breath caught in her throat.

He looked just like one of the men in her dream. Those dark eyes promised every delight imaginable, high cheekbones, straight nose and full lips that in her dreams had brushed over every inch of her breasts. A pair of sunglasses perched on his head holding all that dark curly hair off his face. The rest of it caught back in an elastic at the nape of his neck.

"Amy, are you okay?" Deedee patted her hand

Jolted back into reality, Amy pretended to look around and remembered to breathe. She looked everywhere except at the man behind the counter.

"You didn't tell me you hired someone new."

Deedee snickered. Amy could feel a heated flush creep up her neck.

"This is Nos. He helps me out around here and does the shopping. He came to the grocery store with me the other day. Remember when you tried to take on that army of citrus fruit?"

That's why she saw him in a mirror. She wasn't having a psychotic episode or losing her mind. As for the dream, she must have seen him around and not remembered. Even if the very thought of not remembering him was...unimaginable.

"Nos, this is my girlfriend, Amy."

"A pleasure, Amaryllis."

"How did you know my name?"

Between one blink and another she suddenly found herself looking up at him. He moved fast for such a large man.

"Deedee's told me about you." His voice slid over her skin like an intimate caress. Silently, she watched as he grasped her hand,

pulled her a step closer and pressed her body against his. Every nerve snapped like a freshly struck lightning rod. He made her feel petite. The same as in the dream.

“Oh stop that already.” Deedee’s voice had taken on a bit of an edge. “Perhaps you should inventory the walk-in freezer.”

“If you think that is necessary. Why don’t I get Than to help as well?”

“Why don’t you take the rest of the day off? I can handle it from here.” Deedee’s tone brooked no argument.

Hypnos turned a chilling glare on Deedee. Amy slid out of his arms. She sensed the tension level rising but didn’t understand what caused it. Maybe they had something going on? Deedee had never mentioned him, but it might be a new relationship. Well, she wasn’t one to poach, that’s for sure. Regret flashed in his expression when she stepped away but she didn’t want to get in the middle of anything.

Gaining some space between them allowed her to think a little clearer. Than? The name he mentioned sparked her memory. This had gotten a bit too coincidental,

Hypnos crowded her as he stepped closer. He caught her hand and turned it up, pressing his silky lips against her pulse point. “Until next time.” It had to be her imagination that made her feel as if she had been caressed. A deep ache to wrap her arms around him and snuggle into his chest swept through her. She wanted to relax and sleep in his arms, right after a sweaty romp. Her bra felt tight and her skin tingled, and she had an insane urge to lean forward and lick him. Her gaze was level with the hollow between collarbones. Would he taste as good as he did in her dream?

What the hell am I thinking?

She darted a quick look up at him. His eyes were darker than she first thought and looked as if he knew her thoughts.

Deedee delicately cleared her throat and the moment passed.

Her shoulder brushed against the hard muscles of his chest as he stepped past her, sending a wave of shivers through her nerves. The

door closed behind him, but she could still see him through the glass window. The sun lit up the metallic silver highlights in his hair as he winked at her before sliding the sunglasses down over his eyes and walked away.

Amy fought the urge to take another look at his delicious backside as he sauntered past the front window. She had better diffuse this situation as fast as she could.

“Hey, you know, Deedee, I’m sure he didn’t mean any of it. I’m sorry if I did anything.”

“Of course he meant every word. What a flirt. He is outrageous.” Deedee waved a hand toward the stools that lined part of the counter. “Grab a seat. I’ll make us something to eat.”

Now she wasn’t sure if she should be pleased that her friend wasn’t insulted or annoyed that he treated her with the same casual praise that any woman would have received.

“I hope you don’t mind me asking, but how do you not go crazy when he acts like that?”

“Well, it helps that he is my employee and not my boyfriend.”

That made her feel better.

“And he usually isn’t the intense one.”

That made her feel *a lot* better. “There is another guy that works here, too?”

“No. His best friend works at Elysian House. They both moved into town not too long ago. I’ve known them all my life. When Nos asked, I wasn’t about to turn down that kind of help. They’re a pain in my butt but great for business. Remember when I told you about them?”

“Sorry. It must have slipped my memory. I think it was his friend that was there the night Flora died.”

“You saw him?”

Amy nodded. “I ended up crying all over him. I hope I didn’t embarrass him.”

“You have been going through a difficult time. It’s not that big a deal. Than is really good at being a shoulder when you need one. I’m certain he didn’t mind one bit.”

“So what got Jack’s knickers in a twist this morning?” Deedee stood at the counter slicing up some sandwich fixings. “Must have been bad to drive you to hit the Glayva so early.”

“Who knows?” Thankful for the change in subject, Amy continued. “He’s just an ass. I’ve been dealing with some pretty childish pranks. I can’t be sure it’s him. Could be some local kids or something. Oh, can I have some of that jalapeño Havarti on mine?”

“Pranks? Like what?” Deedee added a couple slices of the spicy Havarti Amy loved to her sandwich.

“My electricity got cut off. When I phoned it in, they told me I was the one who informed them I had moved. The garbage cans were knocked over and the recycling tossed all over my yard the other day. The kicker is when I went out into the garden a couple days ago. The statue of Venus had been knocked over and her head broken off...”

Deedee shrieked and smacked the counter with the palm of her hand.

“Are you okay?” Amy had jumped up thinking her friend cut herself, but when Deedee looked over her shoulder, her expression was furious.

“Oh, yeah.” Deedee’s expression melted back into her usual mischievous look. “For a moment I thought I saw a bug. Just a coffee bean. You said the statue broke? Who would do such a thing? That’s horrible. I’m going to go tear a piece off that asshole myself.”

“You can’t do that! I don’t know he did it. The old base might have deteriorated. It might have slipped. The worst part is that Granny loved that statue.” Tears burned the back of her eyes. She had sobbed the entire time she cleaned up the broken figure that morning.

She felt Deedee’s hand lay over hers. “Oh, hon, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“No, it’s okay. I’m dealing. We had a couple months together before it ended.”

“Still wasn’t enough though.”

“No, I miss her terribly and now I find myself at a loss. I don’t know what to do, or even if I can do anything.”

Deedee turned back to work on their lunch but continued the conversation over her shoulder, relieving Amy because it gave her a moment to compose herself.

“Well, what if you could only have one job for the rest of your life? What would you want to do?”

“I’d want to give kids that are lost in the system a chance. You know the older they get the less chance they have of being adopted.” She wiped her eyes and blew her nose.

“So why don’t you work toward that? You might not be able to adopt them all but what about some sort of program to help them or a drop-in center or be a foster mom. There are still lots of options for you.”

Amy idly swirled her spoon in her coffee, mulling over Deedee’s ideas. “It’s not that I haven’t thought about that before, but I don’t know if I can. Most of these kids have enough issues. I don’t want to be the cause of more. Besides, I’d never pass the financial screening, especially since I’m unemployed at the moment.”

“You don’t have to decide yet. Why not wait and see what the Fates offer you?” A delicious looking sandwich slid into her line of vision where she stared at the counter.

“So far, the Fates have not been so kind to me.”

“Or they have been allowing you to learn what you need to know, in order to become what you are meant to be.”

Amy paused in biting her sandwich. “You know, that one almost made sense.”

“I have my moments.” Deedee sat down next to her and dug into her sandwich.

* * * *

“Damn that woman for playing games like this.” Hypnos reclined back against his sofa, brooding over what had happened at the coffee house. His fingers toyed with the petals of a blood-red poppy that grew up from the velvety flooring. Parading Amy in front of him like that, after she forbade him and Thanatos from having anything to do with her, even for her that was cruel. Frustrated beyond belief he snapped the stem of the flower and threw it across the room and pushed to his feet.

He stalked through the poppies that covered the floor and crushed them beneath his feet. Sweet pollen dust swirled around his ankles. His hair flowed gently around his shoulders. Stepping outside he opened a large vase and grabbed a handful of powder. He opened his hand and blew the dust into the night sky, allowing it to fall where it wanted and lull unknown creatures to sleep.

A shadow slid along the wall beside him, catching his attention. It grew in size until its owner emerged from within.

“That’s cheating you know.” Thanatos watched the sparkling cloud dissipate on its way to the human world.

“So what? It’s not like I truly have control over my powers anymore,” Hypnos threw over his shoulder as he stalked down toward the river’s edge, ignoring the feeling of Death’s glare between his shoulder blades.

Sleep was one of the most important needs of a human being but did they see that? *No*. They controlled their bodies’ natural urges with narcotics and drugs to either make them sleep when they wanted or stay awake when they truly needed him. He didn’t personally visit each one to blow the sleep dust in their eyes anymore and what had his lack of attentiveness gotten him? They now viewed the Sandman as a doddering old fool in a nightshirt and peaked hat with a bag of fairy dust! He had been turned into a comic book character as well,

although that he didn't mind. That brooding character appealed to his current opinion of his existence.

"What are you doing here anyway? Don't you have souls to collect?"

"No, if I did I wouldn't be here enjoying your wonderful company."

Hypnos stood on the edge of a black river and mindlessly threw rocks against his satiny reflection on its surface. "This is much more satisfying in the human world." Each stone cracked the surface, sending ripples a few inches only to settle frustratingly fast.

"I don't think I ever understood that particular pastime."

Hypnos looked over his shoulder at his friend and lover. "How long has it been?"

"Nine days. I won't bother with the hour, that's depressing." Thanatos came closer and wrapped his arms around Hypnos's waist, resting his chin on his shoulder.

"What are we going to do? Act like eunuchs whenever Aphrodite decides to dangle her in front of us?"

"We have no choice but to play by her rules. As long as Amy is ours in the end, then that is all that matters. We never thought we would have this chance and there are still no guarantees. Being receptive to us in dreams is a start, but that is a few steps from fantasy for her."

"Real for us." Hypnos leaned back into Thanatos's embrace.

"Which means more pain if she decides to choose between us."

Hypnos turned and rested his hands on his lover's hips. "It won't be like that. Don't believe it for a moment. She did not hesitate in the dream."

"The way she acts in dreams is far from her reality."

"Than, her anger with you didn't last. Did you sense any hesitation to your touch after that?"

"No, but again it wasn't real to her. All we need is for her to believe in us. That is enough to solidify the strength between us. If

she can't accept that we are lovers, then she can sleep in her own bed."

"We'll do it differently this time. She has to accept us both or there is no point to our pursuing this."

"Well, isn't that nice? A Kodak moment for certain and here I am without a camera," a female voice sounded behind them.

"Fuck off, Aphrodite." Hypnos let his hands drop and turned to face the goddess.

"Oh, someone's bitchy"

"We're playing by your rules. Don't anticipate rubbing it in."

"As if I would." The goddess sashayed toward them, her toga drifting over the plush grass.

Hypnos felt his lover press his hand against his lower back and arched slightly into the supportive gesture, He knew Thanatos was trying to remind him, to be nice for the time being and turned away in order to continue his attempt at skipping stones.

"Okay, I can understand your frustration. I haven't been playing fair. Perhaps I should let the two of you off for good behavior?"

Thanatos took the bait. "What's happened?"

"What makes you think that anything has happened?"

Hypnos snorted and turned to face her as well. "Experience. If something hadn't gone wrong, you wouldn't be here."

* * * *

With a dramatic sigh, Aphrodite shrugged slightly. She waved a delicate hand as she turned to face the water. "Well, perhaps there is a bit of a problem. Her neighbor is a complete ass and is giving her a hard time. She mentioned it before but I didn't think much of it. Childish pranks, but they are escalating. Someone called in and had her electricity cancelled. She's received a few obscene phone calls and to top it off *my* statue ends up broken. Shattered. And then I keep seeing Keres around her. I thought that perhaps you should be there."

She turned to tell them that she would be gracious enough to suspend her earlier rule, only to discover that she now stood by herself.

“Dammit.” Stomping her sandaled foot, she followed in hopes of preventing them from messing any more with her plans.

“Both of you stop right where you are.”

She managed to catch up with them just outside Amy’s house. In this dimension, midnight was hours ago. The garden where they stood concealed them in shadows. Not that it seemed to matter much to either of the men considering their actions.

“We’ve played enough games, Aphrodite.” Hypnos turned away from her and started back up the walkway from the garden. Thanatos stood there. The shadows slid over him as if he wasn’t completely corporeal.

“I have not released either of you from your vows yet.”

Hypnos paused in his rush to get to the front door. “What now?”

Thankfully threats still worked with him. “You are still thinking with the wrong head.”

That got Hypnos’s attention. He marched back and got into her face. Anger etched sharp angles to his normally easygoing expression. While he chose to remain quiet, she could feel Thanatos’s icy glare between her shoulder blades.

“I don’t think it is a good idea to charge in there right now and bare it all. In. Any. Way.”

She waved a hand in an arc over her head. “It’s the middle of the night. How do you think she is going to react? You both will be in a jail cell before the morning, and I’m not going to bail either of your asses out.”

She pushed a finger in the middle of the chest in front of her. “You want her, you get her, but by my rules. No magic, no powers, no otherworldly persuasion. Win her the old fashioned, human way.”

“She’s in danger. We don’t have time for this.” Hypnos paced a few steps past her before turning.

“I am not going to let you go in there and use her. Pasithea’s death didn’t teach either of you a damn thing.”

“We are going to have to make the time. No playing with free will.” Thanatos stepped closer and wrapped an arm around Hypnos’s shoulder. “It’s what got us in this predicament in the first place.”

“I’m impressed. Perhaps you did learn something. Prove it.” Aphrodite smiled at them. They looked magnificent together. Amy didn’t have a chance if they listened to her. “I have an idea how you can still protect her and give yourself some time to win her. Time is of the essence here, especially if the Keres have been called out on her. Just give me a day and I’ll arrange it for you. She won’t suspect a thing. I hope.”

Chapter 5

“Get off,” Amy snapped, jerking forward, almost losing the bags of groceries she balanced in her arms. *How the hell did the jackass manage to move so quietly, I didn’t hear him coming?*

“Don’t panic. Here, let me,” a deep, familiar voice rumbled next to her ear. That certainly wasn’t the neighbour. Amy looked over her shoulder and found herself face-to-face with the man from the hospice. He wore a thick, ribbed sweater that accentuated the width of his shoulders. His hand brushed the underside of her breasts as he reached forward. Normally she would have ripped him a new one for copping a feel like that, but her body felt electrified and her thoughts scattered like the leaves on her lawn. He scooped the bags out of her hands as if they weighed nothing, watching her intently. “I can’t have a lady carrying all these.”

She opened her mouth and closed it a couple times. She waited for the words to come but they remained stuck in her throat. When Deedee said she knew the perfect guys to rent the rooms to, she never mentioned the gorgeous hunks working for her. Hadn’t Granny said many times there was no such thing as coincidence? Obviously she had never been in this situation.

“Are you all right?”

Oh god, she stood there with her bottom pressed back against him, loving the feel of heat between them, as he attempted to be kind. Way to make a first impression.

“Oh. Yes, sorry. You must be Than, Nos’s friend?” *Male friend? Boyfriend?* She stood up straight and stepped away from him. Looking over his shoulder, she saw a big, black Durango in the

driveway. How the hell did she miss hearing that pull in? She could see through the glass that Nos already had the back open and looked to be lifting some luggage.

“I appreciate your willingness to rent us a room on such short notice like this.” He nodded toward the house.

She quickly stepped up onto the porch. Those bags were heavy and here she stood gawking up at him.

“Oh, well, it’s fine. I have the rooms and Deedee vouched for you and all. I normally wouldn’t have rented to a couple of guys.”

“That’s an intelligent choice. You’ll be safer with us here.”

“Safer?” The tone he had used sounded like she should be concerned, but then she remembered telling Deedee about Jackass. She quickly unlocked the door and led the way to the kitchen. Than gently placed all the bags on the counter, and she took a good look at him before he caught her.

Where Nos’s hair curled lazily around his head, laying like a cloud past his shoulders, Than’s was straight and brushed back off his face. Part of her knew it would feel thick and silky, though it looked as though it should be hard from hair gel. His broad shoulders tapered down to a narrow waist and long legs. Both men had bone structure that any celebrity would pay millions for. She grabbed a bag and opened the freezer door. She hoped the cold air would cool down her flushed cheeks before he noticed them.

“I’m going to give Nos a hand moving stuff in.” Was that humor in his tone? He couldn’t know she essentially tried to hide in a freezer, right?

“I’ll give you a hand as soon as I put these away,” she said from behind the freezer door.

“That’s okay. We can do it if you’ll show us which room first.”

Chapter 6

In another dimension, sat a gilded throne of marble and magic, obviously created for a god who ruled his universe. A large man of questionable humor, enormous ego, and dwindling power currently occupied it. A dark scowl etched his features, as he glared at the smaller, winged man before him.

“What do you mean, she’s alive?” Given Zeus’s tendency to bellow at the smallest of offenses, it was when he spoke softly that he was the most unpredictable. This hushed question attested to his level of anger. “When I destroy something, it stays destroyed. Nothing returns from my rage.”

A smaller god kneeled in front of him. Small wings at his ankles twitched as he fought the urge to get as far away as he could, as swiftly as he could.

“That is not for me to know, Master. I am simply the messenger. All I can tell you is that Sleep and Death have an incredible interest in a human woman. She is a dead ringer for the youngest of the Kahrites, the one known as Pasithea. I saw her in the human world.”

Zeus’s entire body shook with fury. “How dare anyone defy me! Am I not the ruler of the gods?”

“Yes, Master.”

“They are forbidden the daughter of Hera, by my decree!”

“Yes, Master.” Hermes cowered as Zeus lifted his hand in an age-old gesture that meant someone’s existence had come to an end.

A deep roll of thunder crossed the skies and the clouds flowed together like a swarm of bees, darkening dangerously. When the

expected lightning bolt did not appear, his hand clenched into a fist. Everyone knew that Zeus' powers were weakening and this wasn't the first time Hermes had seen proof of it. His leader couldn't afford for any of the other gods to be stronger than him, especially Thanatos and Hypnos.

"I will not be defied. The woman will die. I'll do it myself if I have to."

"But, Master, do you want to risk alienating the gods in your weakened state?" Hermes stutter revealed his level of fear. "W-w-why not arrange an accident? It's the way it's done now. She is nothing but a weak human. How hard could it be to have her killed?"

"I'll make it violent death. That way Thanatos cannot interfere in the Keres's hunt. The woman will have to be away from those two in order for it to happen."

"They are keeping close to her, my lord. I don't know if you can separate them."

"I will not be. You will make sure that she is alone. You're a courier. Send her a message, you snivelling ass kisser. Get her away from them or I will tear you apart with my bare hands, and we'll see if you have enough power to put yourself back together."

Visibly trembling, Hermes backed out of the glamorous throne room into the darkened hallway, panting with fear at how close he had come to facing Zeus's wrath. Truly the centuries of dwindling power had twisted their leader's mind, but Hermes wasn't going to be the one to deliver that message.

* * * *

One room. That is what they wanted. Amy had reminded herself of that a number of times over the last week. They shared a room because they were a couple, which made her more uncomfortable as the days passed. It didn't have anything to do with them being lovers and everything with her wanting to be a part of it. That damn,

incredibly hot dream she had weeks ago teased, never far from her thoughts. The fact that she never seemed to be alone made it even more difficult. There always seemed to be one of them hanging around during all waking hours. At night, she curled up in her large, cold bed, trying not to think about what it would be like to sleep between them. The three of them seemed to be the perfect match, as if they had been living together for years and not just a week. She would make breakfast, one of them would bring home lunch from the shop, and they all made dinner together. In the evenings, they often relaxed and watched a movie.

Amy lay stretched out on the sofa. She reached between the pair of shoulders in front of her for the bowl of popcorn. The men sat on the floor. They watched an old '80s slasher flick. She was hiding, sitting behind them, using their size as a shield when the suspense got too intense.

"You can look now." Than glanced over his shoulder at her. "He's dead."

"No, he's not," she mumbled into the pillow she hid behind.

"Yes, he—Aargh!" Nos jumped and grabbed Than's shoulder. "Holy shit, that scared me."

"Told ya." She tried to keep the na-na-na's to a minimum, but who hadn't seen the *Friday the Thirteenth* movies? "He never dies."

"I'd like to see him go up against a gaggle of Keres."

Amy raised her head quickly to stare at Than. "You know what Keres are?"

"You forget how we got our names?"

She grinned. Yes, for a moment she had but then remembered the story they told her about being such mythology buffs in college. They and their buddies all took on the names of different mythological gods. Than got his because of all his research into the afterlife, and Nos because apparently he slept through most of his classes.

"Should we watch another one?" Than flipped through the DVD cases, reading the backs of each one.

“No, they got campy after that one. We can watch *Hellraiser*.” She pointed to the correct case. “That one’s intense.”

Than got up to change the disks, and Nos dropped his head back on the soft seat and grinned at her. “He has a morbid obsession with this stuff.”

Amy shrugged, not sure what to say, her attention caught by the dark hair that spread out over the cushion. It looked so silky and the low lights seemed to catch the silver glints in his hair.

“Did you have someone do this to your hair?” She tentatively reached out and when he didn’t say anything, she lifted up a bit and looked at it. Small silver glints caught the dim lights and sparkled like stars in a sea of black. “It’s incredible.”

“I’m all natural, Amy.”

She looked up at him to gauge his reaction to her playing with his hair but Nos’s eyes had closed, a smile curling his lips. She always suspected the people who grew their hair long enjoyed having it played with. She had never known enough people to test her theory. Her fingers trailed slowly through the silky curls spread over her thigh. Her thoughts drifted back to her dream when the ebony mass lay across the inside of her thigh. She shifted slightly, feeling herself go damp.

He’s gay. He’s gay He’s gay, she mentally chanted, wondering why her body couldn’t seem to remember that fact.

“Like this.” Than had sat back down and took her hand in his. Leading it to the side of Nos’s head, he ran their fingers through the hair just behind his ear. Their fingers slid along his scalp to his neck. A low groan rumbled from Nos and he tilted his head to give them better access.

