

Self Proclaimed Gods

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This novel is a work in progress, this is just the first chapter. It is based on mythology in a way... I don't want to give away too much so as not to ruin it for those who will bare with me through this process, but I can say that it stems from the idea of modren day gods: what of those ancient entities were still around today, their charecters based on their powers. They look like or me, but they long for power, status and awe... or at least some of them do. Then again, some don't aren't even aware of thier background - but all that will soon change :)

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I had just turned eighteen when my mother killed herself. Her absence was nothing new to me. To say she was inverted would be the understatement of the century. She would sit for hours on end staring at a blank t.v. screen, when I would try turning it on she would snap back to reality just long enough to yell at me to go do my homework , not that she cared. Half of the time she didn't even know I was there. It all started when my dad left, supposedly before then we were a happy family, but I wouldn't know - I don't remember. My only memory of that time isn't even of him, it's just of me clomping about the house in his big slippers, I was four. After that I just remember my mom crying at nights. She was still my mom but sad and lonely, though after a while the crying stopped, and so did everything else.

I wasn't exactly miss popular myself but in order to stay away from home as much as I could I stayed outdoors a lot and I had a few friends I stayed with from time to time, though I was careful not to let on anything was wrong. The day I came home to find the couch empty didn't seem ominous at all. At first I was even happy, hoping maybe my mother had finally decided to seize the day, or some such mantra bull-shit. I finally found her on the porch, she had taken sleeping pills. My first thought was *'I can't believe it took her this long'*. I guess she was holding out for my sake, she had gotten worse every day, probably holding on until I finally became an adult. I wondered if she felt relief on my eighteenth birthday.

I had already decided I was going away to college and the looks people began giving me after my mother's death were just a catalyst. I guessed they were looking for signs that I was going off the deep end too. They thought something was wrong with me because I didn't show the proper emotions. I hadn't cried at the funeral or at the wake, I had denied the use of the few shoulders I was offered. I was beyond feeling bad about my mom's death because I had come to terms with her being gone many years before, but I still wished I could have done somethingâ anything. As it was, I just focused on getting out of there as quickly as I could. I had debated which college to go to for a while since I had gotten into a few of my top choices but, in the end, I chose a school I had only applied to as a backup - the university of TX. Even though I didn't think any of my mother's family was still alive I wanted to be close to something of who she really was and not the hallowed-out shell she had become in Wilmington, DL.

In a short month I had managed to pack up the house and get my affairs in order. I hadn't sold the house yet, apparently it wasn't a good time for that sort of thing so I left it in the hands of a seemingly capable real-estate agent. I had left most of the furniture but I took my old nightstand that had my crayon drawings on the side of it. I had also sold all of my mother's things, I only took two pieces of jewelry: a thin white-gold band I now wore on my left hand's little finger and a teardrop diamond on a silver chain that hung around my neck. Those were the only things that had still had meaning to her, everything else was just a part of the sad non-existence my mom had led. And so I was off.

It was my first ever road trip, I guess I could have potentially enjoyed it if it were under different circumstances. When I finally reached Dallas the heat was unbearable, even though it was already September. I got the key to my dorm room, which was being paid for by my grant, so I couldn't really reason getting an off campus apartment. Luckily I had some time to settle in before my roommate would arrive; or so I thought. After I put my things away I got into my 'job-hunting' apparel. It wasn't much, a pencil black skirt down to my knees and a dark blue opened neck blouse that allowed me to manipulate how much cleavage to show (a job was a job no matter how I got it, so long as it paid well and was sleaze-free). I decided against heels, even though I was only five feet two inches, since it would be hard enough getting around in the heat without sweating like a pig, there was no need to over-tax myself further. So after fastening my black gladiator-last-season sandals I turned to the bureau mirror. My red hair was fading fast, I had started dying my

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hair at sixteen. If I wanted to be over self-analytical I guess I was trying to distance myself from my mother's angelic image, but I don't want to - so I won't.

Over the summer I had let my hair grow long so that now it lay just beyond my shoulders. All the dye jobs had made it a bit limp so that it seemed even straighter and more lifeless than it naturally was. I had cut my own bangs so they weren't very professional looking, I made an executive decision and pulled them back with a few pins then put the rest up in a ponytail. I had a pale complexion with a few freckles scattered on my high cheek-bones, which did nothing to hide my thin cheeks and sharpish chin. I have full lips but they always seem to be set in a frown, *'that's genetics for you'*. My eyes are hazelnut, like my father's. I look into them, always searching for a hint of the lifeless blue stare my mother wore so well *'had worn'*. No time for dwelling on the past - I was moving on with my life, so I put on some cherry chapstick, grabbed my purse and keys and started my quest.

I started the job hunt with idealistic hopefulness but I was quickly forced out of this state of mind, until I finally found myself accepting a job as a server in a star-bucks of all places, I hate coffee! *So much for my hopes and dreams of passing the year at a cushy secretarial job*. I still had hope that something better would come along, but the chances of that were very slight, and at least this job was right on campus so I had that to comfort myself with. I was supposed to start on Monday but they wanted me to come in the next day to get my training and help out with the Friday caffeine rush for free, so I went to salvage what I had left of my non-caffeinated freedom. I decided to go out to dinner and a movie, I got a burrito which I ate on the way to the 1 dollar theatre - sitting in a movie by myself was hard enough, I wasn't about to sit in a restaurant alone and I sure as hell wasn't going to pay full price for a movie I could just as easily download. Seeing as this was a spur of the moment thing I had no idea what was playing and I ended up seeing "Remember Me" - as if my life wasn't depressing enough, I had to sit there and watch someone who had it worse off than me. I almost went to ask for my dollar back but decided against it. Instead, I went on a long drive. I parked at a dog park and went for a walk, trying to fill my head with the world around me, keeping myself in the present. I was looking up at the rising moon in-between the branches of the trees when my foot caught on something protruding from the ground and I fell, hard. Luckily I barely scraped my knees because of all the mud and leaves, but that wasn't lucky for my outfit - "damn it!".

"Hey! Are you alright over there?" I heard footsteps behind me before I heard the man's voice and I had my pepper spray poised in one hand and my keys ready in the other as he appeared through the darkness. "Hi, I didn't mean to startle you, I just heard you fall" he said as he came to stand in front of me. "Oh, I wasn't startled" his gaze drifted pointedly to my hands. I gave a short laugh and put my weapons of mass destruction back in my purse, "okay, maybe I was *a little* startled. I'm fine though, thanks". I began to walk away, the guy seemed harmless, about my age and nice enough. However, I am usually more aware of my surroundings, I don't like being snuck up on so I deemed it was time to head back before something bad actually did happen, at least, something worse than just getting muddy. He put his hand on my shoulder to stop me as I began to turn away, "Wait, are you sure you're alright? You can get some nasty scratches out here, trust me on that". He put on a big smile that did nothing to subdue my growing unease. "I said I'm fine" but thanks again" - I couldn't just be rude, I would have to work on that. He kept his hand on my shoulder, adding: "maybe I should just take a look, I have some bandages on me.." he began to bend down but I was starting to get pissed. I detached his hand roughly as I turned away "I said I was fine!" - well I was rude when I got mad, that was at least something.

As I walked away he called out after me: "Sorry, but you didn't happen to see my dog wondering about? Lenny got away from me at the car" I stopped for a split second, torn between mistrust and concern. I finally kept walking but shouted back that I hadn't but I'd look out for him. "It's a her, and thanks!" he called back. I walked slower, I was being silly, there was nothing to be scared of, he really was looking for his dog, probably. I kept my hand on my mace just to be safe. I looped around instead of heading straight to the car, thinking I might help find the missing dog. I heard faint shouts - "Lenny, here girl.." I thought to try and

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whistle, but the last time I had done that in an unfamiliar area more than just dogs came out of the wood work to check me out, so I just kept on walking and calling out "Lenny" sporadically. I had just decided to start back towards the car when I saw a flash of movement to my right, I turned calling out her name and there she was. She had just appeared from under the brush right in front of me, panting.

She was a beautiful koly, with luxurious black, brown and white fur. I bent down, petting her behind her ears and put my nose against hers, she sat down and attempted to lick my face. I held her back, "well hi to you too". She was a beauty but looking into those vacuous eyes I could tell that, un-like lassie, she would be lost long before she ever made it home. I straightened up, one hand absently stroking her head as she sat beside me. I looked around, wondering how to find her owner, now that I had found his dogâ "maybe if you barked, hmm girl? Can you do that?" I lifted my hand from her head and she instantly started barking at me. I couldn't help it, I just cracked up. Apparently she wasn't so dumb she didn't know how to get her way. Once I heard footsteps approaching I continued petting her and she quieted instantly.

I was still trying to hold back bursts of laughter as the guy appeared before us. "Hey! You found her, here Lenny! Here girl!" he smacked his thighs but Lenny didn't budge, she just kept pushing her head insistently into my hand. "Ohâ go on!" I said, still laughing. She then bounded at her owner, if he weren't prepared he would have been on the ground, as it was, he let her lick his face a few times before he took her paws off his shoulders, releasing himself. "You're going to have to be careful with that one, she seems to be distracted very easily" I told him. "Ya I know, thanks for finding her", he fastened a leash to her collar, "I usually don't let her run free in places like this but she ran out of the car before I had time to get the leash out, thanks again... she seems to like you" he added as Lenny found her way back to my side and began sniffing my feet. I giggled, "well the feeling is mutual, she's gorgeous. Why did you name her Lenny?". He smiled, "my mom really likes Lenny Kravitz so this was kind of an attempt to soften her up to the idea of having a pet". "Hhhâ nice, did it work?" I asked. "Well, I still have Lenny but only because I moved out, my mom likes the name but having flees, fur and drool in her clean house is intolerable". I wondered for a moment what it would be like to live in a house like that... "Well parents will be that way. I'm glad you found her alright, I'd better get going, it was nice meeting you". "Uh..you too, wait! what's your name?" he called after me. "Amber". "Hi, I'm Michael. Do you live around here?" he asked. "I just moved here actually, I live in the dorms at the university".

A million thoughts were going through my head all at once: *was he flirting? Was I? Should I be telling a stranger where I live?* The dorms were large he wouldn't find me, but he knew my nameâ *so what? He was cuteâ shit what did he just say?* "Sorry what?" I had to ask. "I asked if you would like to join us for a walk tomorrow, since you're new I thought you might like to see this really great park I take Lenny to on weekends". *Should I?* it sounded nice but I'd never actually been on a date, not one on one anywayâ "sure, um but I have to work tomorrow morning". "Oh that's fine, is four in the afternoon good then? Do you have a car?". *Why, did he want me to pick him up?* "Ya.." I answered tentatively. "Okay so I could give you the directions and you can meet me there when you can", "that sounds great ". I smiled pretty much all the way back to my room.

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