“I’ll clean the kitchen for a week as long as neither of you stop.”

Amy never realized how sensual stroking Nos like a cat would feel. The soft moans he was emanating proved that he enjoyed it as well.

“You know, we could get him to agree to anything at this point.” She leaned closer to Than as he spoke, her lips a breath away from his.

Her heart pounded in her chest and her lips felt dry and sore. Nos’s hair crackled with static electricity, which must be what caused the hair on her arms to rise. She licked her lips and Than fixated on the action, raw desire heating his gaze. She felt as though her body was going up in flames. Her clothes felt too restrictive, his fingers curled around hers and trapped some hair within. He squeezed enough that it must have pulled, but there wasn’t anything painful in the sound that Nos made. She remembered that sound, could almost feel the sensual cocoon in her dream.

Than leaned forward. “What is it, Amy?”

She leaned back, aware of what an idiot she almost made of herself.

“I’m tired. I think I’ll turn in. Goodnight, you two. Enjoy the movie.” She fled the room before she did something stupid, like kiss a gay man—men, back and forth between them over and over. Damn, she needed to get her head on straight. What if she read that situation all wrong?

That night she lay in bed and tried not to think of them together.

Reality. She needed to keep her head in reality. *They are a gay couple. I’m the woman whom they rent a room from. That’s it, that’s all.* Yes, they made her hot, but her imagination was in overdrive. She rolled over and curled up under her duvet in her cold bed. Dreams were all she had, might be all she would ever have. Perhaps she should get a cat now. Start her way to a houseful.

* * * *

The next morning, she couldn’t resist peeking as she passed their open bedroom door. It wasn’t her fault, she tried to rationalize. They

left their bedroom door wide open and as she passed in the morning...well, she couldn't help but look.

A quick glimpse.

A total invasion of privacy.

She should have felt horribly guilty about it. Instead, she gazed at the two large men that still slept. Nos slept spooned up against Than's back, his inky hair spilling over the pillows. What would it be like to walk over and gently brush it away from their faces? They were both so different but if she had to choose she never could. In a way, the three of them seemed to complement each other. As far as two wildly insane but loveable men and her rather firm grasp of reality went, they averaged out nicely.

Nos wriggled a bit as if he tried to get closer to the other man, his hand sliding around Than's waist and dropping down in front. Amy blushed at Than's sharp intake of breath as he slept. While the sheet might block her view, she had a good idea what had just happened. The modest part of her brain shouted that she should leave them alone, let them have some quiet time. The idea of watching them seemed so erotic that she couldn't leave, her curiosity winning out over her moral resistance. She wasn't sure if they would appreciate an audience, although with the two of them she never knew. One thing she had learned is neither of them was all that shy about anything.

Opting for the cautious route, she quietly eased the door halfway closed. She stood in the darkened hallway, watching the two of them, the early sun's soft glow bathing the two figures in its warm light. A part of her brain screamed that this was a massive invasion of their privacy.

But may the gods forgive her, she couldn't tear her gaze away.

Than moaned softly in his sleep and Nos answered by biting softly down on his shoulder. Than shifted his weight and rolled toward the other man, lying on his back he reached up and pulled Nos's head toward him. Nos's hair slid over his shoulder and drifted across their faces. That movement robbed her of the pleasure of

seeing the pleasure on their faces, but the sheet slipped lower. Her pussy throbbed at the view of Nos's hand wrapped around Than's beefy cock, stroking him to a rhythm all his own. Than arched up into Nos's body. He hooked a leg over Nos's thigh and stroked down the leg with his foot. Nos flipped his hair out of the way, granting her the pleasure of watching them kiss. Than reached down and grasped Nos. His body shuddered as Than matched the stroke to Nos's tempo.

Unable to hold back, Amy leaned against the wall. Still watching them, she undid her robe and slipped her hand between her legs. She parted her dewy folds, and found the swollen nub. She drenched her fingers in her own juices as she stroked herself, matching her rhythm to the same pace the men were moving. She bit her lips so as not to cry out as she watched the scene in front of her.

Nos lifted himself up and leaned on his elbow, lording over Than, stroking his purple rod. Than made Nos shake with his ministrations, while with his other hand he had wrapped the long sparkling hair in his fist, refusing to allow their violent kiss to end. They murmured encouragement to each other. It wasn't much longer until Than's body arched up and thick spurts of cum splattered over them. With a snarled curse, he flipped the other man over, pressing a couple fingers between the seam of Nos's ass. The other man gasped, and overcome by the sensations, came as well, shooting ropes up between them. She was so entranced by the sight that it triggered Amy's own orgasm to wash over her. Quietly she slipped back away from the door, not wanting to alert them to her presence, not wanting to intrude anymore on their time together.

Feeling a little off balance, she made her way down the two flights of stairs to the kitchen, careful to step on the outsides of the steps so they wouldn't creak. She made use of the small powder room at the bottom of the stairs, before continuing on to the kitchen. Her absent conscience reappeared and demanded answers she didn't have. How did she think she could look them in the eye after what she had

intruded on? What kind of person did that make her? And the worst one, would she ever get the chance to watch them again?

As she filled the coffee pot, she heard the shower turn on upstairs. Her thoughts filled with images of the two of them washing each other, their bodies slick and slippery with soap. The temptation to run upstairs and ask to join them was almost unbearable. Instead, she concentrated on the mundane task of whisking eggs and cutting up veggies for their omelettes. Another pan held a large batch of hash browns, and then she chopped up some fruit to round it off. The eggs bubbled nicely when she heard footsteps in the hallway.

“Something smells incredible. I’m starving,” a low voice sounded from the doorway.

“Oh good, I made lots.” She tried to pretend that she hadn’t seen anything out of the ordinary, even though she wasn’t able to meet his eyes as he padded into the room. Barefoot, bare-chested, he wore a pair of jeans slung low on his hips. His damp hair hung over his shoulders in soft curls. Thankfully Nos’s empty stomach seemed to rule his thought process. The man gave her a quick kiss on the cheek before laying claim to the plate she filled. Relieved that she had managed to make it past one wasn’t much peace. There wasn’t much Than missed.

“Is Than still in bed?” She looked quickly down at the skillet as she poured more whipped eggs onto its surface. Damn, wrong question to ask.

“Not anymore,” the man in question muttered after he walked into the room. Amy sprinkled a handful of veggies on the bubbling eggs avoiding any eye contact.

“This is a big breakfast. What kind of hot, sweaty work have you got planned for us today?”

She looked up quickly and noticed that Than’s damp hair stuck to his cheeks, framing his incredible eyes. She could feel the heat rise up her neck and stain her cheeks as her imagination reminded her of her

earlier visual ideas. Hopefully, she could brush it off on the hot skillet she worked over.

Any chance of that disappeared when his large arms wrapped around her middle and his face nuzzled the back of her neck. “You should have told me you like to watch, Amy,” he purred, wringing a horrified gasp out of her. *Oh gods, they know?*

“I don’t know what you are talking about.” She flipped the omelette in half and then onto a plate for him. She tried to step out of his embrace, but his arms tightened around her. He pulled her back against his hard form, her traitorous body instinctively arching into him.

He chuckled and bit down on the muscle that ran down the side of her neck. “Little liar, I’m going to punish you for that one later. I see very well in the dark.” He continued whispering in her ear. “I saw you with your fingers between your legs as you watched us.”

She wanted to die from the embarrassment. She tried to meet his eyes, but couldn’t look any farther up than his chin. “Umm. I’m sorry. I had no right to invade your privacy. I didn’t mean—”

“Fuck, don’t apologize, Amy. I came extra hard knowing that you watched. Next time, I want you in the bed with us when you do that.”

He caught the plate she dropped and went to sit next to Hypnos. He leaned over to his lover and kissed his neck before he started to eat.

Hypnos blinked in surprise and quickly looked over at Amy. She stood there, shocked, silent, so he winked at her and continued eating.

“I think I’m going to go have a shower.” She escaped the kitchen, but not fast enough to miss their exchanged grins. Embarrassment and arousal heated her cheeks.

* * * *

Hypnos turned to Thanatos and grinned. “She really thought we wouldn’t know?”

“Apparently, you’re okay with it?”

“Her getting turned on watching us? Fuck, yeah. I will admit that I kind of expected her to be standoffish when I came down. You know, a similar reaction to Pasithea’s when she saw us together.” Hypnos’s attention drifted back to his food as he thought.

Thanatos worked through a similar thought process. Hypnos had had a hard-on for Hera’s daughter for centuries but Pasithea wasn’t comfortable with their relationship. She caught Thanatos with his hands down Hypnos’s pants, so to speak. He had brushed aside his cotton skirts and had jerked him to an incredible orgasm, only to have Pasithea act horrified and disgusted by their display.

It had taken Hypnos another century to woo her again, and this time with promises of never touching his friend in that way. Not that they obeyed her narrow-minded decree. They’d just been more discreet. At the time, they thought her reaction unusual. Very few of the gods would be considered heterosexual, as most relationships circled around who controlled the most power in those days. They realized that she didn’t like the idea of sharing. It could have worked if both of them acted devoted to her, but if Thanatos or Hypnos distracted the other, Pasithea would throw a fit.

After her destruction, they had continued to be discreet. Hypnos had his share of bed partners but very few would be willing to play with Death. Those willing to entertain his particular kinks were demonic enough to enjoy going further than he wanted to. In the end, he found himself torn between two worlds. He wanted to have a special place within himself with Hypnos but remained unable to find a partner who complemented their unique powers as well as she had.

As time passed, Thanatos found solace in the lives he took, wanting each passing to be as gentle as possible, going to the extent of visiting some before their time, so that they wouldn’t be afraid. To screw this up would mean the end of this perfect arrangement between the three of them. Never one to sleep deeply, unless Hypnos helped him, he knew the moment Amy sighed as she partially closed

their door. He had been hard-pressed not to grin. Hypnos curling his aroused body against him had become a perfect opportunity to witness what her reaction would be.

Unable to quell his own responses when Hypnos had begun to stroke him, he had closed his eyes. He'd flopped on his back and decided to take the pleasure offered to him. When he peered from beneath his lashes, it took a moment to realize that she hadn't fled. That she stood out in the hallway. She'd continued watching them intently. The acute pleasure that flooded his limbs had him shaking with need.

"She's watching," Thanatos had whispered to his lover, disguising the movement as his ran his lips along Hypnos's neck.

"Let's give her a good show then,"

They moved in a way that assured she had the best view of everything that they did. When her hand disappeared beneath her panties, Thanatos nearly came right there.

They had discussed the possibilities in the shower. She wouldn't brave the trip up to invite herself in, although she would have been more than welcome. Knowing that she had a voyeuristic streak made him hot thinking about it.

* * * *

"Anyone home?" Amy called out as she kicked the door closed. She heard a mumbled response from upstairs and breathed a sigh of relief. It was nice to not have to come home to an empty house, especially after what she had just gone through. Leaving her bags by the front door, she headed to the kitchen. Plugging in the kettle to make some tea proved to be a bit tricky. Her hands had a slight tremble as did her knees. Giving into the urge, she dropped into a kitchen chair.

"Hey, flower...Amy, what happened?" She could hear the concern in Nos voice, but couldn't form the words to reassure him.

Dark spots swam in front of her eyes. A pressure at the back of her head pressed her face closer to her knees.

“Okay, slowly, breathe deep.” Nos rubbed her upper back in soothing circles, pulling her against him as he supported her shoulders. “Can you tell me what happened?”

“The scariest thing ever. Oh gods. Nos, it was awful. I don’t even want to talk about it.”

He helped her back into a sitting position and looked into her eyes. Her view of him was blurred by the tears collecting in them.

“Are you hurt?” he asked

She shook her head and laid it down on his shoulder, accepting the warmth of his embrace. It felt good to be able to lean on someone, two someones actually. Than had been there for her just as much lately.

“Than is over at the coffee shop. I can get him to come home.”

“No, no, it’s okay. I’m fine. I promise. Just had a fright.”

He didn’t press and that made her want to tell him all the more. Still, part of her balked at leaning on him for support too much. She didn’t want to rely on either of the men excessively, but then how could telling him hurt?

“I heard a couple people talking at the gas station about this new bakery that opened. I stopped there on the way home to pick up some fresh bagels. ”

He made some soft supportive noises, encouraging her to continue.

“Well, I had just gotten in the car when I remembered that we needed bread. As I got back out of the car, I heard all these popping sounds. My windshield cracked on the driver’s side from a drive-by shooting. If I hadn’t moved at that moment, I would have gotten shot in the head.”

“Fucking hell. Are you sure you’re all right?” He ran his fingers down her neck and along her arms. “Are you sure you didn’t get hurt? No wonder you don’t have any color.”

“No, I’m sure I’m all right.”

Despite her assurances otherwise, Nos didn’t let up his examination. She didn’t have any injuries beyond the scrape on her arm, which she quickly told him happened when she dropped to the ground, not from a bullet.

“Why didn’t you call? How did you get home?”

“An officer from the scene drove me. I didn’t want to bother you or Than.”

“Dammit, Amy. It’s not a bother. We care about you.” He looked angry with her and she couldn’t think what she did wrong.

“I’m sorry.” Fear lanced through her again but she took a deep breath and tamped it down. She wasn’t going to be bullied here. Reacting with fear was something she learned from Geoff. “I can take care of myself, Nos. I’m a strong person.”

“Yes, fine, but you know it’s not a terrible thing if you let yourself lean on us. We’re your friends. We’re here for you, not to control you.”

“I need to be able to do things on my own.”

She watched a muscle twitch in Nos’s jaw. He might be angry but inside she was proud of herself for standing up to him. The kettle started to whistle. She moved to get up but Nos wouldn’t let her.

“All right, it’s done now. I’ll make you a cup of tea. Why don’t you go watch TV or something?”

“I left the bags in the hall.”

“I’ll put them away. Don’t sweat it.”

“I can make a cup of tea.”

“I know you can and I promise you can make me one later if it will make you feel better. Please, I want you to find a comfortable spot and relax. I’ll bring a tea in for you.”

* * * *

Thankfully, Amy conceded and got up to go sit in the den. Hypnos bit his inner cheek to stop himself from saying something that would make this more difficult. Like, he and Than planned on taking care of her every need and she had better just get used to it. After she left the room he allowed the anger that seethed below the surface to rise to the top. She could have been killed, violently too. He didn't believe in coincidence either. If Aphrodite would allow him and Than to use their natural powers, they wouldn't have to worry about all this.

He searched through Amy's many tins of tea until he found the one he looked for. Sleepy time would help, not as much as his version, but for now it would have to do.

As he poured the boiled water, he dialed the shop's number and tucked the phone under his ear.

Thanatos answered on the second ring. "What's happened?"

"Get home. The Keres attacked Amy."

"Feathered fucking bitches." The line went dead. Thanatos did need to learn some phone manners.

Chapter 7

“We’re going to have to tell her.”

Thanatos and Hypnos stood in the garden discussing the most recent attack against Amy. Thanatos walked the small labyrinth in the middle of Amy’s extensive garden. He hoped that the meditative walk would help calm his thoughts but that just wasn’t the case. The more he thought about those feathered demons the more he wanted to slice them in half.

“The truth? How do you think that’s going to go over now? We should have tried to tell her right from the beginning.” Hypnos kept pace with him but so far neither of them had found any peace from this meditative ritual.

“She never would have believed us, and that would have made getting close to her even harder.”

“I told you taking the easy way would fuck us in the end.”

Thanatos couldn’t help the grin that crossed his features. “You mean we take turns getting it in the end.”

“You are such an immature asshole. Stop with the stupid jokes. This is serious. We have got to figure out a way to tell her the truth.”

“Tell me the truth about what?”

Thanatos didn’t bother to look over his shoulder at Amy. Of course she had decided not to listen to their advice to relax on the sofa.

“How are you feeling, Amy? Did you sleep at all?” Hypnos stepped off the path and walked up to her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

“No. I don’t think I’ll be sleeping well for a while. Every time I close my eyes I see the windshield shatter.” Hypnos wrapped both his arms around her and looked at Thanatos over her head.

“Nos can help you with that, you know.” *Might as well start if you mean to go on.* There wasn’t any point in delaying the truth. He stepped away from the path. Walking in circles wouldn’t accomplish what a few hours in bed with the two of them would. Following Hypnos’s lead, he wrapped his arms around her and rested his hands on Hypnos’s arms. “There are perks to being the god of sleep.”

Amy tried to turn in their embrace and settled for frowning over her shoulder at him. “I think this goes beyond some college nicknames. Now what is it you two haven’t told me?”

“Amy, you don’t understand. I’m trying to tell you we are who we said.”

“Stop it. I’m tired and grumpy and I don’t want to play.”

Thanatos looked over her head at the other man and shrugged as if to say *Tag, your turn.*

Hypnos reached out and caught one of her hands. “Amy, we think that you are being hunted by Keres. That is why some strange things have been going on.”

“Oh and you’re here to protect me?”

“Yes, and to seduce you, like before.”

Thanatos could feel Amy’s body stiffen up with Nos’ words. She glanced at each of them in turn, her expression a mixture of aggravation and confusion “What do you mean?”

“The dream when we both came to you. As fun as that was, I think the three of us could enjoy each other a bit more.”

* * * *

Amy felt like a mass of tumbled emotions rolled inside her. Being cocooned between the two of them made it difficult to pay attention to what they were trying to tell her. Not to mention the ridiculousness

they were spouting. She shoved and they dropped their arms, allowing her to step away and get some space. Her traitorous skin prickled from the lack of comforting warmth they had provided.

“Deedee told you about that, didn’t she?” She must have told them about the dream. *How else would they know?* “I’ll kill her. Listen, I’ve had a brutal day and I’m not in the mood for this. Don’t pick fun, I had an erotic dream and that’s all.”

Not wanting to continue the conversation she headed to the house. She knew that they both followed her. She stomped over to the cupboard and pulled out the kettle. She needed a cup of tea and it gave her something to do with her hands.

“Why is this so impossible for you believe?” She turned and faced Nos as he spoke to her. “Flora told you all about us.”

“Why is it impossible?” She shook her head as Than leaned back against a counter. Nos stood a bit closer but each had wariness about their stance, as if they were unsure what her reaction would be and wanted to have all possibilities covered. “Are you listening to yourself? They are stories, mythology.” She turned away from them, opening and closing each cupboard door as if she looked for the tea.

“All myths start with the truth. Sometimes all you need is to believe in them.”

Angry tears pricked at the corners of her eyes. How could they tease her like this? She blinked away the tears and turned to face them. “You both want me to believe that you are an ancient Greek god. A myth created to explain the normal day to day functions of the world around an ancient people.”

“Pretty much. Except about the myth part.” Nos walked over and opened the cupboard behind her head and handed her a box of tea bags. “You know it’s not that crazy.”

“Try being on this side of your story. I start to believe in that and then I have to believe in everything else.” She accepted the box from him and pulled a bag from inside. “Remember all the problems that

happened when all those kids couldn't distinguish between real life and *Dungeons and Dragons*?"

Than rolled his eyes "Oh, come on, Amy. You don't believe for one moment that this is the same situation. Give us some credit. We're grown men not a bunch of socially inept teenagers."

"Next you're going to tell me that Atlantis was home to a race of aliens."

"No, it wasn't. The innocent and naive population of Atlantis ended up as cannon fodder in a godly war they never understood. As much as I would love to debate this, we have more important issues to deal with."

"Oh, like the fact that you two sound insane. Fine, if you're gods, then do something godly. Prove it."

Nos pushed himself off the counter and glared at her. "I don't have to prove a damn thing to you. I've been down that path before."

He walked out of the room, leaving her standing there holding a box of tea. She turned her gaze on Than. "What did I say? It isn't an unreasonable request."

"No, but it's not one we can fulfill."

"Convenient."

"Amy, we vowed to seduce you in a human fashion. We have been forbidden to use any of our natural gifts, which puts us at a distinct disadvantage. Especially since the creatures that are trying to hurt you are not under the same restriction."

"It can't be real. None of this. It's too crazy. I just want a normal life."

"Normal, compared to what? Your life has been full of richness and you haven't seen any of it. You gave up and allowed a man to control almost your every thought. He spoke and you did what you were told."

"I didn't tell you about Geoff."

"No you didn't, Flora did."

"That is exactly what you want me to do."

“No, not at all. We want you to come to us out of your own free will. I want you to submit to me because I understand what you need. We want you in our life and trust us to care for you as much as we need you to care for us.”

“Hypothetically speaking, what can I do for a couple of gods? I have no powers. There isn’t anything great about me.”

“That is where you are completely wrong, and no one can make you see that until you are willing to see it. You are our bridge.”

“How? Boring you to death.”

“Have you seen either of us fall asleep when you are around?” He invaded her personal space and pressed his erection against the small of her back. “Does this feel as though I am bored around you?”

“No.” Her voice caught in her throat.

“Exactly. You do have a gift for relaxing people, for calming them. That is the bridge between myself and Nos.”

“I don’t think I understand.”

“You’re an open minded person that people are willing to talk to. Talking helps to get their worries off their minds and they relax, which in turn means they open themselves up to other possible solutions.

“Now you are trying to draw me into your delusions. I do not have anything special about me. I’m just me and that is all.” She pulled the plug of the kettle, not interested in the tea anymore. She wanted to get away from all this talk about myths being real.

“If that is all you believe, then that is all you will ever be.”

“Thank you, Yoda.” Her lips curled as she snipped at him before leaving the room. Stomping up the stairs to her room might not be the most mature think to do at the moment, but then she didn’t feel very mature. Part of her wanted to run away. The two men had shaken up her entire life with their presence, shaken up her beliefs.

She might have fantasized about it but hadn’t expected the possibility that they would be interested in her. If she were honest, she would admit to herself that she feared getting too attached to

them. What if they became bored with her as well? That is, as long as Than told the truth about both of them being interested in her. Nos had already left the room when he mentioned it.

She paced the oval carpet in her room, thoughts tumbling over and over, quicker and quicker. How had everything become a jumble so fast?

Her bedroom door swung open. Nos stood in the doorway.

“You want proof, Amy?” He raised his hand, opened his palm and blew her a kiss.

* * * *

Amy woke up feeling completely refreshed. The clock on her night table told her she had been out for a few hours but she felt as though she had slept for twenty-four. She couldn't remember the last time she had slept so soundly. She didn't even remember crawling into bed. The last thing she recalled...

She sat straight up. Nos had blown a handful of dust at her, or a kiss? Did he actually cause her to fall asleep? That had to be exhaustion coloring her memory. Either that or perhaps he had managed to get his hands on some ether? Ground up sleeping pills? Not likely, and besides, neither man would hurt her. Deedee never would have recommended them to her. She knew she owed each of them an apology for being an immature bitch earlier. Concern for their mental health didn't give her the right to speak to them like that.

Arguing with them wouldn't help. If anything, it might cement the delusions in their heads. She needed to figure out a way to help them. Maybe convince them both to go see a doctor. At least if they stayed at the house she could make sure they didn't get into any trouble. She could keep them safe. It would be so easy to allow herself to be convinced. She almost believed that a pack of Keres played with her, teasing her with what they could do to her, before choosing something incredibly violent to happen to her.

That paled against the revelation Than had said about him and Nos being interested in her. She had to have heard that wrong as well. Nos wasn't there, so perhaps only Than felt that way? That possibility made her feel sick. She wasn't about to be the other man, or woman, as the case may be.

A soft tapping heralded Nos peeking around the door. "She's awake," he said over his shoulder and then pushed the door completely open, revealing Than behind him.

She rubbed her forehead and took a deep breath. "I'm sorry for being so nasty before."

"Amy, don't worry about it. We piled a bunch of stuff on you at the worst possible time."

Nos sat down on the edge of the bed. Than rested his hands on the thick wood of her footboard. Both men looked at her so intently it made her nervous.

She glanced at Than, feeling an intense heat building deep within her. Looking over at Nos didn't make it go away, it only burned hotter and spread along her limbs. This wasn't going to work. Telling them about her attraction to them would cause more trouble. The idea of being the cause of a break-up made her physically sick. Her head started to throb. This wasn't going to go away and would only get worse if not stopped now. "I've been thinking that perhaps I would do better on my own."

"No!" they both snapped.

Nos's hand covered her mouth before she ever saw him move. "Amy, let's just forget about all that for now."

She reached up and smacked at his arm. Her words muffled against his palm. Than reached forward and placed a hand over her blanket covered foot. "Amy, we spoke while you slept." He gently rubbed the sole of the foot with his thumb through the covers. The pressure from Than's thumb distracted her from saying anything.

"How about you come out on a date with us tonight?"

That caught her attention. She immediately looked to see Nos's reaction.

He answered her unspoken question. "I think it's a great idea."

Than switched to the other foot and gave it the same relaxing treatment. "We'll get out of the house and have some fun. There is a traveling rave being hosted tonight that we've enjoyed in the past."

She loved dancing and hadn't been out to a club in ages. Now that Nos seemed to agree with the idea, she wasn't exactly sure what she thought. Two men? She hardly knew what to do with one. Only one way to find out. "A rave? What's it like?"

"It's a surprise." Nos rubbed her leg before standing. "Trust us, you'll love it."

"Okay, but what should I wear?"

"I took the liberty of picking out an outfit for you. It's hanging in the bathroom." Than wrapped an arm around Nos. He rested his head on Than's shoulder. "Take your time. There isn't any rush. We'll meet you downstairs when you are ready."

He turned, took Nos by the hand and led him out of the room.

"Nos? What did you blow in my face?"

She watched amazed at how their relaxed posture changed. Nos turned with a questioning look on his face. "I have no idea what you are talking about, Amy."

"Oh. I guess I didn't see what I thought saw. I must have been more tired than I thought."

"That must be it," Than answered and laid a hand across the back of Nos's neck. "We'll meet you downstairs. I have to talk to Nos."

If the harsh whispering that went on as they headed downstairs indicated anything, Nos had done something to piss Than off. She sat there and wondered for a moment how everything suddenly changed. Five minutes ago, the best course of action she felt would be for them to move out. Now, she was about to get ready to go out on a date with them?

A part of her thought that she should be annoyed by Than's high-handed action but then his dominant side turned her on as well. She had a moment to think about it and then decided to go for it. What the hell. As long as she kept her feet on the ground and didn't get too caught up in their fantasies, how could one evening hurt? What kind of woman in her right mind would pass up the chance to go out with both of them? The idea made her stomach clench and languid tendrils of heat stretched through her body.

After a long shower and taking great care in her makeup, Amy looked at herself for the umpteenth time in the mirror, amazed by her reflection. She didn't look any different but felt like she stood at the edge of a new life. Would she be brave enough to step across? "You are going insane," she told the woman staring back at her. "But at least you look good."

She must be out of her mind. They hadn't told her anything more about this rave they were going to. The dress that Than had laid out for her was one of the few very dressy things she owned. Wouldn't something a bit more clubbish be appropriate? Her life seemed to have made a subtle turn into the *Twilight Zone* over the past few weeks. She missed not having Flora around to talk to or phone at a moment's notice. A sharp pain clenched her heart but she took a deep breath knowing that her granny would be the first to push her to go.

She left her room, pulling at the neckline of her dress. It felt like the girls were going to pop out at any moment. Perhaps this wasn't the best choice? Her old, trusty black sheath hung in the closet but that seemed much too funerally and that wasn't how she wanted to feel tonight.

Her feet stopped moving when she entered the living room where the guys waited for her. Sex on a stick, beefcake, hunka burning love. Any and every cliché shot through her head and she looked them over, much as they did her. She stumbled forward a couple steps, feeling anything but graceful.

Than caught her hand and bent slightly before he brushed a kiss across her knuckles, nipping slightly at the skin. “You look delicious.”

With his lips curled in a grin, Nos stepped up and placed a chaste kiss on her lips. His hand captured her free one.

His fingers gently traced the deep V to her dress, scratching ever so slightly the sensitive skin between her breasts. The shiver that caused shot straight down, making her wonder what it would feel like if he did that between her legs. She allowed herself to sway closer to him, turning her face up.

“All in good time,” Than crooned in her ear, breaking the spell that seemed to have woven around them.

“The two of you clean up nicely,” she managed to get out. She wanted to maintain her cool, composed distance. Considering how she just acted, that was going to be harder than she thought.

Than wore white, from his tuxedo pants and vest to shirt and tie. His jacket was tailored to those broad shoulders with a thin, black ribbon that followed the line of his lapel and another across the top of each pocket. The tuxedo had a long jacket that reached halfway down his thighs, accentuating his long legs.

Nos’s black tuxedo, without a collar, looked Oriental in style. A black, shiny ribbon ran along each edge of the opening of his jacket. Where Than wore a tie, Nos had a white, V-shaped scrap under his collar.

After seeing the two of them, she immediately felt better about what she was wearing. Nos moved around her and gently slid his fingers under her hair to the front of her neck. Amy felt something cool drape over the sensitive skin. When his fingers moved, she could see the reflection of a silver choker in the mirror hanging on the wall.

Tiny, intricate links created a delicate lace pattern across her skin. In the center a crescent moon carved out of a luminescent stone hung from a larger loop. Its beauty was diminished only by the fact that it looked a bit more like a collar than she wanted to admit.

“What’s this?” she asked hesitantly. Than stepped up behind her and looked at her over her right shoulder in the mirror.

“A gift,” he replied simply.

“It looks like a collar. You don’t have the matching leash?”

Than’s eyes flashed dangerously, sending a chill down her spine. Perversely enough she also felt the beginnings of warmth between her legs.

“Only if you ask nicely.” Nos grinned over her left shoulder and kissed her neck. “This is so everyone will know that you are ours.”

“Yours?”

“Ours.” Than slid a hand around her waist and rested it heavily on her hip. Her body reacted to his fingers gently playing with her hipbone as Nos’s fingers caressed a path down her arms and captured her hand.

“Where exactly are we going? I’m not so good with surprises and the fact that you feel the need to mark me as a possession.” Her cautious nature took over again. “I don’t know if tonight’s such a good idea.” Her body reacted so quickly to the two of them, she might be the one to make the first move before they ever left the house, a fact that excited her more than it scared her.

“Amy, let us take care of you. Stop your worrying or analyzing and let it be.”

Her gaze shifted from Nos’s playful gaze to Than’s intense one. Beneath both looks lay a heat that reminded her they couldn’t possibly be real. No man, let alone men, looked at her this way.

“Do you trust us?” Than asked suddenly

“No.” That might not be the response they wanted to hear, but she wasn’t going to lie to them. Instead of getting angry like she expected, Than grinned at her. Now why would that answer make him happy? Unless he responded more to her honesty than her answer?

“Then, perhaps by the end of tonight, you will.”

They drove to the harbor front and pulled up in front of an old, abandoned warehouse. The vicinity looked deserted and silent except

for the soft slapping of the waves against the dock posts. All Amy's nerves suddenly stood at attention and once again she questioned her sanity for coming to a place like this.

"Stop worrying. The place is sound-proofed. Bacchus doesn't advertise nor does he appreciate party crashers. At least not the kind that frequent places like this."

"Bacchus?" She stopped walking and looked back and forth between them. "You mean...?"

"Yes, the same. No one throws a party like him."

"Are you certain this is the place?"

They both patted the hand resting on their arms and propelled her forward. Here she walked in a part of town where the most murders occurred, all dressed up with two men who believed themselves deities right out of Greek mythology. Men she already admitted she didn't trust.

They were about four feet away from the front door when a red carpet appeared below their feet. The rusted warehouse door in front of them morphed into an opulent carved entrance with a rather large Minotaur barring the way.

She blinked in surprise and quickly looked at each man, who didn't seem surprised at all. What the hell? Her brain scrambled for a logical solution. Mirrors! That had to be it. The carpet and door didn't appear out of nowhere. It had to be some mirror or light trick that made it appear to have changed. Lots of special effects companies specialised in this sort of thing. The other day she saw a street magician on TV who made it look like he could levitate. These people must just have the same knack for diverting attention from things. As for the large half man-half bull bouncer, yeah that could easily be a costume. A creepy, intimidating costume.

He stared at her and snarled, unnerving her. She stumbled slightly, and both men moved to cup her elbow in perfect synchronicity.

"She ain't welcome here." His deep voice sounded like rocks being ground together.

“She’s our guest. Move your ass,” Nos said calmly.

“Her kind don’t pass this door. I have my orders.” The grinding reply was accompanied by his crossing of his rather large arms over his barrel chest.

Than turned on the bouncer and snarled, “Fuck your orders.”

The creature’s eyes filled with fear as he stumbled back out of the way. “Many apologies, Master, I didn’t recognize—”

Her companions swept her past the frightened creature without sparing it a second glance.

“What was that all about?” The second they cleared the threshold, Amy could hear the pounding music ahead. She tried to look over her shoulder to see the creature again but the large door closed, blocking her view.

“All creatures fear death.” Than pushed open a second door, “Don’t worry about him, Minotaurs love to be a pain in the ass.”

The inside of the warehouse had transformed into something more spectacular than words could describe. A red velvety substance lined the walls. It shifted and waved as if a breeze blew over it, but she couldn’t feel one.

Suspended from above, wrought iron chandeliers holding two dozen candles each, warmed the hallway with their flickering light.

“This cannot be real,” Amy murmured as she lifted her hand from Nos’s arm and stretched to gently stroke the waving velvet. It was thick and luxurious against her hand. She could imagine leaning back on it and having it cradle her body. “I could handle a bed made out of this.”

“That’s the idea.” The look on Than’s face tempted her again to say to hell with the night and go find a bed somewhere.

“Huh?”

“Just imagine how comfortable it would be if one of us pinned you up against the wall.”

“Oh, my.” She had to blink a few times, not that it cleared the visual her brain supplied.

The room opened up from the narrow doorway. Hundreds of creatures lined a bar that ran along the room's perimeter. Opulent drapes lined the walls, creating a palatial effect. From the ceiling hung eight large rectangular cages. Within each cage, a scantily clad woman danced seductively. On the far wall ahead of them, two staircases circled up to a mezzanine. Many had found refuge from the crowd up there and looked down, watching the packed dance floor.

Creatures in all types of dress, conservative and not, surrounded them as they moved through the crowd. A tall, beautiful woman with golden hair walked past them, her head held high, a gold leash in her hand. The leash was hooked to a collar around the neck of a man...a centaur? His shoulders and torso looked to have been carved from bronze, while the equine body looked like velvet over steel. And dangling between his legs...Her eyes widened in shock. Now she understood where that term came from.

"You're staring," Nos breathed in her ear, and she snapped her head forward.

Than chuckled and lifted a hand to kiss her knuckles. "Believe me, two are better than one."

"I need a drink." This had to be some sort of cult or fantasy group that organized this, like those people who liked to dress up in animal suits and go to orgies. Similar idea, only these people must have a lot more money to pull off meetings this elaborate. Their costumes looked so real. If she wasn't so sure of the truth, then she could easily have fallen for all this.

The men led her over to a long bar and she hopped up onto a stool. Nos took position on her left, leaning back against the bar, while Than faced the same direction as her on her right. His hand rested on her lower back, and she could feel the heat through the thin silk. Her nipples tightened in anticipation.

"What can I get you?" a low voice asked. She looked up and clenched her teeth to stop her mouth from dropping. Without a doubt, he was one of the most unusual looking men she had ever seen. His

sharply angled features surrounded eyes the color of freshly dug earth. Pointed ears peeked out from under messy, spiky hair. Dozens of thin leather strips woven into a tank top covered the bartender's broad chest. Below that, another woven piece protected her from seeing it all, but the thick, muscled, furry legs and cloven hooves astonished her.

When a large hand caressed her bottom, she realized that she had stood up on the stool's footrest and leaned over the bar to get a good look at what the bar hid.

She dropped heavily down on the stool and levelled a look at Thanatos. Why didn't he stop her from doing something so silly?

He shrugged nonchalantly. "I couldn't resist."

She still glared at him slightly before turning her attention back to the bartender

"Forgive me. That was rude."

"Don't worry, sweetheart, I consider myself well compensated." At her questioning look, the grinning bartender motioned to the front of her dress.

Dammit, she had forgotten about that! The deep V had given him a free view of almost everything she had to offer. If only a large hole would open up at her feet.

"What would you like, miss?"

"Vodka martini." Nos rested a large hand high on her thigh, his long fingers a hair's-breadth away from the juncture of her legs. "Make that a double," she squeaked.

Than rested his hand on the back of Amy's neck and lightly scraped the sensitive skin with his finger tips. A rush of goosebumps broke out over her arms and she had to work to stifle the shiver that ran along her body. She took a shaky breath as the bartender moved away to make their drinks and then turned on the boys. "Stop that."

"Why?" Nos made small circles on her skin, his fingertips slipping under the hem of her dress. Her tummy clenched and heat flooded her.

Than stepped closer, pressing himself against her arm, letting his hand slide down her spine in a gentle caress. “Why?” he purred.

“What if someone sees and it’s not...I mean...” She could feel her skin heat and knew that she was blushing again. In this dress there wouldn’t be any chance of hiding it. She tried to pull her scattered thoughts together. Nos’s fingers slipped higher under her skirt as Than slid his hand up and around her body, stopping under one breast.

“But no one will care, Amy,” Nos breathed into her ear. “Not in this place.”

“This is the fun part.” Than leaned over and brushed her shoulder with his lips.

Amy felt bombarded with emotions, like the ocean beating against a sandy beach. Feelings of insecurity were quickly overwhelmed by empowerment, embarrassment swiftly overtaken by boldness. An inferno of heat soaked her silk panties and throbbed against her clit. Part of her desperately wanted to let go, to accept what these men offered, but if she did that, would she have to accept what they told her about themselves? *What if they are telling the truth?* Than gently bit the skin at the base of her neck, startling a gasp out of her.

“You’re thinking too much, precious. Here.” Nos handed her a triangular glass. Her hand shook slightly as she reached for it and swallowed half the contents in one gulp.

“That’s my girl.” He grinned and she felt, more than heard, a chuckle against her neck where Than continued to kiss.

Long, warm fingers pressed against the wet silk between her legs. She jumped. The movement was blocked from anyone’s view by the size of the two men. The remainder of her martini sloshed close to the rim of the glass. She looked back and forth between them. Differing shades of brown eyes held mirrored expressions, white-hot heat behind heavy lids.

“Drink and we’ll dance.” Than rubbed her intimately. A shiver danced down her spine.

Another large swallow emptied her glass. The warmth burned its way down and spread artificial calm over her limbs.

Nos lifted her from the stool and each claimed a hand as they walked out to the dance floor. A haunting song flowed out over the crowd. The strains felt like a pleasure not consummated and her body reacted to the earlier touches in her memory. Than claimed her, caressed her arms as he led them to his neck. Nos stepped up behind her and rested his hands on her hips. Any other time she might have felt claustrophobic, trapped between two large men. Yet the music pounding in her chest matched her quickened heartbeat, along with the sense that the two of them protected her from the crowd around them, made it easy to feel as though they alone owned the floor.

They weren't, not by a long shot, but no one paid them any direct attention. Everyone enjoyed themselves, dancing however they felt. It suggested freedom in the truest sense of the word, but she wasn't used to it and could feel her cheeks warming faster than the rest of her. *What did they expect from her? What should or shouldn't she do?*

"Amy, relax. There aren't any rules, no specific expectations. You don't have to do anything you don't want to or aren't comfortable with," Nos whispered in her ear before kissing where her neck met her shoulder.

One of Thanatos's hands laid on her hip, the other reached over her shoulder, touching Nos behind her, she supposed. "We can feel your thoughts, every time you start to tense up. Stop worrying about what happens next. Have some fun and let the night do what it wants."

The three of them rocked back and forth, slowly, sliding their bodies against each other. She could feel Nos gather the front of her skirt up in his fingers but didn't feel as if she had the strength to stop him.

Thanatos's hands slid down her arms to her breasts. He pinched and kneaded her nipples into hard points, before he bent forward and kissed her neck. His lips slid down in the deep V of her dress and

gently slipped the fabric aside to latch onto a hard nipple. He laved it with his tongue before he gently bit down.

She cried out and then stiffened, embarrassed by her lack of control. She couldn't let go of the fact that they currently danced in the middle of a crowd of strangers. Than straightened her dress and grinned a wolf's smile down at her. "I can't wait to taste the rest of you."

"Not here." She looked around and still, other than a couple amused glances, she didn't see a single look of shock or censure.

"Not on the dance floor you mean?" Hypnos reached over her shoulder and drew Thanatos's face closer to her shoulder. Than crowded her and kissed the other man, right there in front of her. It wasn't the first time she had seen the two of them kissing. Her experience that morning would attest to that. But to be so close to them when it happened? She stretched up and pressed her lips to Than's jaw while Nos claimed his lips. His skin felt silky smooth, and moved slightly as he and Nos continued to kiss. As she slid her lips along his jaw, he moaned.

His hand trembled where he gripped her hip tightly enough to bruise. An insane part of her wanted him to mark her, wanted both of them to brand her as theirs, a lust-induced craving that both excited and terrified her. Their lips locked in a passionate kiss, but she didn't feel like a third wheel at all. They were focused on each other but gripped her tightly between them. Watching them gave her an immense amount of pleasure. The music throbbed around them and she began to sway to the beat, rubbing herself against her dance partners.

"I swear by the Styx, you two will have me acting like an inexperienced boy in a moment." Than looked down at her. His eyes had darkened with pleasure and looked as black as night.

She shivered but not in fear. He looked like a man who had just found his heart's desire.

“Than? Let’s find somewhere we can test our limits.” The edge to Nos’s voice spoke volumes.

Than grasped both her and Nos’s hands and headed toward a shadowed walkway. She hesitated slightly. Nos scooped her up in his arms, pressing his lips next to her ear. “No pressure, Amy. We are here to have fun, to enjoy ourselves, but you can say stop whenever you want.”

“That would make me a tease.”

“Thankfully we are old enough to be past adolescent name calling. If you want, you can watch and we can give you a show. To be honest, I would be much happier if you joined in with us.”

Than navigated a path through the crowd and Nos followed with her in his arms. If he felt her weight at all, he didn’t show it and never wavered. They entered a small room, more like an alcove, with a small, padded bench. That didn’t distract her as much as the rings embedded into the wall. Nos gently set her on the floor, keeping her tightly against him. Than unhooked a heavy looking drape. It fell across the entry and gave them a bit of privacy.

“Finally some quiet.” Nos stood behind Amy and pulled her hair to the side, kissing her neck. She stared at the rings when Than’s form interrupted the view. Than reached out and gripped one of the rings, pulling on it as he stared at her. “Not this time, unless you want to?”

The idea sent another spark of arousal straight to the apex of her legs. She shook her head quickly, that might be a bit too much for her right now. Nos turned her in his embrace and wrapped his arms around her and pulled her hip to hip. His lips played with her, his tongue tangling, teasing, darting in for a taste before retreating so she would have to give chase. He smiled at her playfully before kissing the tip of her nose, making her laugh at his antics. She stroked the hair that framed his face, and any concerns or nervousness slipped away.

“Stop hogging her.” Than tugged her out of Nos’s embrace. “I want another taste.”

Smiling, she went willingly into Than's arms and rose to meet his lips. Where Nos was playful, Than's kisses were intense and focused. They both made her toes curl in her shoes in their own way. He traced a line down her neck with his lips and bit down on the muscle in her shoulder. Nos's fingers traced designs over her back and bottom, pausing so he could cup her ass and squeeze slightly.

Her legs shook and her knees felt like unsubstantial water. She would have fallen if Nos hadn't leaned her back against him, her body naturally arching against Than. He slipped a finger inside the neckline of her dress and pulled it back, revealing her bare breasts. He palmed them in his large hands, nuzzling his lips against the crease. His fingers scissored her nipples before pressing hot, open-mouth kisses in a path to one of them. As he tugged on one, he sucked the other, kicking up the trembling in her limbs.

She felt a cool breeze against her thighs and felt Nos bend slightly behind her. He slid his fingers between her legs and caressed the sopping folds. She was already so close but as she reached a peak they both backed off, easing her down again. The three of them continued to move, rocking to the haunting tones around them. Her body strained to arch against both men. Her hands, desperate for some grounding, gripped Nos's steely thighs. His fingers of one hand parted her pussy lips and the other stroked the petal-soft skin. She felt a thick hardness pressed against her back and knew that he enjoyed this as much as she did.

The music seemed to change in harmony with her heart rate. It danced over her heightened senses, pulsated into her wet pussy and vibrated her nipples as Than suckled and bit them. The slight pinch morphed into pure pleasure. She dropped her head back against Nos's shoulder and panted. She rocked her hips against the friction of his fingertips.

At the same time Than slipped a long finger inside her tight passage and wrung a cry from her lips.

“That’s it, Amy,” Nos crooned in her ear. “Let go. Show us how passionate you are.”

Than’s head lifted from her chest and while his hand continued to torture her nipples, he slipped another finger deep within her. “Come for us, precious. I want to feel your juices soak my fingers. I want to hear you scream out your pleasure. Over the music.” He kissed her deeply, plunging his tongue into her mouth, sweeping her away on a carpet of erotic heat. Intense shivers radiated from her spine, dancing along her limbs.

“We are going to take you at the same time, Amy,” Nos whispered against her neck. His hand cupped her breasts and pinched her nipples between his fingers. “I know you are going to love it. You will be so full of us. We are going to make you very happy, and I swear you will never have to worry about anything.”

Than pumped her pussy to the beat of the thumping music, his thumb strumming against the small stiff nubbin just above.

“Oh god, don’t stop. Please don’t.” An orgasm vibrated from deep within her, before exploding against her skin.

“Now please, oh god, please. I want to feel you inside me. I want you both. She cried out her release uncaring if they were still in the middle of a crowd of people. She needed them with an intensity she didn’t understand.

They stroked her, murmuring against her skin as her heart rate slowed back to normal. At some point they had moved to an oversized daybed, which she hadn’t noticed when they first entered. Cradled in Than’s lap, her legs stretched out over Nos’s tuxedo-clad thighs. Neither man was wearing a jacket. Their shirts were unbuttoned. Under her hand and through his silk shirt, she felt Than’s heart still raced. She opened her eyes and watched as he and Nos shared an incredibly passionate kiss. Their love was obvious in the look they shared as they separated. She found herself pinned under that intense look and she knew the truth. Both wanted her as much as each other. Silence hung in the air. They couldn’t wait a decision so soon?

“I don’t know.” The words tumbled from her mouth in a rush. They hadn’t even asked a question but she could feel their need for an answer.

A flash of disappointment shone in Than’s gaze before she looked to Nos who gave her an understanding smile. “There’s no rush, Amy. We’re not going anywhere.”

“Do you feel up to going back out there?” Than stroked a hand up her arm and lifted her fingers to his mouth. “Or do you want to leave?”

“We just got here not that long ago.”

“That’s what I like to hear.” Nos slipped out from under her legs and started buttoning his shirt. “The night is early and the party’s just started.

“What about you two?” Standing in front of her it was easy to see the tent in the front of Nos’s pants and feel Than under her bottom. “I mean it’s not fair to you two.”

“Later. There is something to be said for anticipation.” Than lifted her to her feet but kept his hands on her hips. A thoughtful act, because she didn’t feel entirely steady yet.

She danced for hours with them and saw creatures that defied explanation. By the end of the night she asked herself, *could it be real?*

Chapter 8

“Could they be gods?” The ceramic frog stared at Amy with lifeless eyes. Obviously not much help there if she really expected an answer. She crossed her legs, sat back in her chair, and sipped a steaming cup of tea. There wouldn’t be many nice mornings left before the mornings got too cold to sit out here. Even now she needed to have jeans and a sweater on to ward off the chill. The gardens looked in good repair despite Flora’s absence. Amy didn’t have near the same talent her granny did with plants. The ice pansies and hardy mums still bloomed in bright colors, and small, whimsical toad houses dotted the beds. Amy brushed a tear from her cheek. Her granny liked to say it was important to attract frogs to the garden. Not for bug control but more so because you never knew if one might be a prince in disguise. She often wondered if Flora kissed all the frogs that made it into their garden over the years and, considering her granny’s eccentricities, she wouldn’t have been surprised.

The remaining leaves rustled in the trees above her, shaking a few loose enough to fall down around her. *Did the wind have a god that controlled it? Would he be showing up on her doorstep?* That led to her thinking about which of the storybook gods she would want to meet if given an opportunity. What was so easy to believe last night was so much harder now. Not a single cloud marred the blue sky and the morning sun’s rays beat down on the back of her head and neck. She wanted to believe so very much

She couldn’t come up with any reason for them to lie, unless they were insane and that wasn’t the case. A true fact is that they had been in her dream and now resided in her house. One reasonable

explanation was that she could have seen them briefly in town and their images had embedded in her subconscious.

She lifted the mug and gently inhaled the minty scent before lowering it. She rolled her head around in hope of loosening up the tightness that had been developing there. *Okay, so what if they are not gods at all? They're normal guys with overactive imaginations?*

Ignoring the fact that a psychiatrist would say she needed lots of therapy for even entertaining the notion, what if they really were gods? It was an interesting idea but not rational. Regardless of who or what they were, could she handle being in a relationship with two men? Her dismal track record with one man proved pathetic at best. What made her think she could take on two men, a pair of gods no less? They must have had scores of women much better in the sack than she, so what kept their interest?

The obvious answer would be Pasithea. If the stories were true and her granny correct, then the two of them believed her to be some moldy, old goddess who had been destroyed long ago. Not a great compliment by any means. Raw emotion burned in her chest. Normally she wouldn't describe herself as having a jealous nature. It seemed silly to be jealous of a fictional character, but she was. She wanted them to love her for her and not because they wanted her to be someone else. *But, in a way, isn't that what I'm doing to them?*

"I have learned that when a woman is that deep in thought, it does not bode well for those around her," a deep male voice drew her out of her musings.

Amy looked up to see Than standing next to her. Wearing a thick camel sweater adorned with an intricate cable down the front, a pair of blue jeans and brown boots, he looked like a walking advertisement for lust. He had tucked some hair behind one ear. The rest hung straight. Instead of shining in the morning sun, it seemed to absorb the light, even though she could still make out the midnight blue highlights. A steaming mug was held in each hand.

“Especially when she is so deep in thought that she doesn’t realize that her tea is cold.”

She looked down at her own mug. It looked cold, a milky film coating the surface.

“How long have I been out here?”

“I have no idea, but it’s a beautiful morning so I wouldn’t worry about it. Fresh air is good for you.” He took the mug she was holding. “Here, have a hot replacement.” He handed her one he brought out, and placed the cold one on the small table next to her.

“But...” she stammered, his thoughtfulness robbing her of words.

“Stop worrying. I brought a second for myself.” He grinned as he plucked the second small chair from its resting place and placed it next to hers, facing the opposite direction. When he bent over to set the chair down she caught a delectable view of his denim-covered ass. Sitting down, he stretched his long legs out in front of him. He cupped his own mug in his hands and rested them against his chest. He grinned at her. “We’ll save the cold one for Hypnos. If he ever gets his ass out of bed, that is.”

“Well, I would imagine the god of sleep needs lots of it.”

He glanced quickly at her, an eyebrow raised slightly. “You sound like you are starting to accept the truth, and I wish I could believe it, but I can still feel the disbelief in you.”

“I want to believe.”

He waved a hand at her to stop. “Forcing yourself will only create more doubts. Relax and let your intuitions do the work.”

She snorted softly. She had been trying to do that, but her thoughts ran around in circles like a dog after its own tail. “It seems strange that you are comfortable in the sunlight.” That earned her a strange look

“Why wouldn’t I be? I’m not a vampire. Of course I love the sunshine for all the same reasons you do. It’s relaxing when you have too many things on your plate.”

“Are you telling me that there are vampires in the world?”

"I didn't say anything of the sort." He grinned. Than captured one hand and gently kissed the backs of her chilled fingers, his lips warm and soft against her skin. "Why don't you figure out whether you believe in gods, then we can move on from there?"

She had the distinct impression that he was teasing her, but one could never be completely sure of anything when talking to someone who believed themselves to be Death.

"Tell me about this Pasithea? Did Zeus really destroy her?"

"Yes," Than replied softly.

"The two of you loved her very much, huh?" She felt another sudden stab of jealousy over a forgotten goddess.

"As much as I could," he replied, his eyes taking on a distant look. "Pasithea couldn't handle certain aspects of my relationship with Nos and that kept a wall between us. Hypnos was completely besotted with her, and yet, after her death, the human race didn't suffer as much as I thought they would by his grief."

"What do you mean?"

"Other than an epidemic of insomnia that drove some humans mad, Hypnos seemed to bounce back fairly quickly. Over time, I have come to the belief that I'm not sure if he truly loved her or loved the idea of love."

"How tragic," Amy replied softly.

"Zeus's temper tantrum is what heralded the beginning of the end of the Olympian's reign. You see, when he killed the goddess of relaxation, the human race felt a drive that it had never known. No longer did they waste the days away, basking in all the gods had to offer. A demand for power over material things drove the human race. Slowly over time, Pasithea became a forgotten memory. The human race started to push themselves onward to bigger and better things.

"Science has ruled, as do religions featuring one true god. Over the centuries, the Olympians have weakened to the point of either revealing themselves or swan diving into the River Lethe to forget what they had once known."

She watched him closely as he spoke. A raw look of anguish crossed his features and desperation in his voice. *He must be describing his own feelings to a certain extent and using this elaborate story to hide behind.*

“What happened, Than? Why do you and Nos act like you two are really gods? Are you two hiding? If you would let me, I would like to help you.”

“What do we have to do to convince you, Amy? After everything you saw last night, why do you insist on believing that we are making it all up?”

She could see his anger in the hardness of his jaw and his abrupt movements as he spoke.

“Shall I create a coliseum on your behalf? Would that convince you that we truly are gods, or is that not good enough for you? Perhaps you would like to assume Pasithea’s place at our side?”

“I think I’m going to do some gardening.” She couldn’t go on listening to him talk like this. A few more sentences and they would start saying things they didn’t mean. At least she would. Could delusions be contagious the more one listened? Ignoring Than’s obvious displeasure, she placed her mug on the side table and walked down to the garden shed.

“Everything is going into hibernation if it hasn’t already.” His voice snapped as cold as the breeze.

“Bulbs. I’m going to plant bulbs. This is the time of year that you plant them, you know.”

* * * *

Than knew avoidance and denial when he heard it, both feelings he had too much experience with. Of course, being an asshole wasn’t going to convince her any quicker and would only frustrate matters further. He knew that a part of her wanted so badly to believe. Whatever grounded that wonderful free spirit of hers raised its ugly

head when she abruptly ended the conversation. No doubt she learned that trick from her ex. He wanted her to trust him enough to fight with him, to know that he would never harm her.

She had brought up Pasithea this time. He remembered the time they told her she and the dead goddess were one in the same, but had Nos mentioned to her that they no longer believed that? Because he knew he hadn't.

Placing his mug next to hers he followed her down the stepping stones. "Amy, wait. I need to ask you something," he called out just as she reached the small shed

"Whatever it is, it can wait." She turned to answer him as the shed door opened.

"Watch out!" He sprinted toward her horrified at what the opening door revealed.

* * * *

What sounded like a hundred gardening tools fell through the doorway, clattering noisily against the ground. Amy jerked to the side, her right hand grabbing onto the upper part of her left arm. Blinking in surprise, she stared at the spot she would have been standing if Than hadn't called out to her. A pair of large gleaming hedge clippers wavered slightly from the force of impact into the ground.

"Come here!" Than grabbed her roughly against his chest only to push her away a second later so he could check her over. She could hear him speak but didn't understand the words. The sunlight glinting off the sharp tools seemed to be the only thing she could focus on.

"Fuck's sake, Amy, you could have been killed! Where does it hurt? Did any of them get you?"

"Who moved the tools?" She stared at the garden tools feeling as though she had never seen them before or realized how dangerous they could be.

“Amy!” He gently cupped her chin and turned her head toward him. “Where does it hurt?”

She blinked and shook her head. Her eyes slowly focused on him. “Um, my arm.” She lifted her right hand away from the injured area. “I think one got me.” Her arm felt warm and sticky and her fingers had blood on them. A wave of dizziness washed over her and she swayed closer to him. “I don’t feel so good.”

“Let me look. Don’t touch it.” He turned her slightly to get a good look. Her skin burned, and the sensation blazed along her upper arm and up the back of her neck. Her head cleared when the intense flash of pain jolted her.

“Ow!” She smacked Than in the chest. “What did you touch it for?”

“Don’t be such a baby. There isn’t anything there. You got a light scratch. It just bled a lot for a moment.”

Lifting her arm, she twisted it and tried to have a look herself.

“Stop that. You will make it bleed again. I can see from here, it looks worse than it is.” He wrapped an arm around her and she let him lead her back to the house. “What did you say about the tools?”

“They are always at the back, never that close to the door. It’s too dangerous. What if I had been standing there?” A slight tremor ran through her body.

“You weren’t, so stop with the ‘what ifs’ for now.” He looked up and scanned the cloudless skies as they navigated the path back up to the house.

“Looking for something?” She scanned the sky around them, wondering what had caught his attention.

“Birds.”

“You’re kidding me.”

Nos almost ran into them as they entered through the sliding door. “I heard yelling. What happened?”

“I wanted to get some stuff out of the shed but some of the gardening tools fell out.”

“She got a scratch on the arm, though. Here, let’s get this off you. That way we can get a better look.”

They pulled the cozy sweater over her head and revealed her arm. She turned and looked over her shoulder at a small mirror that hung on the wall. A thin red scratch stretched from under the sleeve of the t-shirt almost to her elbow.

She twisted her arm to get a better look, “Oh, is it still bleeding?”

“Not now. Stop moving your arm so much, or it will start again.” She felt Than lifted her shirt sleeve up. “It wasn’t as bad as I first thought. You’ll be fine.”

“I’m going to go wash it anyway, to be safe,” she muttered and headed up to the bathroom, still trying to twist her arm to get a better view.

“Need some help?” Nos’s voice echoed along the hall.

“No, I’ll be fine. It’s a scratch. Back in a sec. Think about what you two want to do today,” she called out from the stairwell.

* * * *

“So, did you see them?” Hypnos asked Thanatos as soon as Amy was out of earshot.

“Keres? No, nothing, but this would be something they would do. I can’t believe those bitches had the nerve to get that close to me.” Thanatos fingered the large rip in the sweater’s arm and the blood soaking the sleeve. Had she been standing in front of the door, she’d be dead. “It’s amazing she only got cut.”

“How did the sweater get that bloody, her arm didn’t look so bad.”

Thanatos moved closer to the hallway and assured that the water was running upstairs, he answered.

“She had a wicked slice down the back of her arm. It was deep and bleeding.” Thanatos glanced around, concerned that Aphrodite would appear and call a forfeit to their agreement. Either she missed

all of this or had a rare moment of sympathy, willing to excuse his use of power because it saved Amy. “I took a chance and healed her without her knowing.”

“Holy shit, Than. If you could do that, then at some level she has accepted us as we really are, which might be why Deedee hasn’t ripped us a new one for that.” Hypnos gripped him in a tight embrace.

“I thought of that too.” He stroked Hypnos’s back and briefly thought of what it would be like to finally share her. “She is so close to believing in us. I don’t want to jeopardize that by pushing too hard.”

* * * *

Amy stood in the shower, the hot water pulsing over her head and down over her shoulders. She tried to figure out how the tools came to be stacked up against the door like that, and how the hell did she walk away with such a minor scratch? When she had entered the bathroom, she stood with her back to the mirror and took a good long look at the scratch on her arm. It looked like a cut that had healed and not a scratch. Hell, when it happened she could remember the feel of it slicing down her arm, the moment of panic when one knows that something really bad has happened but is afraid to look. But then to have Than glance at it and tell her it was nothing? And what about that weird heating in her arm when he stroked his hand over it? Could he have healed it?

Then, why didn’t he tell her? *Because you would not have believed him!*, a small voice in the back of her head sounded off.

She decided not to dwell on it any longer. More important right now was how the tools ended up that way. It could have been a freak accident, or maybe Jackass had stepped up the game a bit. Could he be trying to scare her off?

She washed her hair as her brain formulated dozens of logical questions but few logical answers, unless the crux of this problem was

that she continued to overanalyze. If someone wanted to get her or scare her off the property, they were doing a good job.

Both men sat reading when she came downstairs. They looked up as she entered the room, both wearing a guarded expression. Not that she could blame them.

Nos got out of his chair and approached her. He paused in front of her to look deeply into her eyes before he pulled her in close for a hug. She wrapped her arms around him and relaxed. "I know you don't believe us, Amy. Promise you will try?"

"I'll do what I can to make you feel better." She met the other man's gaze over Nos's shoulder.

Than's eyes narrowed slightly. He had caught her evasive answer. Nos no doubt did as well but chose to ignore it. Still, she wanted to help and needed to get her hands on some books on the subject.

"Do either of you feel like going out? I want to go to the library."

"Why would you need another book?" Nos looked over the expanse of shelving that held hundreds of books. "There is no way you have read all of these. Look at them all, a veritable plethora of learning at your fingertips."

"The library has what I want. This is mostly fiction anyway. I can run down on my own. It won't take more than an hour or so, and I promise I'll be right back."

Nos looked at her as if she was crazy. "Amy, you're not going anywhere by yourself until we figure out what is going on."

* * * *

The library had always been one of her favorite places, her fortress of solitude during those difficult teenage years. Drifting along a couple rows filled her arms with potential information. She turned down another row and disappeared behind a rack stuffed with all sorts of books on mythology. That had her eyebrow twitching. There was a

possibility that she could catch them in a lie and make them admit to being normal guys with extraordinary ideas.

There were so many to choose from, hard covers, trades, and the odd paperback. She flipped through each one, reading up on the gods of sleep and death. The eighth book confused her more than the seven before. So many texts contradicted each other. A copy of *Bulfinch's Mythology* appeared in front of her.

"Here. This is one of the better ones," Nos's voice drifted down from above her. "Amy, if you want to know anything, ask."

She nodded and opened her mouth, wanting to say something but didn't know what. She wanted to believe them but it was too fantastic, too out there, not a possibility in this reality.

A shadow passed behind his eyes and his gaze darkened. "Or are you still trying to find ways to prove that we don't exist?" His low, husky voice both thrilled and scared her. He held out a hand and she slipped hers into it, letting him pull her to her feet. "What do I have to do to prove to you that we are who we say we are? Parlor tricks? I refuse to do that, you know that, and Thanatos isn't any different. But right now, I think that I need to prove something else to you."

"What is that?"

"That regardless of who you think we are or want us to be, you still crave me as much as I crave you." His lips came down on her hard, obviously punishing her for doubting their word. His hand gently stroked her back before sliding down over her ass and down to the hem of her short skirt. She could feel her body readying for him, the hot wetness seeping out from between her nether lips.

She reached back and stopped him. "We can't do that here," she whispered through her teeth. "What if someone sees?"

He frowned and then nodded, sending a wave of resigned disappointment through her.

"You're right." Grasping her shoulders, he turned her and placed her hands on the shelf in front of her. "You keep watch."

“Nos. No. You can’t.” She looked through the shelves quickly. *Is anyone watching?* Her fingers gripped the shelves, tingles shooting down her arms in anticipation. He wouldn’t. This was part of a game he liked to play, trying to set her on edge again.

“Yes, I can,” he whispered against the back of her neck before she felt him slide down behind her, nipping one of her butt cheeks through her skirt.

“Would you stand up?” Part of her wanted him to completely ignore her demands. The idea of being caught made her hot and damp. Never had anyone encouraged this side of her, a side she herself had never encouraged. Good, safe Amy wanted to learn this lesson about what she had only read about.

“Keep watch, Amy. God, I can smell you from here. This really makes you hot, doesn’t it?”

She groaned and her cheeks heated. “Noooo.”

“Don’t lie to me.” His fingers slipped up the back of her skirt, tugging at the back of her thong, teasing down the seam between her cheeks.

“Oh, please tell me you wore this just for me.”

She turned and looked down at him with all intention of denying everything. The lie died in her throat when she saw the naked hunger in his eyes. He licked his lower lip in a blatantly sexual move and tugged her panties down to her ankles.

“Now turn around and look through the shelves and watch to see if anyone comes back here. You don’t want to get caught, do you? Have someone find you with a big bad god between your legs, eating this tasty pussy of yours?”

She took a quick look around, not really caring anymore if they had an audience. She felt him guide one foot up and free her completely from her panties. Then he pressed at her legs, widening her stance so he could kneel between them.

“Lean forward, my goddess.” He had her so hot already, but she wanted to feel his talented fingers on her skin. Her breath caught

when he pulled up the back of her skirt, exposing her to the cool air. A large hand pressed her forward a bit so that her delicate folds were completely exposed.

She gripped the shelf in front of her, waiting for the first stroke but it never came. Instead, Nos nipped and teased the backs of her thighs and knees. Her legs shifted slightly apart, encouraging him but still his ministrations moved to her inner thighs, forcing her to spread her legs farther apart until he practically sat beneath her. Her pussy throbbed in anticipation, creaming more the longer he made her wait.

“Nos... please... please don’t tease.”

“Keep watching, Amaryllis. You don’t want to get caught by an angry librarian, do you?” His hot breath feathered her sensitized skin. “Of course, if you want to be watched, I wouldn’t mind that, but you’re the one who likes to watch, aren’t you?”

He ran a finger lightly over her swollen clit, and her legs quivered. A soft moan escaped her lips.

“Oh, baby, you’re so wet for me,” he crooned, petting her swollen flesh with soft strokes. She tried to press against his hand, but he lifted it away before she could find any sort of relief. “So pink and swollen. I bet you would love for me to slip my fingers between these creamy folds and give you some relief.”

Her hands trembled and her eyes drifted shut. “Please”

* * * *

What had started out as simple teasing, something to do while she dragged him through this boring place had fast aroused him to the point of breaking his self control, not that he had much when it came to her.

Leaning forward, he pursed his lips and blew a stream of cool air right on the swollen folds of that puffy skin. She moaned deep in her throat and her knees shook again. Cupping her ass, he did it again. Right after, he pressed his hot tongue against her and gave her a nice

long lick, tasting the creamy skin, feeling it practically drip on his tongue.

She shook and pressed her pussy against his face. “I’m begging you, Nos, do it already.”

The pleading in her tone broke the final thread. He stood up behind her, wrapping his arms around her body, trapping her against him. Pressing his lips against the pulse in her neck, he felt it beat in time to the throbbing in his cock.

“Baby, I swear all I wanted to do is tease you, make this trip a bit more fun, but I need to be inside you right now.” He pressed a thigh against her ass, his hands kneading her breasts, then slipping underneath to play with her nipple. Amy’s entire body quivered, on the threshold of falling apart in his arms. “Listen to me, Amy. We have to be quiet, and you need to watch carefully.”

The soft purr of his zipper being lowered made her shiver again. “I’m going to press you forward and fuck you nice and hard, the way you like it.”

She whimpered as her knees buckled slightly. “Oh no...condom. Oh, please tell me you have one.”

He gritted his teeth together. If only she believed in him, then he wouldn’t have to delay their pleasure. He did take solace in the fact that she was as anxious as he was. A moment of thought solved the problem. He might not be able to use his powers where she could see, but making a condom sheath his cock behind her back didn’t break the rules.

“Don’t worry I have it covered. Lean forward, sweetheart, now you better keep watch and be quiet. We can’t get caught.”

She gripped the shelving unit and gave it a quick push. Thankfully, this part of the library was lined with old shelves, which were made from heavy wood that didn’t budge. Flipping her skirt up, he pressed the broad head of his cock against her opening. Gripping her hips tightly, he slowly pressed into her inch by inch. She was so wet. He eased deeper, keeping the pace tortuously slow. She pressed

back against him, but he chuckled and moved back, preventing her from spearing herself on him.

“You need this, don’t you, baby? Hold tight, and remember to be quiet.” He gripped her hips and pulled her back hard. He impaled her. She gripped him so tightly it danced on the verge of painful, but felt so incredibly good. Her pussy clenched around his cock, squeezing and spasming, bringing him right to the edge of exploding within her. Only Amy managed to almost have him coming from just entering her. As much as he would love to have this last the next couple of hours, sooner or later someone was bound to come back here. The last thing he wanted to deal with was possible police involvement.

“Hold tight, Amy, I’m gonna ride you nice and hard,” he purred. He pulled out to the tip of his cock, then pressed back in hard and deep, then again, picking up speed each time. She panted by the third time and writhed by the fifth. He had the sudden realization that this wasn’t going to last long as his balls tightened beneath him, sending a tingling down his legs. He leaned over her and slipped his fingers between her velvety folds while wrapping an arm around her waist.

With a single touch of his fingers, she started coming around him, clenching him so tightly that he could hardly pull out of her. Her body shook with the force of her orgasm as he continued to play with her hard little bud and pumped her with short, hard strokes. He ground himself against her until he, too, couldn’t hold back and spilled deep within her.

Leaning back against the wall, he cradled her against him, supporting her boneless body as they both recovered. Their harsh breathing eased and their heart rates slowed to a normal pattern.

“You okay?” he whispered down at her.

“Yeah, thank you, I feel much better now.” She sighed.

He laughed out loud.

A responding *sshhh* came from somewhere, and he grinned. Once Amy could stand on her own, he bent down to pick up the books she had chosen. “Come on, babe. Let’s go home. I’m starving.”

Chapter 9

Thanatos knew the moment that Hypnos and Amy got home something had changed. She wouldn't meet his eyes, and Hypnos looked like the cat that had caught the canary.

Than strode up to Hypnos and cupped his face, sharing an emotion-filled kiss. "You two have fun? How was she?" He heard her gasp behind him and smiled against the other man's lips.

"I highly recommend the experience and plan to indulge again. After I have a nap. She wore me out."

"Nos! I can't believe you would say that."

Thanatos looked over his shoulder at Amy. Her cheeks had gone pink, but a grin played at the corner of her luscious mouth, though she still couldn't bring herself to make eye contact with him. Good. Embarrassed he could handle, but if she was feeling ashamed, their relationship was in jeopardy already. She fidgeted where she stood but didn't try to run away. Shame. He would've enjoyed the chase and making sure she enjoyed it more when he caught her.

Before she moved another inch, he swept her up into his arms. Her lips were softer than Hypnos's and she wasn't as aggressive. There was a slight hesitation for a moment, but then she relaxed and accepted his ministrations. It was a rare treat to be accepted so quickly, given that most creatures gave him a wide birth. He slowly slid his hands along her, memorizing the curves of her body, looking forward to retracing this path with his tongue on her bare skin. After a moment's delay, which would have been so Hypnos could enjoy the impromptu show, Thanatos heard him head upstairs to their room.

Slipping his hands under her bottom, he pulled her higher against him. Her legs automatically wrapped around his waist, and he fought the sudden urge to drop to his knees and take her in the hallway.

She whimpered softly in her throat and wriggled against him. Such a delicate sign of submission made him want to howl in response.

An irritating knock sounded somewhere in the distance, which he happily ignored as he walked toward the steps. Amy wriggled again in his arms, only this time he realized she attempted to slip her legs from their enticing position.

“There’s someone at the door.”

“Ignore it, Amy. They’ll go away.”

“Dammit, it’s Jack. My neighbor. He can see us through the window. Better let me down because he’s a complete ass, and I guarantee he won’t go away.”

“I could kill him.”

* * * *

“Better not, but I appreciate the offer.” Amy stumbled slightly, her knees not all that sturdy at the moment. Reality crashed down around her. She had been well on her way to having sex with Than, not even an hour after having sex with Nos. Before they walked into her life, she wouldn’t have ever considered it. Now...well, things change. At least this should put those lesbian comments to rest.

Than looked furious.

She took a deep breath as the first wave of nerves washed over her. He wasn’t going to hurt her. His anger was toward the asshole on the other side of the door. Still, the sooner she got rid of Jack, the longer the jerk would live.

She opened the door just as Jack moved to pound on it again. Thankfully, he stepped back as she moved, allowing her to close the door behind her.

“What is it?” She could hear the bitterness in her tone and couldn’t be bothered to mask her contempt.

“I took the liberty of having some proposal papers drawn up for you.” He had a large orange envelope in his hand to give to her. He sounded as though they had discussed this in depth and he wasn’t trying to blindside her. “I’m sure you will find the offer more than generous. I’m not trying to screw you out of anything, Ms. Bitonu.”

No, you’re looking to screw me in other ways. The thought crossed her mind but she knew voicing it would only delay this little meeting.

Taking a couple steps forward, he invaded her personal space. She had to bend her neck to look up at him, a pinch forming at the base of her skull. She was unable to take a step backward as her back pressed against the door. He pressed forward, crowding her, but she refused to slide out of the way. She was going to stand up to this jackass, no matter what. “I don’t think—”

“Look at the proposal, Amaryllis.” His face was a façade of calm and charm, but his voice held an edge that sliced through her. He grabbed her arm tightly and lifted her closer to him. “I’m tired of dealing with you and playing your games, you little whore. The whole town knows what you are up to around here.”

“Like what?”

“The fact that you are entertaining two men. Hope they’re paying you well enough. Now, sign the fucking papers, or I will make sure you will regret it.”

“Amy, sweetheart, are you all right?” Than’s voice came from behind her neighbor and relief flowed through her body.

She didn’t care how Than and Nos had managed to appear behind him. She felt that warm feeling of security wrap around her shoulders. She didn’t have to face Jackass alone, but instead of charging in and taking over, they left the choice up to her.

She gave Jack a smug smile. “No, I’m not all right.”

Jack quickly let her go and spun on his heels to face the men behind him. If only she could see the look on his face when he saw who challenged him.

Jack might be a big, burly man who used his size to intimidate, but her guys' size came from muscle not fat. The look on Nos's face alone would have terrified the most hardened criminal.

"Hey there, nice to meet you. I'm Amaryillis's neighbor, Jack." As if using her full name gave the illusion of their being friends, he stuck out his hand to Than, giving them his best good-ole'-boy smile. "Known her since high school."

Than ignored the gesture. Jack dropped his hand.

"And that gives you the right to threaten her?" Nos's words sounded clipped and icy, as if the thinnest of threads stopped him from being violent.

"Threaten her? Hell, no. Amy, you weren't scared, right?" Jack looked back at her. She had shifted and now reclined against the doorframe, not about to say anything.

"You know, I dislike men like you." Than stepped up and got right in Jack's face. "You think you can use your size to intimidate, when you are a stupid liar who obviously doesn't understand the word 'no.'"

"This is all a misunderstanding. I didn't mean anything by it. I have her best interests in mind."

"Then, you will be leaving this property, as she has requested." Than held out his hand and Amy gave him the envelope. "You'll be taking these with you."

Jack stared at the papers and then gave both men a dark look.

"Goodnight," he said simply.

The three of them watched Jack hightail his cowardly ass down the driveway.

"Glad he backed down. I'm too tired to put up much of a fight." Nos rubbed his cheek and gave her a sleepy smile.

“I wondered if you were about to tear him apart.” Amy leaned against the doorframe waiting for her heartbeat to slow down. That entire altercation could have gone so many different ways.

“He’s not worth the effort or the explanation afterward.”

“I’ll make sure that he’s Keres’s bait.” Than gathered her up into his arms but paused instead of kissing her as she’d expected. “You going to sleep, Nos?”

“No. I read about something in the paper yesterday that interested me.” He slid his fingers into the hair at the back of Than’s neck, pulling him forward for a kiss. Their lips slid against each other in a passionate caress.

Amy’s heart tripped along. She had been on the receiving end of just such a kiss and could imagine exactly how it felt. The two men separated, and Nos treated her lips to the same experience. “You two have fun.” He smiled and strode down the walkway to the car.

Amy could feel herself blush again. He didn’t think they were going to...? A look up at Than confirmed that he had every intention of picking up where they’d been interrupted.

“Where do you think he’s going?”

“There is a sleep disorder clinic in the city. I think he’s gone to cause trouble, if you ask me.”

“Either that or the place will get a reputation of curing people in one stay.”

“He should get a job there, make himself feel useful.”

“I already thought he’s pretty helpful. In fact, you both have your uses.” She grinned mischievously. He gripped her hips and pulled her up off her feet. She wrapped her legs around his waist and her hands around his neck.

He laughed low, almost like a purr. “I can think of one or two games we can play since we have all this time alone.”

Walking them through the doorway, he kicked the door shut behind them. He started for the stairs, then seemed to changed his mind, and headed down the hall.

“Oh, and what would that be? *Scrabble? Monopoly?*” Her tummy muscles clenched at the dark look that seeped into his eyes, or could it be the way his hands fisted in the back of her shirt? She had come to realize that both men had different tastes. Than’s passions ran deep and Nos tended to bow to his directives. She thought him a perfect example of a true Dominant. She didn’t know that much about it, except what she had read in stories. He overwhelmed her senses and made her body ache. Geoff had liked to play domination games with her, but he’d enjoyed humiliating and hurting her. For the longest time, she’d thought that she deserved it. *That was then and this is now.* Geoff no longer controlled her. She had regained the ability to make her own choices.

Than carried her through the house to the living room. “I want you, Amaryllis.” Sitting her down on the edge of her desk, he sat in the chair. “I want to hear you screaming my name, and I want you to beg.”

Amy couldn’t say anything. Her throat had gone dry. Her playful lover had disappeared. Here and now, Death stood before her, slightly frightening but not violent. She trembled as he hooked his fingers on the waistband of her skirt and slipped his fingers under the edge. He caressed her delicate skin as he skimmed his fingers along her lower belly. He slid the fabric down over her hips and lifted her up to get it out from under her. He dragged it down her legs, tossing the fabric to the floor a few feet away from them. Next the buttons on her sweater caught his attention. He kissed each inch of skin revealed between her breasts.

“No bra or panties? You naughty girl, you have to watch out for Nos. He likes souvenirs.”

She allowed herself a small grin as Than slipped her sweater off her shoulders. He tossed her sweater behind him, where it landed with a soft whoosh on top of her skirt. He left her sitting completely bare on the edge of the desk. Vulnerable. She expected to feel a panic attack stirring...but no. Her nerves sparked like a fireworks display

but there wasn't any fear behind it. Would that mean she trusted him? He caressed her skin, creating a wave of goosebumps. Anticipation clenched her stomach. She did trust him and knew that he wasn't going to hurt her in any way. It made her want to jump up and kiss him...but that would have to wait.

"Now, what should I do to punish you?" He placed her feet on the arms of the chair. "Keep them there, Amy." He rolled back a few inches, stretching out her legs slightly. She could almost imagine what kind of view she presented him with. Did the tight curls covering her pussy glisten in the sunlight? Leaning back, she braced her hands on the desktop behind her. The angle forced her breasts up, easily catching his attention. His hand moved to the erection visibly straining against his jeans and rubbed it. She took a deep breath, and his eyes darkened. His gaze felt like a brand as it lingered on her body. Completely exposed to him like this, she felt powerful instead of uncomfortable. Biting on her lower lip, she shifted her weight and moved, essentially posing for him to see what garnered her the best reaction.

Although he looked to be relaxing back in the chair, the tension between them practically vibrated. A deliberate tilt of her head, allowed a bit of hair to slip over her shoulder and slither over her breast. Than's facial expression didn't change but he wrapped his fingers tighter over the bulge in his pants. Another deep breath and he pressed the heel of his palm against himself. She wanted to feel his hands on her skin, wanted to please him. She wanted to push his control to the limit. What would make him loose his cool and did she dare test him?

Than slowly rolled forward again and her knees bent up while he massaged the soft skin of her inner thighs. A shiver ran along her skin. Watching him palm himself turned her on more than she ever imagined. She wanted to see his hand pump his large cock, watch how he liked to be pleased. Here she was, bared before him like a buffet on the desk, but he didn't do anything more than rub himself

through his pants or caress her thighs. She wiggled impatiently. “Than?”

“Begging already?”

She pressed her lips shut.

“Ah, I see the stubborn little miss of the other night is back. If I remember correctly, she didn’t last too long. Think she can last against me? Is your will stronger than mine, Amy?”

He pinched a sensitive bit of skin at the top of her legs, and she jumped in response, moisture seeping from between her nether lips.

“Amy, I love how responsive you are, but you just reminded me of something.” His low voice sounded like it rumbled in his chest. He reached out and pinched a nipple. “Don’t move,” he warned as he walked out of the room.

Amy looked around in wonder, not sure exactly how to take his last comments. She wasn’t that comfortable and thought for a moment of sitting on the chair itself. Technically, she was staying in the same area, and if she got in a bit of trouble? It might be worth it.

She slipped from the desk and leaned back in the chair, resting her heels on the desk, crossed at the ankles. She sighed and crossed her hands behind her head.

Than’s voice snapped like a whip through the room. “I thought I ordered you not to move.”

Wide eyed, Amy hopped back up onto the desk.

“I didn’t go anywhere.” Fear rushed through her veins when she saw the look on his face. His eyes had darkened to a soulless black, cold and hard, but still a heat radiated off of him. When he lifted a hand filled with silk scarves, a spike of adrenalin shot through her system.

“I told you not to move, Amy. When I give you an order, I expect it to be obeyed.” He stepped between her legs and pushed her back against the desk, altering his stance so her legs spread wide, exposing every bit of dewy flesh to him. One hand clasped both her wrists, pinning them to the desk above her head.

As he wrapped her wrists in colorful silk, she stared up at him, uncertainty in her eyes.

* * * *

He would have reassured her, if it wasn't for the moisture that practically dripped from her. Already her arousal had spiked and he wondered how far she would let him push her.

"Master." He glared down at her. "You will respond to me with Master."

"Yes, Master." Shifting her hips against him, she bit her lower lip. "I'm sorry I disobeyed you, Master."

Fuck, she would be a natural submissive. He was already rock hard and ready to fuck her pretty, little brains out. He secured her wrists together and then cursed himself for not planning better. There wasn't anything for him to tether her wrists to.

"You have been a naughty girl, Amy. You deliberately disobeyed me. After I warned you I would punish you. That tells me you want to be punished."

Amy shivered, her nipples crinkling up almost painfully tight. The action caught Thanatos's notice, and he bent over, biting down on one sharply, wringing a surprised cry from her and another wave of moisture to her already sopping pussy.

"This is making you hot?" He arched an eyebrow at her.

"Yes, Master," she quickly replied. He stood up and sat down on the desk chair pulling her with him until she bent over his knees. Her arms and head hung down one side, and he laid a heavy hand on the small of her back.

"You know what I do to naughty girls, Amy?" he asked gently, playing with the seam of her ass and thighs, deliberately avoiding the glistening seam of her pussy.

"Fuck them silly?" her soft voice drifted up to him.

Keeping a grin off his face proved to be almost impossible. She was going to accept him like this? Let him do what he wanted to her? He'd expected her to fight him a bit more, especially considering the string of assholes in her past. But no, she lay over his knee cracking jokes at the wrong time. His hand itched to feel her ass warm beneath it.

"Wrong," he replied, coldly. He felt her flinch at his tone but continued on. Reassurance would come later. He rubbed her bottom as he spoke, warming it up, but she didn't know that. "Repeat after me, 'Steampunk.'"

She twisted so she could look up in his direction, giving him an odd look. "Steampunk?"

"That's right. That isn't a word you would normally say. When you have had enough, that is what I want to hear. It's your safe word. Say that and everything stops. Game's over, all right?"

"Don't worry, I can handle what you need."

"It's not a contest, Amy. It's for your protection. I want you to use it. I expect you to."

She nodded and a second later, he brought his hand down hard on her warmed ass.

Whack!

"Jesus, that hurt." She jerked against his grip before wriggling in his lap. It couldn't have hurt that much.

Thanatos smacked her other cheek, leaving a matching red mark. "This is what happens to naughty girls that talk back and don't call me Master."

Whack!

Whack!

Thanatos admired the lovely shade of dark pink her ass turned. Between smacks, he would caress the angry skin and lightly stroke the soaking lips of her pussy. She writhed against him, whimpering with arousal. She was so turned on her honey, dripped on his pants

leg. His cock pressed up against her and dug into the metal zipper of his jeans. The sensation created another level of arousal for him.

After a couple of more smacks, he lowered Amy so she kneeled on the floor at his feet. She dropped down against her heels and then popped back up onto her knee. Her bottom must be sore. She looked up at him, her eyes slightly glazed. Hungry.

“Now show your Master how sorry you are.” He stood and leaned back against the desk.

Amy reached for the fly of his jeans, first outlining the rigid mound with her fingernails. He hissed a breath through clenched teeth.

“Stop fucking around.”

“Yes, Master,” she purred, careful not to press her sore ass back against her heels this time. It took her a moment to figure how to do it with her wrists tied but she managed and quickly undid the offending garment. His cock finally sprung free into her hands, much to his relief.

Leaning forward, she took him into her mouth, sucking him deep. Her cheeks hollowed, as she pressed her tongue against the underside of his cock. Inch by inch she moved down his length, then retreated back, gripping the base in one hand, the fingers of her other hand caressing his balls.

Thanatos widened his stance for better balance and gripped the edge of the desk with his hands. His head thrown back, he felt her lips dance along his rod, sucking until he thought he would explode in her hot mouth. He reached one hand down and tangled in her hair, directing her rhythm. She must have sensed his impending explosion because her fingers stroked his balls before slipping back along the sensitive skin behind his scrotum.

One delicate finger slipped past his tight sphincter, shocking him to the core and arousing him more than godly possible. *What did she use for lube, unless she had dipped her fingers between her own legs?* “Amy!” He hollered, shooting his load into the back of her throat.

She kneeled quietly with her head bowed as he recovered and stared at her in amazement.

“Get on the desk,” he gasped, his heart still racing. “You are a good little slave, aren’t you? You knew exactly what I needed.” A sly grin curled her lips as she perched back on the desk’s edge.

“I’m yours to do whatever you want with, Master.”

“Yes, you are.” He lifted her up and deposited her on her back. “Now, lean back. I want you wide open for me.”

He slid his hands along her calves and guided her legs wider apart. Retrieving a couple scarves from where he dropped them earlier, he quickly secured her legs to the rings used to open the desk drawers, leaving enough slack so that she could brace her heels on the desk edge but not move them closer together.

As she lay back, he leaned closer and ran his tongue along her dripping seam. Her body immediately arched into his touch. His hands lifted to caress her supple breasts while his tongue played in her folds, gently tickling the hard nub he found, then retreating, leaving her frustrated and sobbing as wave after wave of pleasure coursed over her.

“Amy,” he snapped. “Open yourself for me.”

Immediately, her bound hands came into his view. Her fingers gently opened the delicate folds of her pussy and exposed her hardened clit. “Good girl,” he crooned, blowing a cool breath on the hot little nub, bringing her body to a shudder. “You are hot, aren’t you, baby?”

She whimpered in response, clearly well beyond putting anything into complete sentences.

He purred against the sensitive skin and she cried out. Another wave of juices dripped from between her legs.

“Oh, please. Please. Please.”

“That’s my girl.” He slipped his thumb within her while he licked her clit. He proceeded to spreading her juices around the tight rosebud of her ass before sinking two fingers deep in her pussy.

“How about I return the favor?” She gasped as he invaded, pushing his thumb the tight muscles of her anus. She rocked her hips in time with the rhythm his finger and thumb set up, gasping for breaths between moans. He laved and licked that erect little nubbin as he finger fucked her ass and pussy, changing the tempo and speed according to her body’s responses. Every time she reached for the final peak he slowed down, waiting until she receded slightly.

“Than, please. Oh, please.”

“Are you mine and Nos’s to play with, Amy?”

“Yes, forever.” She trembled on the desk, straining against his fingers.

“Then you can come now.” He rocked his fingers deep within her and felt her quivering pussy clench incredibly tight. Her body stiffened, and her mouth opened in a silent scream as she came. His lips and tongue danced over her delicate folds, licking up every tangy drop of her juices.

Amy collapsed back, cradling Thanatos’s head on her lower tummy, his arms wrapped around her hips. He gently kissed her soft belly, as he untied her legs and wrists. He knew now, deep down, she wouldn’t run from him. When the darkness rose up within him, she would accept it and allow him to play his games. If her response to this little taste of bondage was any example, he looked forward to some heavier play. His balls tightened in anticipation of painting her with latex and slowly peeling it from her.

Chapter 10

Quiet moments had become rather rare in Amy's life as of late. With the sudden influx of not one but two men in her life, Amy spent most of her time in a daze. A rather relaxed "I just had my socks rocked off" kind of daze. Still, even she knew that at some point the other proverbial shoe would have to drop. Drop it did, with a resounding thud. Two officers knocked on her door, inquiring about a couple of con men that had been reported in the vicinity.

They almost had her convinced, Amy would give them that, but obviously they didn't know a vital piece of information. She believed her lovers. It was as much a shock to her when she realized it. Laying in bed this morning wondering if Thanatos could take her to go see her granny. Then she hesitated about telling them how she felt and chose to wait and make a big dinner for them tonight. She wanted it to be perfect.

The officers in front of her looked normal, if police officers were exquisitely formed, without a single physical flaw. Both had the brightest blue eyes she had ever seen. Instead of having a typical reaction to gorgeous men, she was thoroughly creeped out. They acted like puppets with some unseen person pulling their invisible strings. It took everything she had not to shrink back when one stepped closer to her, holding out a photograph. Not a shred of emotion showed on either of their faces. Was that customary for law enforcement? The few officers she had ever met seemed like average people.

“Ma’am, have you seen either of these men in the vicinity? They are a couple of known con men who have been working some very detailed scams. They tend to prey on single women such as yourself.”

She looked down at a grainy picture of Hypnos and Thanatos. The snapshot looked like a surveillance photo taken without their knowledge.

“They’re pretty good looking.” She steadied her breath and looked at the two officers in front of her. She needed to get rid of them, then warn Thanatos and Hypnos. “I think I might have seen them around town. They look familiar, but I can’t be certain.”

“You sure that they haven’t been *here* before? We spoke to your neighbor and he is certain he recognised them.”

Of course. He would happily rat them out. “I spend a lot of time in the back garden. I guess it’s possible that they came to the door. Perhaps they wanted to feel me out and see if I would be an easy target?”

“So, they have been here.” The officer tried to peer past her into the house.

“I only said they might have knocked at the door, but I never heard them. Haven’t spoken to them either.”

“It’s imperative that you tell me anything that you know.”

A trickle of sweat ran down her spine. *Don’t panic, don’t panic.* Please let her have a good enough poker face. “That is all I know, officers. I wish I could be of more help.”

One of them handed her a small business card. “If you see either of these men, contact me immediately. Do not let them come in your home. They’re dangerous.”

“Thank you for the warning, officer. I’ll be in touch if I hear anything.”

She slowly shut the door. As quietly as she could she turned the lock. Amy collapsed back on the door and bent over to brace her hands against her knees. *Oh, God, I just lied to the cops.* The rational side of her brain battled with the small voice that insisted that

something wasn't right. Those might have been real men but something in those empty gazes struck her as being very off.

A look through the peephole in the door revealed an empty porch. She hadn't even heard them walk away. That scared the hell out of her as she raced through the house and dialled the number for Thanatos's cell. She paused at the back door and peered out, afraid the two officers would be standing there.

There wasn't anything but her garden, sliding open the door she stepped outside and paced the deck. This was a safe place, no one could get through the hedges that lined the back yard.

"Amy, is everything alright?"

She jumped as Hypnos's voice sounded in her ear. "Where are you two? The cops are looking for you."

"What? Amy, what are you talking about? Police? Where are you?"

"I'm in the backyard. A couple officers stopped by here looking for you. There was something just not right about them." She could hear Hypnos relaying her information but Thanatos's deep reply wasn't as easy to hear.

"Don't leave the property. There are police here as well. Deedee is talking to them, and Than and I are in the back."

"Oh, God, what is going on?" Amy stepped off the deck and headed to the path. "Can't the two of you do something?"

"No. Not without consequences. Keeping you safe is our primary concern."

"This is nuts. What is the point of being gods if you can't fix this?"

There was a moment of silence before Hypnos spoke again. "We have limitations as well, sweetheart. You're too precious to us to risk."

A screech sounded above her, making her jump. She looked up and saw the most horrendous creatures circling her property. They looked like huge vultures, but had a woman's torso. Brown, matted

feathers cupped small breasts. Their faces were contorted masks of rage. Shocked motionless she watched one descend. Its claws scraped the shingles, tearing them up. Irritated, it squawked and ruffled feathers.

“What the hell? Nos! Holy shit, they’re Keres!”

“Amy, get in the house!”

Thankfully, she shook off her shocked paralysis and was running by the time Hypnos yelled in her ear. One of the creatures swooped at her, a claw just missing her cheek. She ducked and dove for the deck, landing hard on one hip. Pain shot up through the bone, stealing her breath away. The phone bounced out of her hand and skittered across the planking. Scrambling to her feet only made her an easier target. Something impacted against her shoulder and sent her flying into the railing. Grabbing the edge stopped her from flipping over but it forced all the air out of her lungs. She ducked another set of talons reaching for her as she grabbed for the large, ceramic planter that rested there. Holding on with both hands, she twisted quickly and whipped it at the head of the closest creature. It made a wet crunching noise when it connected with the Kere’s face. The others screeched and dove for her. She ducked, grabbed one of the tiki torches that lined her deck and started swinging. It kept the creatures at arm’s length simply because they didn’t know what the weapon she wielded was. Amy figured this wasn’t going to last long, but all she could do was distract them and delay their reaching her. Hopefully help would arrive soon because she didn’t know what would harm them.

Silver glinted in her peripheral vision. It headed straight for her and she knew she would never get out of the way in time.

Chapter 11

Thanatos swung his blade in a wide arc, driving it deep into the chest of the Keres. He had forgotten the thrill that always came with delivering a death blow to those bitches. All of mankind wished for a peaceful death, and Than had learned long ago that the Keres didn't give up their prey without a fight. He had formed a treaty with them long ago. Each agreed not to change the fate of one slated to die. At the time, he hoped it would cut down on the amount of violence they could spread. Curing world hunger would be easier than stopping the spread of violence. This was the end of him playing fair. His scythe swung in a deadly arc and decapitated the head of the one about to claw Amy.

They turned on him and attacked as one, as if that gave them an advantage. Nothing would stop him. If he failed, they would turn on Amy. He wasn't about to allow that. Rage might have started his attack but a shimmer of calm dulled the sharp edges of his rage and allowed him to concentrate. To make the most of each swing and do the most damage until there wasn't a single Kere remaining.

The final one screamed in pain, and he drove his weapon into her shoulder. "Now, you go tell your sisters the treaty is broken by your hands. This human is mine, as are they all. Any attempt on your part to end their lives in violence will be dealt with. Swiftly and deadly."

She screeched her defiance and hopped to her feet, the wound healing before his eyes, before she disappeared into the shadows.

There would be no more attempts on Amy's life. Despite that, a deep rage threatened to erupt again at the direct attack on their

woman. No one would take her from him. With a mental nod, the remains of the Keres he had killed faded from view.

All he wanted was to head to Olympus, hunt down Zeus, and destroy him for unleashing those feathered bitches. He strode into the house and looked down at Amy shaking in Hypnos's arms, the two of them sitting on the floor in the kitchen.

Thanatos slammed the door shut and glared down at them. She watched him from within Hypnos's embrace, her eyes wide with fear. Even Hypnos eyed him as if he were an angry cobra about to strike. This wasn't the first attempt on her life but this time she saw the creatures behind it. Thanatos dropped to his knees in front of her, anger still pumping through him. He couldn't help grabbing her chin roughly. "When we tell you something, I expect from now on you will believe us?"

Wide eyed, she nodded, the movement mechanical in its jerks. "I'm so-rry. I did-n't kn-know." Her voice hiccupped, as tears streaked down her cheeks.

The remnants of anger melted with the sight of her tears. "It's not your fault. I'm not angry at you, baby." He kissed her cheek.

"We've never been so frightened either." Hypnos's voice purred in her ear. He looked up at Hypnos and gave a small nod.

"I want you to do something for me, Amy."

"What?"

Thanatos watched as Hypnos trailed his fingers over her forehead. Her eyes drifted shut, and she dozed off in the arms of Sleep.

Hypnos looked over her head. "Should we leave her here? I could make sure that she sleeps until we get back."

"After what just happened, I would rather keep her within arm's reach."

"Agreed." Hypnos stood up and kept their woman in his arms. "Are you okay?"

Thanatos nodded. He wrapped an arm around Amy's sleeping form. He leaned over and kissed his lover, loving the feel of her between them. "I'll be better once we are home."

He stepped back and slashed with his scythe. Earthy reality peeled back like an open wound. Their world was visible, only through the incision.

Cradling her close to his chest, Hypnos stepped through after Thanatos. The dimensional opening led straight to their bedroom.

Hypnos placed Amy gently in their bed and the men quickly divested her of her ripped clothes. They couldn't miss the multitude of cuts and bruises that had begun to stain her porcelain skin.

"Every time I start to think how amazing she is, she goes and does something that makes what I am feeling an understatement."

"I don't even want to think about how close we came to losing her. If it wasn't for the fact that I can't bear to leave her alone right now I'd go after Zeus myself."

Thanatos wrapped an arm around Hypnos, pulled him in for a hug, and pressed a kiss to his temple. "We need to rest with her and when we all feel better, then we will go have a chat with the asshole."

They eased themselves into bed with her. One on either side, their arms wrapped over her sleeping form. Thanatos relaxed. Nothing could threaten them here. She could sleep deeply and her injuries would heal.

* * * *

Amy woke to the sound of a soft harp playing somewhere outside her window. She shifted slightly, revelling in the remaining aftershocks of her dream. Could she fall asleep right now and restart it?

"If you open your eyes, beautiful, it won't be a dream," a low voice rumbled into her ear. Her eyes snapped open in shock. A man in her bed? She looked up into a pair of warm brown eyes above her.

Looking beyond them she saw a ceiling that had been painted black and yet still shimmered.

“Welcome to our home, Amy.”

She frowned and sat up slowly, pressing a hand to her spinning head. She felt like she had the worst hangover, the kind caused by way too many margaritas. Only she didn’t remember drinking.

“Give it a second and it will pass.”

“What’s wrong with me?”

“Your soul is fighting the fact that you are here. Under regular circumstances only the dead travel in the underworld, so you’re suffering a bit of shock. Drink this.” He held out a glass for her, steam lazily drifting from the top.

“What is it? Some sort of magical potion?”

“Absolutely. It’s peppermint tea. Should settle your tummy and turn you into the walking dead. A zombie who only answers to the two of us. A slave to do as we wish and service us any way we want.”

She gave Hypnos a withering look and rolled her eyes. “Right. If that happened, then why isn’t this house filled with mindless sex slaves?” She lifted the glass to her lips. The minty scent soothed her immediately.

“‘Cause I keep them locked up?”

Amy hesitated for a moment and then sipped the sweetened beverage, giving them a defiant glare over the rim.

Thanatos’s arms wrapped around her. He reclined back slightly, hugging her tightly against his chest. Hypnos crawled up on the bed with them. With a wicked wink, he slid her dress up almost to her hips, then lay down between her legs. He laid his head against her tummy and wrapped his arms around her waist. Her body relaxed between the two men, the three of them fitting perfectly together. She sipped her tea, resting her head on Thanatos’s shoulder between swallows. With her free hand she stroked Hypnos’s hair, running her fingers through his soft curls

It wasn't long before her body noticed some other sensations, the soft feel of Thanatos's breath on her temple and the heat from his hand where it rested below one breast, Hypnos's weight at the apex of her legs, his chest pressing against her core. His hair tickled her skin as he nuzzled her tummy. A tingling between her legs grew hotter the more she tried to ignore it.

Hypnos licked her skin and her breasts grew heavy and her nipples tightened. Thanatos shifted slightly, and she could feel the outline of his erection against her lower back. That brought back memories of her first dream and another wave of heat coursed through her limbs.

"Amy..." Hypnos tilted his head and nuzzled her tummy with his lips. "What are you thinking?"

"This reminds me of the dream the two of you invaded."

A low growl vibrated the skin on her neck where Thanatos nibbled on the sensitive skin joining her neck and shoulder. His hand drifted up to trace the deep V of her neckline, slipping a finger beneath the edge to stroke the silky skin. "You submitted to us then." His breath hitched as she pressed back against the hardness that grew against her spine.

"Sweet Lethe, I can smell you from Amy." Hypnos grazed her hip bone with his teeth, nipping at her skin enough to spark her nerves but not hard enough to hurt. His fingers stroked her through her panties. Oh, God, she wanted that material gone.

"We're going to show you exactly what it will be like between us."

Hypnos lifted up onto his elbows and pushed at the sheer dress. Thanatos reached from behind her and lifted the cup of tea from her fingers.

She lifted her hips and Hypnos pushed it up farther. His lips and tongue paid homage to every bit of skin bared. His warm breath against her damp skin sent tingles through her body. She felt as though she couldn't get a proper breath. She gasped. Her eyes drifted

closed. She expected to be nervous, perhaps she was a bit, but she trusted both men, so much that the thought of both of them deep in her at the same time overtook any concerns. She opened her eyes, and blinked, not wanting to miss the sight of her two men.

Thanatos caught the crumpled skirt and lifted it the rest of the way off her body, tossing it off to the side. It drifted down to cover a patch of poppies. Its color matched the colors of the flowers.

Dozens of candles sprang to life around the room, bathing them in a soft light. The candles stood out against such a dark backdrop, but their gentle light helped to draw the rainbow of colors out of everything.

Amy gasped in surprise. She surveyed her surroundings. She was standing in an incredibly large bedroom with what looked to be a large bathtub filled with black water in the corner. Everything looked black, but seemed to shimmer against the candlelight and revealed dark shades of red and purple and blue. Rich, dark fabrics decorated the walls, creating a fairytale wonderland devoted to sensual pleasure. They seemed content to let her inspect their room for a moment, but didn't hesitate to attract her attention again. Hypnos had slipped farther down and blew a cool breath on her inner thighs before he licked the outside of her silk panties. He covered the material with his wet mouth and breathed hard against her. His hot, damp breath against her pussy sent hundreds of shivers through her body. She arched her back, pressing herself against Thanatos. He retaliated by clasping her breasts in his hands. He kneaded and pinched her nipples. She moaned low in her throat and felt Hypnos's breath between her legs. The soles of her feet tingled in warning that if they kept this up, she wouldn't last long at all.

"No, stop," she gasped. She tried to sit up and pushed at Hypnos's shoulders to dislodge him from between her legs.

"What is it, Amy?" Thanatos asked, his tone wary. "What's wrong?"

“You two. It’s not fair.” She crawled up between his legs and pressed her lips against his, kissing him hard as though she had figured out what he liked.

Hypnos’s hands slid around her torso and then cupped her breasts. He tweaked and kneaded much as Thanatos had done. Enough to remind her that she wasn’t just dealing with just one man. *What if she wouldn’t be able to handle them both?* Hell, her experience being with one man wasn’t much. Her experience with two was nonexistent.

She grasped Hypnos’s hand and pulled at it. He rose over her and pressed his erection against her ass and triggered a dark secret fantasy of hers.

“My turn will come, Amy. I want to see your pretty lips wrap about the cock in front of you.”

Thanatos’s eyes darkened at Hypnos’s words, naked desire there for her to take. “You don’t have to.”

She gave him a saucy wink before pulling at the clip that held his pants together.

“But I want to.” She looked down as his cock sprang free. A large, hard, pale rod nestled in a nest of black curls. She bent over and slipped her lips over his head. She sucked gently, grasping him by the base with one hand. She could feel his body tense and tremble. It encouraged her. He dropped his head back with a groan, and she sucked him a bit farther into her mouth before letting him slip almost all the way out.

“Oh, fuck, baby, that’s good.” He tangled his fingers in her hair, which helped her learn the pace he liked.

Amy revelled in the power she had over the man beneath her. She remembered how much Thanatos had enjoyed this while she played servant to his master. This time felt different. They weren’t pretending to be something they weren’t. This time she wanted him to know that she craved him as much as Hypnos.

While she was on her knees, Hypnos jerked the delicate silk she wore and ripped the sides of her panties. She kept up her sucking on

Thanatos's rod as Hypnos licked his way over her ass, teased the rosebud of her anus with his tongue before he slid down farther. He took long licks of her dripping pussy. Her legs shook and she gasped. Then she doubled her efforts on the cock in her mouth. Amy sucked until her cheeks hollowed out. She let him go with a pop, then sucked him back down into her mouth.

Thanatos gripped her hair tightly and she whimpered. It wasn't that it hurt that much but more like it set her nerves on "super-sensitive." He must have been afraid that he hurt her. He let go of her hair and chose to grasp at the headboard over him. She groaned slightly, wanting to explore this new sensation.

Before she could let Thanatos slip from her mouth and voice her opinion, Hypnos's hand came down on her behind, smacking the cheek sharply. That caused a white hot flare through her senses. She cried out in pleasure and Thanatos's cock hardened even more. He cried out and his hips jerked.

"Amy...I can't hold on."

"Oh, yeah, Amy, suck him harder. Than needs to let go. You can do it. You'll let him, won't you?" Hypnos acted like a devil on her shoulder, whispering in her ear. Only, she wanted to listen to him, wanted to feel Thanatos lose control. "Cup his balls in your hand."

She swirled her tongue around his tip and sucked harder, rolled his balls with one hand while she gripped the base of his cock with her other. Hypnos gave her ass a couple more smacks, flooding her with moisture.

Thanatos cried out, his hips jerking against her face. A hot gush flooded her mouth, and she kept up the pressure until she licked him completely clean.

Thanatos's fingers delved into her hair and tugged her up. He sat up to meet her and captured her lips with his own. All the while, Hypnos's fingers teased her, stroked between her legs, pressed her petals open with his fingertips, and played with the hard nubbin there.

“I need to be inside you, Amy. Please?” Hypnos nipped her earlobe.

“Now that is something I want to watch. Especially since I missed out on the trip to the library.” Thanatos’s eyes had darkened drastically with passion. “You’re not the only one who likes to watch.”

She nodded her silent agreement and he helped her spin around and straddle Hypnos’s hips, guiding her down on his large cock. She shook as she stretched around his girth. She cried out when Hypnos jerked his hips and buried himself completely within her.

“You, too, Than,” he gasped. He captured Amy’s face and kissed her deeply. “You are about to find out how easy it is to please two men, precious.”

“I need to be inside you, too, Amy,” Thanatos’s voice rumbled behind her. She tried to look over her shoulder at him, but he leaned forward, over her. He kissed her deeply and pressed her against Hypnos’s chest. Hypnos’s arms wrapped tightly around her and held her in place.

Her heart rate sped up when she realized what he planned to do. “I can’t. You’re too big.” Her emotions ran the gamut from fear to arousal at the idea of being taken in such a way.

“You trust me?”

“Yes.”

“Then just relax and kiss Nos. I promise I’ll take care of you.”

Strong fingers smoothed a cool lotion between her cheeks, rubbing her puckered entrance. It felt a sharp contrast to her heated skin. Thanatos’s fingers slid easily over the surface. He slipped a thick finger into her back entrance, worked the slippery lotion inside and stretched her. It distracted her but then Hypnos moved, and she felt the friction of both of them. The sensations made her pant and press back against Thanatos’s fingers, silently begging for more. Hypnos kissed her deeply and slid his cock almost out of her pussy. Then he drove deep and rasped her clit with his springy curls.

“Hold still, Nos.” Thanatos removed his fingers, and she felt something much harder and larger push against her. Her body clenched tight in anticipation.

“Oh, by the gods, Amy...let me in please. Baby, you need to relax.”

“I can’t. It’s too much.”

Hypnos slid his cock in and out of her a couple of times and wrung another pleasure-filled cry out of her. “Trust us, flower, you can do it.” He kissed her deeply and distracted her from the blunt force of Thanatos’s cock.

“Push back, Amy, right fucking now.” Thanatos barked the order. Trusting him, she obeyed and pushed back against his cock. Her ass burned as he pressed into her.

She cried out and tried to lunge forward to escape but Hypnos held her still. He crooned in her ear. Thanatos shook over her as he pressed deeper and deeper. Her breath caught in her throat at the most intense feeling she had ever experienced. His cock felt like a white hot poker up her ass but she wanted more. She took a deep breath and concentrated on relaxing her muscles.

He pressed the last inch and held still. His arms on either side of her shook with the strain. She had never felt so full in her life, never so wildly aroused. The sharp bite of pain receded into an agonizing desire to move. More. She needed more. “Move, dammit.”

“In a moment,” Than bit the sensitive skin at the base of her neck.

Wait? Not a chance. She arched her hips a fraction. The movement wrenched a cry out of both of the men.

“Flower, stay still.” Hypnos trailed his teeth over her collarbone. Thanatos clenched her ass, then slid out slightly, allowing Hypnos to drive deeper. Hypnos would retreat and Thanatos would increase his pressure. Back and forth, they moved in perfect tandem, one out, the other in. Amy’s hands fisted the sheet on either side of Hypnos’s shoulders as the tension built in her, keeping her on the verge but never quite enough.

They picked up speed until she no longer knew who stopped where. The two of them merged with her, deeper than merely physical, as if the three of them created one being. They writhed together, panting, sweating, caught in the throws of deep primal pleasure.

Straining, she reached for the breaking point that seemed out of her grasp. Her body trembled under their combined ministrations. Her sensitized nerves absorbed every gentle stroke and teasing bite. Thanatos's hand came down hard on her ass, the smack send a spike along her nerves. The tension finally broke, and she screamed out both their names. That wasn't the end of it. The men kept up their pace for a few more strokes until they tensed up against her. They ground against each other through her. The power of it all brought her to another orgasm. She felt them move out of her and slide to either side of her. She fell asleep before they settled.

* * * *

Amy had no idea how long she had slept, but she woke up cuddled up next to Hypnos, her arm and leg thrown over him. Thanatos spooned up against her back. She felt safe and protected and would have happily gone back to sleep if her thoughts hadn't started running a mile a minute.

This couldn't possibly last. It all happened too fast, too intense for it not to burn out, besides the obvious problems that would face a relationship between gods and humans. Had there ever been a happy joining of a deity and a normal person? All the stories she could think of ended in tragedy.

She still hurt from Flora's death, and this must be some sort of emotional backlash. They saved her life. She had only known them for a day or so. Still, too soon to feel this strongly for them.

Slowly, so as not to wake them, she slipped from between the two men. Feeling sticky wouldn't help her get back to sleep, so she quietly

made her way over to the bath she had noticed earlier. It was so still, she kneeled down by the water's edge and quickly touched the surface. When that didn't hurt, she cupped a handful in and let it run through her fingers. It felt hot but not more than she could stand, and, at the moment, it called to her like a siren to a sailor. With a quick look back over her shoulder to ascertain whether they were still asleep, she caught Hypnos watching her.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you." Her voice was hushed in the quiet.

He winked at her and motioned for her to slip into the water. "Enjoy your bath now because once I get enough energy, I am joining you."

A muffled comment came from the body behind him and both of them laughed softly. "Apparently, he might take a bit longer to recover."

Amy didn't waste any time slipping into the pool with a sigh and a groan. "This is magical."

The water soothed her troubled thoughts, a calm blanket to her jangled nerves. She slipped under long enough to soak all her hair before she returned to the surface. When she did, she found Hypnos perched on the edge, his legs in the water.

"Feel better?"

"Hmm, feel incredible." The bath-pool was large enough that she could stretch out and float on her back. A part of her shied away at first. Exposing herself to Hypnos felt a little nerve-racking, but then, he had seen every part of her in the last couple hours anyways, so why worry?

A soft tickle on her toes made her open her eyes. Thanatos stood at the pool's edge at her feet. He gave her a lecherous grin and then pointed up. She followed the direction his finger made and gasped in wonder. Where did the ceiling go? She could see straight through the open space to the outside. The underworld sky looked black as pitch and unusual in the fact that no stars could be seen. Instead, waves of

color, not unlike the Northern Lights, stretched across the sky. These shimmered and glowed like a rainbow reflected in the pool of silver.

She gasped at the incredible sight and twisted onto her tummy and swam back to the water's edge. Hypnos held out an arm. She took it and let him pull her until she sat in one of the seats carved out of rock and she was tucked under his arm.

"What is it? It's beautiful."

"Our night." Thanatos slipped into the water and now floated much the way she had. The peaceful smile on his face as he watched the light show almost brought tears to her eyes.

"It's caused by the flight of souls passing through the mystic barriers from our world to yours."

"Isn't that the wrong way?"

Hypnos kissed her temple, "No, love, those are souls that have chosen to begin again. To be born into your world."

"Wow, that's a hell of a lineup."

Thanatos swam over to the two of them and took a seat on the other side of Amy. He took a ceramic jar and scooped out a sticky substance that had her giving him a look of curiosity and nervousness.

"And exactly what are you going to do with that?"

"Wash your hair." He grinned back at her.

"Oh." Feeling silly, she turned to give him better access.

Hypnos, in the meantime, had soaped up a cloth and began running it up and down the length of her arm. She relaxed, feeling like a princess, and they cleaned her up. Between the ministrations on her hair and body, her body felt heavy with exhaustion. "Are you two thinking of..."

"No, sweetheart, I'm afraid we wore you out as much as you did to both of us." Thanatos kissed her shoulder. "Now, go rinse."

She mentally smiled. So Amaryllis Bitonu could wear out two men at the same time. As she swam out to the middle of what she started to think of as her bath-pool, the two of them made quick work of washing each other.

She dunked herself and rinsed the shampoo from her hair. She exited the tub first and wrapped a large towel around her body before rubbing her head with another towel. Thanatos had a towel wrapped around his hips and lifted her up against his hard chest

“I can walk.”

“I know. I like carrying you.”

Her yawn caught her by surprise. Perhaps she shouldn't complain after all. He carried her back to the bed and joined her just as Hypnos crawled in on the other side of her. Tucked between two large, warm male bodies created a sense of security and peace she had never experienced before.

Chapter 12

Amy nervously ran a hand down the robe she wore. Made of snow white silk with black edging, it draped over her curves and showcased her to perfection. She had never felt so sexy or feminine at home. The looks on the men's faces when she emerged from their bedroom spoke volumes. She had piled her hair on her head, letting some fall around her face and neck, keeping with the tone of her wardrobe. She felt like the Greek goddess they originally mistook her for.

Thanatos suggested they dress to match, his insistence they keep a united front. That lasted as long as it took for their leader to enter the house. Then they went into protective mode.

Thanatos stepped in front of her, blocking her view of the tall man who strode into their home. "This ends tonight." His anger vibrated the room around them. "You can't take her this time, Zeus. Try it, and I will be sure to have the Keres pick your bones clean."

"Don't you dare speak to me. You are forbidden to have her, both of you. I decreed it millennia ago!"

This was the legendary Zeus. One of the windows suddenly became crystal clear, allowing a ray of sunshine to stream in, lighting the man perfectly. His golden hair sparked with almost metallic highlights, cascading down past his incredibly broad shoulders. His skin had a perfectly even tan. High cheekbones, full lips, and long lashes made him almost too pretty for a man. His body was swathed in a long, white robe. The neckline fell open, exposing a strong muscular chest and a torso that tapered to a narrow waist where a gold belt held the robe closed.

“We are forbidden to have Pasithea, goddess of relaxation. The woman between us is not her,” Hypnos’s clear voice rang out.

“You believe she is Pasithea,” Zeus replied smugly.

“You have slipped, old man. Neither of us has believed that for a very long time. She’s completely human.”

A smoldering voice shivered through the air just as Zeus opened his mouth. “Hate to break it to you, gentlemen, but that’s not completely accurate.”

Amy tried to peer around Hypnos, trying to see the owner of that voice.

“What exactly do you mean by that, Bacchus?” Thanatos asked.

Amy wanted to see whose voice that was. She had also tired of being spoken of, and not to. Regardless of what they thought, she needed to remind them it didn’t include making decisions for her. To let them get away with this now, she might as well have *Welcome* tattooed on her forehead. There was no way she could allow them to treat her like a doormat they walked over. Pinching Hypnos hard on the back of his arm made him jump and gave her the opportunity to slip between him and Thanatos.

“Ah, there you are.” A young, gorgeous man smiled at her. He looked like a guy in a local band, complete with an artfully tousled hairstyle and barbed wire tattoo around one bicep. He wore a black t-shirt and faded Levis and looked completely out of place here. Plop him in the middle of a rock concert and he would blend in completely. As scrumptious as he looked, he didn’t cause the deep ache between her legs that the men protecting her did.

“And you are...?” she asked. She kept her voice as condescending as possible, remembering Hypnos’s advice that when in doubt fall back on bravado.

“Bacchus. Your father.”

Her jaw dropped. “Wha...”

Both the men started to protest the moment the words left the god’s mouth.

Bacchus held up an arrogant hand. "Hear me out. She is my daughter. We all know how powerful a force belief is and what it can do." He gave Zeus a rather pointed look. "Her mother did enjoy a special position in my rituals and always professed a true belief in me. I honestly didn't realize how much till she came to me one day with the story that I was responsible for her pregnancy."

"That's impossible!" Zeus blustered. "Even I cannot sire children anymore."

"That's because no one truly believes in you anymore. I have a legion of fraternities that perform varied rituals in my name, frat parties, toga parties, all in honor of me. That is true belief. I never realized how powerful mere children could be. Until this one showed up of course."

"So, I am supposedly a child of a god, right? And that makes me..."

"Sadly, not much more than a human I am afraid. Your positive attributes and stubborn nature are from your mother's descent. I had planned to keep in touch with you. But, there are so many parties..."

Amy's lip curled in disgust at the man who had sired her. "Don't worry. I'm not exactly surprised if this is what the human race can expect from the gods. Just as well you are almost forgotten."

A slight clearing of a throat, in stereo, reminded her of the men flanking her at the moment.

"Well, you two are the exception of course."

Bacchus laughed at the expression on the two men. "Good luck, gentlemen, you're going to need it. I'm afraid that the boys are right though, Zeus. You can't touch this young one. She is my daughter but she isn't Pasithea. I've seen the thread the Fates created for her. If somehow that thread is cut prematurely?" Bacchus stepped closer to Zeus. His casual demeanour vanished as cold fury descended over his features. "It'd be a shame if someone let loose the Titans, wouldn't it? They still have a massive grudge against you and couldn't care less

about humanity. I wonder if you would have the strength to fight them off this time.”

As threats went, that sounded like a good one. Amy expected a dramatic exit from Zeus. Instead, he shot a furious glare at them all and simply vanished.

“Now that bluster head is gone, please allow me to tell you the rest of the story.”

“What is it?” Amy asked, quietly.

“Bacchus...” Thanatos warned the god.

Amy elbowed him in the ribs. She wanted to hear what the man...god had to say. “No secrets.”

“We don’t want to see you hurt by any lies he might tell.” Thanatos pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“I’m not going to lie to her. In fact, despite what the three of you think, I’m quite sad that I missed out on the beginnings of her life.” Bacchus moved over to a large chair and dropped down into it. He ran a hand through his hair. For a moment, he looked so much older than she had originally thought. If all this had been dumped on her earlier, she might not have taken it as well. Thanatos pressed gently against her back and led her to the sofa across from Bacchus’s chair. She sat down with Thanatos and Hypnos flanking her.

“Truth is, you are my child, and you once were the Kahrites’s Pasithea. What made Pasithea a goddess disappeared the moment Zeus pushed her into the Lethe. Nothing can withstand its power and it stripped her of all memory and character. Only a faint essence of her remained.

“I had made a deal with Hades as soon as I heard of Zeus’s plan. I was too late to prevent it, but a split-second before the moment that the lightning bolt hit my daughter, I had her body switched with that of a demon from the underworld.”

Amy frowned in confusion, but it obviously made sense to her men.

“That is why Hades wouldn’t let me see her.” Thanatos shook his head as if he should have already known. “He never claimed her to a place in Tartaros.”

“No, I held her essence close to me for thousands of years until I knew that Zeus wasn’t strong enough to do that again.” Bacchus moved his gaze back to Amy “Then, I met your mother, already pregnant with you at the time.”

“So you lied to Zeus?”

“No, not really. It all depends on your point of view. The small piece of my daughter I still held, I gifted to you. I knew it would help your mother stay straight enough to give you a healthy start.”

“I don’t remember her ever being straight.”

“Believe me, I wish I had kept her as safe as these two keep you, but no matter how old I get, I forget how delicate human life is. Your mother died, and this time I was too late. I arranged for you to be sent to Flora’s house.”

Amy’s eyes brimmed. “You knew her.”

“I knew that she would keep you safe. I couldn’t watch over you because that would have drawn the attention of the other gods. I had to wait and hope that the Fates would entwine your strands with these two again. True to nature, the Fates jumped at the chance to untangle the knot that Zeus had created millennia ago with his temper.”

The idea of actually being this Pasithea depressed her. She wanted Hypnos and Thanatos’s love, but not because of a millennium-old obsession with some moldy, old goddess—even if it looked as though she was the moldy, old goddess. Could she get any more confused? “So. I am Pasithea?”

“Again, not exactly.”

“Explain.”

“Well, like everything else, a lot has to do with what you believe. Do you think you are Pasithea?”

“Wouldn’t you want to be a goddess?” Hypnos wrapped his hand over her shoulder, and she could feel Thanatos at her back. “You could stay with us forever. Immortality has its advantages.”

“Tell me who I am.”

Bacchus shrugged his shoulders. “I can’t tell you that, young lady. That is for you to decide.”

She didn’t want to be that stupid goddess, some flaky twinkie who couldn’t see a good thing standing right in front of her. But she wasn’t sure if her men loved her for her or what they wanted her to be. “I need to think about all this.”

“Why? It doesn’t change anything. Nos and I love you, Amy.”

“Do you? Do you really or do you love what I might be?” Did they not understand how important that was?

“Would it be so bad if you were her? Just think of all the things we could accomplish.”

“But, I can accomplish things all on my own. Neither of you understand that, do you? I can’t explain it right now and obviously neither of you is going to understand. This is too much for me.”

“We’ll take you home.” Hypnos wrapped his arm around her shoulders and she stepped out from under it. The hurt look he gave her stabbed her right to the heart, but she needed time to think and that meant being away from them.

“I can’t think straight when you two are there. Please understand. I need to think.” She looked to Bacchus. “There isn’t any more danger, right?”

“Zeus is pissed, but I’d say harmless. He will go rant and rave somewhere, but you’ll be fine.” Bacchus took her hand and placed it in the crook of his arm. “Come on, I’ll see you home.”

She allowed Bacchus to lead her away, unsure if she could leave herself.

“Amy!” Hypnos’s voice made her heart break but she didn’t turn around. She knew if she did she wouldn’t have the strength to leave

them again. So much had happened. She needed some space. Needed to sort through her feelings and figure out what was real.

* * * *

“Amy!” Hypnos had all intentions of charging out the door after her, but the two hands that gripped his upper arms prevented him.

“Let her go.”

“Thanatos, you might be willing to let her leave like this but I’m not,” he snapped, giving his arm a hard tug. “What I felt for Pasithea is nothing compared to how I feel about Amy.”

“I feel the same way.” The sorrow in Thanatos’s voice made it sound rougher than usual. “But she needs to sort everything out for herself. We can’t force her to stay, and we swore to Aphrodite that we would let her go if she demanded it. All we can do is wait.”

Chapter 13

The breeze had a slight bite as it lifted Amy's hair around her face, dancing with it before letting it drift back down. She didn't even bother to brush it out of her face, too caught up in her own misery. As if to respect her mood, the sun had not come out today. Instead, it hid behind gray skies and allowed winter to announce its pending arrival.

She sat in one of the wrought iron chairs in her yard, her legs stretched out in front of her as she stared at her worn boots. Pushing her hands deeper into the warm pockets, she tried to burrow down and let the collar block most of the cold breeze. She was angry, hurt, and confused, not sure who she should be pissed at more: the boys or herself. Hell, she couldn't get to sleep last night, unable to relax in the bed they had shared. Everywhere in the house reminders of their short stay teased her. From the orange paste that still resided on the ceiling from Hypnos's blender accident to the copies of romance novels Thanatos had left by the reading chair.

Small reminders of what she had thrown away to save her sanity and now she reconsidering the fact that she might never be sane again.

So instead, she changed into something warm and walked and walked. Then, she sat and brooded, waiting for life to pass her by. And it had. People, with lives, bundled down the sidewalk headed to different locations as she sat there, wondering what would happen next.

The bench jiggled slightly as someone sat down next to her. She peeked through her hair and saw a bright pink pair of Doc Martens stretched out next to her legs.

“Hey, Deedee,” she muttered, not bothering to move anything but her mouth.

“Wow, you look like shit. How long have you been sittin’ here?” She hadn’t changed. Her bright voice and blunt comments almost forced a grin onto Amy’s face, but the key word was almost.

“No offence, Dee. I need to be alone right now.”

“None taken.” Dee pulled a bag out of her pocket and started munching. “I’ll wait until you feel differently.”

Amy turned her head and glared through her hair at the other woman. “I’m trying to be miserable here.”

“I know. I’m waiting until you stop feeling sorry for yourself.” Dee shoved the bag into Amy’s face and the scent of double-butter popcorn made her tummy growl. “Want some?”

Amy sighed and looked out over the yard, watching the leaves fall from the trees. The world slept, people died, and she had pushed away the two men that made it all possible “Would you get angry if I told you to fuck off?”

“No.”

That bit of honesty brought tears to Amy’s eyes. Despite everything going on, she did have a friend and didn’t need to feel completely alone. Before she realized it, Deedee’s arms wrapped around her and Amy sobbed her heart out while her friend rubbed her back.

She told her everything, the dreams, why she acted so skittish in the grocery store, and how she had fallen in love with two men.

“I’ll bet you think I’m insane.” Amy sniffed, rubbing her nose on her sleeve.

Deedee pulled a tissue from out of her coat pocket and handed it to Amy. “Nope, not in the slightest. How are you juggling two men?”

“I’m not.” Of all the people she had known or knew, she didn’t doubt that her new friend wouldn’t judge, but she had to admit to a bit of concern. “Well...I’m....we...are a couple. Or would that make us a few?”

Deedee's smile grew. "Good for you. If one isn't enough, I'm glad you're smart enough to find yourself a pair."

"You think that is all right? You know, not sluttish or anything?"

"Please tell me you're kidding, Amy? It's the new millennium. Antiquated viewpoints on relationships are very passé. Tell me, do they make you happy?"

"Yes, they do. There's something about them. Between the two of them is my perfect man. They're a bit eccentric."

"Eccentric is good, makes for fun sex. What's wrong? They like to dress up? Role play? All that is part of a normal sex life."

"No, more like they think that they're gods."

"That could pose a problem then."

"You think?" Amy's heart sank. There had to be a way to make this work.

"I mean if their egos are that big, I don't know why you would want to be involved with them. They don't make you feel inferior, do they?" Her voice had taken a vicious turn, and Amy quickly shook her head.

"No. No, it's not like that at all." Amy leaned forward and whispered conspiratorially, "They *are* gods. Thanatos, the god of death and Hypnos, the god of sleep."

Her friend stopped chewing and swallowed carefully. "And that is a problem?"

"Of course it's a problem. They're immortal to start with. How can I, a mere mortal, compete with that? I'm going to grow old and die and end up in that sparkly lineup, waiting to do it all over again."

"Come on. You and I need to have a talk, and this isn't the place for it. You never know who is listening." She waved a hand around them. "You'd be surprised what has ears."

Amy followed Deedee back into the house, stopping at the doorway. Her kitchen smelled of freshly ground coffee beans. A brand new espresso machine sat on the counter and a man who

occasionally worked at the coffee shop got milk out of the fridge. He glanced over at them. “Just about done.”

“Just about done what? Deedee? What’s going on?”

Her friend plunked down in one of the kitchen chairs. “If those idiot men had just listened to me this would be so much easier. You have all of Mount Olympus in an uproar, did you know that?”

“Oh, no. You’re one of them, too.” Amy calmly moved into the room and sat down in a chair on the other side of the table. Not knowing what to think about this newest revelation, she felt like the butt of an elaborate joke. “Things that boring on the mountain that you decide to play ‘mess with the pathetic human’?”

“No, it wasn’t like that at all. I swear.” Deedee looked horrified that Amy would think that. “I wanted to tell you before, but I enjoyed having a real girlfriend. One who didn’t know what I could do. Selfish of me, I know.”

“I can understand that.” Amy rubbed her forehead. “So who are you really?”

“Do I have to tell you?”

“I would feel better if you did.”

The smaller women sighed. “Aphrodite.”

Amy couldn’t help herself. She started laughing. “Wow, you are really bad at what you do.”

The goddess gasped and frowned at her friend. “I am not.”

Tom slid between them at that moment and placed two large latte bowls in front of them. Amy had forgotten for a moment that he puttered around behind them. The scent of fresh espresso and cream and caramel curled around them. Next, he placed two large sandwiches stuffed with all sorts of roasted veggies.

Amy’s stomach growled loudly and Tom smiled down at her. “Thank you, I will take that as a compliment.”

* * * *

Aphrodite smiled as Amy attacked the large sandwich as if she hadn't eaten in days. One of the symptoms that came with being in love was a lack of appetite, but she didn't bother pointing that out to her friend. Amy needed to figure out some things on her own.

"Mistress, is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Thank you, Tom, this is fine. Amy and I could use some time alone." She waved her arm and the man disappeared.

"Wow. Where'd he go?"

She grinned at Amy's wide-eyed surprise at Tom's exit. "Just back to the shop. He's fine."

* * * *

"Oh, okay." Amy quietly polished off half of her sandwich, analyzing everything that her friend had told her. She had so many questions but didn't know how to start.

"Amy, just ask what you want to ask. I promise I'll answer anything I can."

Amy watched her closely. "So, there are things you won't answer."

"There are things that I *can't* answer and things I don't know. I am a goddess but that doesn't mean I am all seeing. There are still rules that we all must follow."

"For example?"

"Unless you believed in me, I wouldn't have been able to flash Tom out of here if you were watching. It's faith that makes us stronger. You have to believe in us before you can see us."

"That is why my guys didn't do any sort of magic when I first met them?"

"Aside from invading your dreams, correct." Aphrodite lips curled up in a mischievous grin. "And because I told them not to."

"Why would you do that?"

“Because, I wanted them to earn you the old-fashioned way. I wanted to make sure they appreciated the person you are.”

“Why the two of them? Why not one like Tom? He’s good looking, seems like a nice guy.”

“First off, Tom is an incubus. So, you would have even more issues if you got involved with him.” Aphrodite grinned and Amy could only imagine the shocked look on her face. “Secondly, you are a very complex woman, Amy. You have needs, but they are such extremes that it would be almost impossible to find that kind of depth in a single man.”

“Impossible?”

The surprise that registered on Amy’s face must have made Deedee amend her words. “I’m not saying that they aren’t capable of that kind of complexity, although the gods know, there are few of them. But for a man like that, he himself would be incapable of settling down with one woman. He would be the modern equivalent of a Regency rake.”

“Unless, he found a woman who matched him in complexity?” Amy stood and took their plates to the counter.

“Yes, but the odds of that happening are incredibly thin. Men can surf through the female population with little to no guilt or stigma. Women aren’t that lucky. There is still a double standard to deal with, and frankly, you are not moulded that way. Emotionally, you need the security and friendship that Hypnos can give you. He’s funny and makes you laugh and stops you from taking yourself too seriously.

“Thanatos, on the other hand, appeals to that shadowy side that you hide from. He is dark and intense, enjoys discussing philosophy, scouring bookshelves, reading thought-provoking work. Also, he is a serious kink-master and that appeals to you as well.

“They both encourage you to take risks and explore aspects of yourself that you shy away from. Left on your own, I would worry you would lock yourself away somewhere and hide from everyone.”

Amy took a sip of her coffee before continuing. There was so much to consider. “I don't know if I want to go off to...” She waved her hand around her head. “Under-whenever. I need to get a job. I love my house. How can life be normal this way?”

“Normal is relative. Amy, you know that. A lot of creatures have normal lives. It's how they can interact with mankind these days. It takes much more to fool humans.”

“But I wasn't fooled...not really.”

“No, you weren't. You knew right off the bat that the boys never lied to you. They may have gone about it completely wrong and held back information for too long, waiting for you to be ready.”

“Deedee...I can still call you that, can't I?”

“Of course. I like that name. Don't think for a moment that I want to get all formal.”

“Okay. My problem with all of this is that they only fell in love with me because they thought I am that other goddess. The Kahrite one. Pasithea.”

“I know they thought that in the beginning, Amy, but it's you that they love.”

The idea that Hypnos and Thanatos loved her because of someone else really upset her. “How do you know that, if I am so much like her?”

“You are not anything like her. The resemblance is uncanny but your nature is very different. I knew Pasithea. She never would've been able to hold her own against the boys. She wanted Nos' complete attention all the time and only tolerated Than.”

“Are you sure?” Amy still doubted that she could hold her own against them.

Aphrodite reached over and held one of her friend's hands. “I attended Bacchus's party as well. I saw the way the two of them bowed to you. Sure, it looked as though they controlled what happened, but I see more than that. It's part of what I am. I could see

the passing of power between the three of you. You are their equal, and they realize that.”

“And I walked away,” Amy whispered. She slipped her hand free before she leaned back in her chair and rubbed her forehead

“Yes, you did.” Aphrodite’s soft tone didn’t have condemnation to it. “While I wouldn’t have chosen that route myself, the two of them needed to be reminded that you are an individual. Now, you are in your separate camps, miserable, alone, and hurting.”

“So what do we do?”

“Don’t look at me. You guys love each other more than anyone wants to admit. I still don’t understand that.” Aphrodite shrugged and took a sip of her latte

Amy worried the corner of her napkin for a moment. “Do you think I can have a message delivered to them?”

A piece of paper, envelope, and feathered quill appeared on the table before her.

“Wow, now that’s cool,” she commented, making Aphrodite laugh.

Amy thought for a moment and then scratched out a few sentences, folding the paper in half and slipping it into the envelope.

The air around them stilled as the fabric of this universe wrinkled. A thin line appeared in midair and then opened, allowing a slender man to step through.

With a slight bow, he looked at both of them, his eyes blank. A large bag rested across his chest. A slight movement caught Amy’s eye. Looking down she saw a small pair of snow white wings twitching from under the hem of his jeans.

“Hey there, Hermes. Could you do me a favor and deliver a message from Amy?”

“Of course, Aphrodite, I am nothing but your humble servant.”

“Hermes, I want this to go straight to Hypnos and Thanatos, no detours. Understand?”

Amy handed the envelope to the gods' messenger, shivering slightly at the look he gave her from under his lashes. It carried so much loathing that she thought for sure she would be struck dead by its intensity.

He walked away from them, and she frowned at her friend. "Are you sure he's okay?"

"Oh, yeah, he's fine, very submissive. Gets annoying after awhile." Aphrodite didn't seem to care that he hadn't stepped back though the opening when she made her off-hand comment. Amy saw the messenger god's shoulders noticeably tighten and his hands fist up. Another chill danced up her spine and she gnawed slightly on her lower lip as she watched the opening close up and disappear as if it never existed. "I think he heard you."

"He has said worse, trust me. Let me worry about Hermes. You know, there is one more very important thing you have to consider. You are still mortal while they never will be."

Considering everything that she needed to focus on, Amy happily ignored how Hermes creeped her out. "I'm trying to deal with things one at a time, leaving the impossible stuff to the end."

Aphrodite leaned over and placed a gilt box on the table in front of her. "Perhaps this will make it a bit easier for you."

"Can I open it?"

"Of course."

Amy reached for the lid and the box's golden vines slithered apart. Startled, she snatched her hand back and the vines tangled together again. "What the hell?"

"It's for you, so no one else, god or otherwise, can open it." Aphrodite proved that by trying to pry the lid off but the vines held strong.

When Aphrodite stopped, Amy reached out again. The vine slithered back, exposing a mound of what looked like purple cotton candy. Curious, Amy lifted it out and sniffed at it. It smelled of eucalyptus, blueberries, and cloves.

“It’s ambrosia, Amy. Eternity is yours. You will remain human, but immortal.”

“Oh, man, that’s something I really have to think about first.” Amy placed the fluff back in the box and let it slither shut.

“Please keep this in mind. Regardless of your choice, I am now and forever will be your friend. As a friend, I have to tell you that they both love you in their own ways, and the three of you complement each other perfectly.”

Amy nodded and leaned forward, giving her friend a hug. “Thank you, Deedee. You’ve given me a lot to think about and helped even more.”

“So, what did your note say?” Aphrodite sat forward with a grin and it felt as though they were back to being a couple of friends again.

Amy’s lips curled into the beginnings of a smile, the first in what felt like years. “I want them to come home.”

“Then, you need to have a nap and regain some strength, and a shower.” Aphrodite gave her a quick hug and kissed her cheek. “Remember what I said.” And with a snap of the goddess’ fingers, she disappeared, leaving behind a sparkling kitchen and the new espresso machine.

Chapter 14

If anyone had asked her a month ago if she could be desperately in love with two men, Amy would have in all certainty said that it couldn't happen. She would've been downright wrong. She loved her two men, desperately, heartfelt, never ending, white hot love for both of them.

Why couldn't it be possible? Mothers could love more than one child. Family members loved each other, no matter how big the family. So why couldn't it be possible for her to love two men? Of course, a thought like that is what allowed polygamy to flourish but most of those relationships circled around a central man with many wives. She felt as if their relationship was a ring. Each of them brought their own strengths to the relationship, and they each balanced the other two out. A rare situation indeed, but then Thanatos and Hypnos weren't typical men.

After a nap, which Aphrodite insisted she take, she woke still tired but not as dead exhausted as she had been. Armed with her stubbornness, she headed back down to the water front to Bacchus's warehouse. She figured this would make for a good neutral meeting place. It wouldn't be fair for her to expect them to come to her when she had been the one to push them away.

The red carpet had disappeared as well as the scary, suspicious, minotaur-like animal guarding an ornate carved door. In fact, when she tried the handle, the door stayed its normal size and swung open easily. A sense of dread came over her. What if the boys chose not to come? What if they didn't want her anymore? Despite Aphrodite's

assurances to the contrary, Amy couldn't help the niggling feeling of doubt that crowded her mind.

The doorway opened to a big open space. It smelled of damp dog and urine, certainly not the elegant opulent example of excess it had been a week ago. Gnawing on her lower lip, she slowly walked into the big open space. Dirty windows caked with grime filtered the bright sunshine outside. Scratching noises erupted from darkened corners where her footsteps startled what must be rats.

"Thanatos? Hypnos?" she called out, hearing the echo of her own words coming back at her. Tears pricked the back of her eyelids. Dammit. Fine, if they wanted to make it hard on her, she would talk Aphrodite into taking her to their home.

Determined to make them believe that she needed them, she spun on her heel and almost walked straight into a large male body. Her throat tightened in fear, so what would have been a loud, terrorized scream sounded more like a squeak. She stumbled back a few steps, almost tripping over some of the garbage strewn around.

"They aren't coming." The man stepped closer to her and she scrambled back.

He stepped into a small wash of light and she recognised him. Her heart beat rapidly in her throat as cold sweat broke out over her body. "Zeus?" She wished her voice sounded stronger than it did.

He flicked his hair back, a feminine gesture that had more to do with effect than necessity. She almost wished it was a dangerous stranger who had found her, instead of a god with an overabundance of vanity.

"At your service, little girl. For now."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"That means that I am being nice to you, and you will be nice to me. Since your gods don't care about you, I figured that I would."

Her eyes widened in amazement at his audacity. "What makes you think that I would want you?"

“Because I am Zeus.” He looked at her as if he couldn't understand why she didn't fall at his feet. “If you're worried that I can not keep up with you, never fear. If it takes sleep and death to keep you happy, then I will be more than enough for you.”

Any fear that had been pulsing through her veins slowly retreated in the face of her anger. He had managed to insult her twice and the boys in the same breath. By the look on his face, he still thought he had her.

“No.”

A frightening glimmer echoed in Zeus's grin. “I don't recall asking. I don't need your agreement. I don't even need you to spread your legs.”

Before she realized it, she found herself bent over a tall pommel horse. Her legs were long enough that her toes could reach the floor but not enough to gain any balance. Silk cords wrapped intricately around her wrists and knotted to a ring in the floor, anchoring her in place.

“You see, belief is a very powerful force. Now that you finally believe in the boys, in turn, it also means you believe in me. And I like that feeling.” He walked past her and smacked her denim-clad ass, hard. Her body reacted in memory of Thanatos's hand and her pussy flooded with heat, heat rushing to her cheeks.

“You blush? I can not imagine your ass not being touched, especially considering whom you have been keeping company with.” He bent down close to her face and touched her nose with his finger. “Don't worry, little one. When I am done with you, you'll crave my touch.”

Amy glared at him. “Fuck you.”

His face contorted in rage and he slapped her across the face. “No one talks to me like that, especially a pathetic little human.”

Her cheek throbbed in pain as she gently licked where her teeth had cut her lip. She wanted to stay strong, but in the face of this assault, fear rushed back in full force, making her tremble.

“Bent over, tethered and waiting for use. Tell me. Are your trembles from fear or anticipation of my touch?”

She arched her neck and glared up at him refusing to answer. He would only twist her words. She needed to think of a way to get out of this.

“By the time we are finished, you will understand what it is to be the Master of all.” He trailed a hand over the roundness of her ass, smacking it again. This time her traitorous body didn’t respond.

A slight shimmer in the world’s energy tingled in her peripheral vision. She tried to look, but Zeus caught her chin with his fingers, forcing her to look at him. “I am so glad you asked me to come here, Amaryllis.” He let go of her chin and stroked a hand down her spine. She felt like he was petting her and it turned her stomach.

“It’s about time the boys finally took the hint.” Standing behind her he pressed his rock hard cock against her leather-covered ass, startling a cry out of her

“You whore,” a dark, rage-filled voice rumbled across the room.

Amy let out a little cry, struggling against the restraints. “No, Thanatos. It’s not what you think!”

“You could have fooled us,” Hypnos replied. “I know you like to be watched, Amy, but I thought you would know that we wouldn’t want to watch this.”

“No. No. No. You don’t understand. Let me off this thing, you asshole,” she snapped at Zeus and he laughed.

“She is a good actress, is she not?” Zeus grinned, resting a large hand possessively on one cheek. “You boys want a piece of her? I will send her down when I am finished.”

“I wouldn’t fuck her with your dick.” Thanatos walked around to where her head hung and stared down at her, his face a mask of rage.

“Don’t believe him. Please.” He had to see that she had been hit. Her cheek throbbed and felt as though it had swollen to twice the size it normally would be.

“He’s serious, Zeus. You can stop thinking about sticking your cock anywhere near that body ‘cause it will not happen.” She heard Hypnos come from somewhere behind her.

Zeus turned toward the god of sleep with a questioning look on his face. “What are you talking about?”

“You see, we are not as stupid as you’d like to believe. It is only humans who have that much power in faith. We gods don’t. Aphrodite didn’t trust your little slave, Hermes, and made sure that we got Amy’s message and the fact that you were not invited.”

“She is ours as much as we are hers, and we don’t share,” Thanatos commented, now cradling Amy in his arms. “In fact, I think that a change in politics is in order.”

Zeus roared, “Never!” He raised his hand palm up but instead of instilling fear, the boys waited to see. Sure enough, the skies darkened, the lightning cracked but none came to the old god’s hand.

“Oh, that is enough showboating,” a female voice snapped and Aphrodite strode into view, her stiletto high heels clipping along the floor. “You have done enough damage for thousands of year with that ego of yours. It’s time you learned a bit of humility.”

Amy stared in wonder at her friend. The tiny woman exuded power from her small frame. Dressed in a light sundress, she curled her hand in the air as if she wrapped something around her fist, then gave it a tug.

A swirling of what looked like thousands of fireflies lined up from her fist to Zeus’s neck, wrapping around it as they settled into a solid form. An iridescent leash appeared, and with a firm tug, the goddess of love had the once potent god on his knees. She giggled and placed a dainty foot in the middle of his back, pushing him to the floor. “I think we will start with the basics, slave. This is called genuflecting. You will do it whenever I enter or leave a room if you are not with me.”

“You little whore. I will never—” His nasty tone cut off when she ground the sharp heel into his spine.

“There are ladies present. You will not speak like that or you will be punished.” She looked up and grinned at Amy.

“Now apologize to my friend and the gods of sleep and death.”

“Go fuck—” The humbled god hissed in pain. Amy didn’t know what Aphrodite did to shut him up, nor was she going to ask at the moment.

“Apparently, we need to work on our manners. If you three will excuse us.” With another swirl of fireflies, the pair disappeared.

“How the hell did she do that?” Amy asked in wonder.

“Didn’t she tell you? Love is the mightiest of all beliefs. She simply waited until the time was right to step forward.” Hypnos grinned at her.

The sudden silence reminded her of the fact that she was the only person here with them and that Thanatos hadn’t lost his scowl.

“Than, you have to realize that he lied. I swear that I never said or did anything he said.”

“I know that, Amy.”

“But you looked so pissed at me, and you called me a whore!” She frowned at him and smacked his chest.

“Distraction tactics. Learned them while playing paintball with Aries. Very effective.” He gently placed her on her feet and then cupped her face in his palms.

Hypnos moved up behind her, trapping her between them. “He hit you, Amy. It took everything I had to keep my mouth shut and let Deedee do what she wanted with him.”

“That is why Than came to check on you, and I didn’t. He has a much better poker face than I do. Comes with being the scarier one.”

“I am not, you narcoleptic loser.”

“Okay, death breath.”

“Boys? Can we save the name calling for later, after I have a chance to tell you that I cannot live without either of you?”

Thanatos brushed his lips ever so gently across her forehead. “We love you, too, Amy.”

“No more secrets,” Nos whispered. He brushed her hair out of the way so he could kiss her neck.

Epilogue

One year later

Amy sat back in her chair under the window and looked over at the two men in her life. Almost a year had passed since Granny Flora's death. A year filled with the most amazing experiences and opportunities. Jackass had tried to cause more trouble with them and their "deviant" lifestyle as he shouted over the fence. Neither of her men would admit to forcing him to move, but she felt a distinct sense of relief when a "For Sale" sign appeared on his lawn. Amazingly enough, Than and Nos purchased the house for her and with their encouragement she created a safe haven for children. Now, it was known as one of the best homes for foster kids.

"You know, maybe it's time that all the gods actively joined the human race instead of living on the outskirts."

Than looked up from reading the obituaries and blinked at her, his eyebrow twitching as he thought about it.

"Are you crazy?" Nos artfully flipped a pancake. The god of sleep had discovered a love of cooking, especially breakfast.

"No, seriously, the two of you have been assimilated. Resistance was futile, of course."

"You have been watching late night sci-fi reruns again, haven't you?" Than folded his paper and placed it down on the table.

"It's not my fault. I couldn't sleep."

Nos turned on her, obviously insulted by her slight against his powers. "I'll have you know that I could have taken care of that for

you, but you told me, and I quote, ‘to stick that fairy dust up my ass,’ end quote.”

Amy looked sheepishly up at him. “Sorry, I’m having a hard time with my emotions. It’s partially your fault.”

Than snorted, and she pinned a look on him. “The other half is your fault, so the two of you can consider any mood swings your own doing.” She rubbed a hand over her distended tummy and shifted uncomfortably in her chair. Immediately, Than got up and helped adjust the pillow wedged between her lower back and the chaise. “Thank you.”

“Now what did you say about the gods and the humans?” Than reminded her of her original topic, giving her a soft kiss on the forehead.

“Oh, yeah, well, if you two could find a place, then why not everyone else?”

“Because some are happy being on the outside, supporting the species.”

“What do you mean supporting?”

“Someone has to make sure that the sun rises and sets.” Than leaned down and pressed a kiss to her rounded stomach.

She ran her fingers through his hair and watched Nos flip a pancake in the air, clapping when it missed the ceiling this time. “Okay, I can understand that. What about the other deities? Is there a way to help them fit in?”

“Flower, we have made the change easily because we have you to remind us what is important, and in four months, we’ll have two more reasons.”

“What about Deedee? Who could we set her up with?”

Obvious by the grin on his face, Than thought her silly for trying to play matchmaker for the goddess of love. “Sweetheart, Deedee is love. She doesn’t fall in love. Unlike Nos and I who fell so incredibly hard for you.”

She smiled sweetly up at her other love, amazed that she had been so lucky to find them. “Okay, so maybe Deedee can help. What about my father? I bet the right women could calm him down.”

“I don’t think that your father is the least bit interested in finding a life mate.”

“Well, maybe he doesn’t know what he wants,” she added cryptically, rubbing her swelling tummy thankful that their children had finally settled down. Trying to eat while four feet kicked any organ available usually upset her stomach. “I think he needs someone who could put some structure in his life.”

“I think that you need to eat.” Nos grinned and slid six fluffy pancakes, two sausages, and hash browns on her plate. He filled another pair up with the same amount of food for himself and Than.

Mouth watering, Amy poured a puddle of spicy BBQ sauce on the plate and dunked almost everything in it before eating. She had never been interested in this particular condiment until her pregnancy, now she couldn’t get enough of it.

“At the rate you’re going, our children are going to be born with hair on their chests, demanding a beer.” Than moved the bottle out of her reach.

“Oh, stop fussing. They’ll be fine.” Amy smiled at both of them. “I think they are going to have the most wonderful fathers in the Universe.”

* * * *

Music vibrated throughout the candle-lit room. Every shadow hosted an illicit tryst, for the enjoyment of both exhibitionists and voyeurs alike. Here and now, anything went and most took complete advantage. High above the crowd, in an opulent balcony reclined a Greek god and goddess on a pair of snow-white chaises. Between them sat a low table heavily laden with fruit and pastries. A magical

bubble surrounded them, blocking out the thundering music and raucous crowd, allowing them a private conversation.

“Have you spoken to Amy lately?” Aphrodite sipped from an ornate goblet

“I visited her a few weeks ago.” The god’s lips turned up in a proud smile that was nothing short of truly beautiful. “They found out that she is expecting twins. I heard her threatening to ban Thanatos and Hypnos from her bed, One was apologizing, the other trying to reason with her.”

The goddess snorted softly knowing that Amy loved Sleep and Death as much as they loved her. Fear might cause her to overreact but her husbands would keep her safe.

“She and my grandchildren are completely healthy and progressing as they should. Apparently there is a way that they can take a picture of the babies without breaking the skin,” the god mentioned, amazement in his voice. “It’s called an Instamatic or something like that. I’ve never truly paid attention to the changing health world. As long as my power base didn’t waver, who cared? It wasn’t difficult really. Simply appear at the odd fraternity party in my honor and whip them all up into an orgasmic frenzy.

“Young people never change over the passing of time. They all still see themselves as immortal and are narrow minded in the pursuit of happiness and pleasure. It’s amazing times they live in.” Bacchus sighed slightly, snapping his fingers at Aphrodite’s newest slave before holding out his hand for his goblet. The slave, formerly known as Zeus, shot him a venomous look and smacked the vessel in his outstretched hand almost spilling the contents on his toga. Aphrodite gave the golden leash in her hand a sharp tug, pulling the collar at his throat. Zeus turned and gazed adoringly at her.

“His training is coming along nicely,” Bacchus commented sarcastically before lifting himself up and wandering over to the balcony’s edge and watched the writhing bodies below.

“Yes, he is learning to be a good pet.” She tugged the golden leash and the god came to her, kneeling down next to her. She crooked a finger and he gracefully leaned down and kissed her softly on the neck. “Pass me an éclair please?” she asked softly

“Yes, Mistress.” He turned and quickly obeyed her request, kneeling back down and offering the pastry on a plate for her.

“In order to be a good Dominant, one must learn to be submissive,” she purred and stroked the man’s face, smiling when he flushed under her praise. “Zeus is learning, slowly mind you, that a little kindness and good manners will get you all sorts of treats. Something you might want to remember.”

“How the mighty has fallen,”

“Has he really?” She tightened her grip on Zeus’s leash and he automatically laid his cheek on her thigh. She stroked his hair as praise for his good behaviour. “Zeus has adapted to a new position in this world. How well would you, or any of the other Olympian’s do?

Aphrodite watched the wine god carefully. Not much longer and he would be ready for the training she had planned for him.

“Deedee, do you think that maybe there is more out there than the singular existence we have been living?”

Aphrodite, goddess of love, smiled at her friend and winked at him, knowing that she had him this time. “Chuck, I think that there is an entire Universe out there, if only we could break out of our own shells.”

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Corinne Davies reads anything she can get her hands on, from the side of a cereal box to a historical book on the Riflemen during the Napoleonic wars. By day, she is a full-time wife, mother, and works in the wine industry. At night, she avoids such mundane tasks as housework and laundry by creating her own worlds where mythology comes to life—worlds in which you are just as likely to be living next door to an ancient deity as finding a mystic treasure in the attic.



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