

Gemma Farley

The Stolen God

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*The night lit up with power of one whose love was ripped
apart through their own blood.*

*A child cherished and celebrated is torn from bed to start a
journey to reclaim their rightful place amongst the gods.*

*A mortal start for one whose fate was to lead the world to
the way of light.*

*Caution must be taken by those seeking to intervene for
Love not Blood will determine Light or Dark.*

Anon.

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Prologue – Origins

Joy and laughter rang out as the sounds of celebration at the twins' birth was shared far and wide amongst the gods, an event it had seemed would never transpire for the King and Queen after centuries of trying. The twins' birth a few days ago had brought on a celebration of the type not seen in an age, with gods from far and wide clamouring for a glimpse of the new Prince and Princess. All seemed to be well and peaceful, with the King and Queen exhausted but exhilarated at the arrival of their children and having decided to remove themselves from the festivities for a well-earned rest. Unaware of their importance, the infants lay quietly asleep in the room next to the royal chamber, oblivious to the joy that their birth had caused.

As the gods celebrated and the King and Queen rested, all present appeared unaware of a sinister figure lingering in the shadows of the infants' room. The guard charged with their protection, turned away from the infants' doorway, heading to complete a check on the other entrances of the hall connected to the infants' chamber, and in doing so did not see the cloaked figure

steal across the room. Upon reaching the infants' crib and whispering soft words the figure gently raised the closest child into its arms and, careful not to wake the child, cradled the child's head close to its chest. Stiffening at the sound of a creak the mysterious cloaked figure turned to the door, expecting to see the guard, but relaxed on realising that the alert had not yet been raised; a few quick steps to the door and with a crack of thunder the figure disappeared with the infant clutched tight.

The guard appearing in the hallway cried out but it was too late, the cloaked figure was gone and on inspection had taken with them one of the infants. Instantly the guard sounded the alarm, crying out, 'Someone has taken one of the children!' Laughing at the words the gods nearby thought it was a joke, until entering the hall they saw the guard rushing to the twins' room with a look of fear and panic etched upon his face, and all merriment vanished.

The guard arriving at the side of the infants' crib turned to see the King and Queen appear on his right, with the same fear and panic mirrored in their eyes as in his. Looking into the eyes of the King, he failed to find the words for his defence as the King, with a wave of his hand, extinguished the guard's life. Turning to the guards that were streaming into the hall the King spat, 'Find the wretched individual and return our child safe and unharmed to our arms!' with a look in his eyes of deepest anger that caused the bravest guard among them to quake in fear.

Gods and guards alike fanned out across the palace, determined to track the culprit down, but as they continued to search and the minutes passed by, all hope of the child's recovery began to ebb away.

Whilst the search was being conducted and shouts rang out, the sound of thunder that signalled the cloaked figure's movements went undetected. Arriving in the shadows of a nearby chamber the cloaked figure appeared to stand as still as stone itself with one notable difference from previously; the child once held in its arms was now gone. Opening a portal to peer through the wall the figure, seeing the path unhindered, moved gently so as not to alert anyone to the arrival and was once more in the connected hall. The hall had been emptied as hoped, to complete a comprehensive search, and now, able to move with more confidence, the figure stepped into the infants' room once more.

A deafening sound rang out. Surprised, the figure turned to see the cause of the noise and if needed make a quick getaway, but saw that it was too late. Fanning out the gods and guards were forming a circle with the clear intention of not allowing this thief any chance of escape.

A baby's cry caused the heads of all present to turn as the King and Queen enter the room, the remaining child cradled in the Queen's arms. The Queen, looking closely at the figure, trying to determine who would dare such a thing, demanded, 'Show yourself, who are you and what have you done with our child?' A sharp intake of breath rippled through the crowd as the hood was

pushed back from the kidnapper's head, revealing the face of the King's brother, the twins' Uncle.

'You!' exclaimed the King, a look of shock mixed with a deep-seated fear at the realisation of what was starting to become the epitome of a true nightmare.

With a maniacal laugh Molus looked at his brother; 'Me,' he proclaimed, with a note of glee in his voice.

Molus' gaze remained fixed on his brother, his expression darkened and with a jeer he asked, 'Surprised to see me out of my cell? Thought I would remain locked away for an eternity?' Molus shifted his weight and adjusted his stature to his full height and continued, 'I warned you! I warned you that I would have my revenge and that you would rue the day that you went against me. You have brought this chaos onto yourself, brother! A braver man would have been honest, wouldn't have hidden behind a vale of secrets and used others to fight his battles.'

The King, enraged by Molus' speech, shouted, 'Enough! How did you escape and what have you done with our child?'

Surprise crept onto Molus' face as he surveyed his brother, seeming to almost ponder the question posed before responding, 'In answer to your first question, my brother, I escaped due to your lack of diligence to my cell. Centuries have passed and the ground has shifted and changed but my cell has not been altered, allowing me the chance to escape, which now I have taken. In

answer to the more important of the two questions I have taken what you cherish most and tarnished it as you did to me all those years ago. How does it feel to know that your child cannot return to your arms? That through your own decree it is banished to a life without your love, living amongst the mortals?’

Silence spread out as the King looked around, hoping desperately for a chance to save his child. As the King’s gaze swept back over the back of the room he spotted the Seer and, with a commanding voice, summoned the Seer to the front. The Seer, seeming to sense the King’s intention, moved deftly to the front of the crowd and with a bow to the King and Queen straightened up and stated, ‘How may I assist you, my King?’

Although the King’s command had been immediate the question he wished to ask appeared to stick in his throat and, pausing, he addressed the guards within the room, ‘Take him back to his cell, all members of the council are to attend and reinforce the security of the cell so that he can never escape again.’ Turning to his brother he asked, almost as already knowing the answer, ‘You intended to take both of our children, didn’t you?’

Molus replied without hesitation and nodded, his face now blank. ‘Yes.’

The guards leading Molus and all the members of the council slowly began to empty the hall as the King began to pace the room, barely glancing at his wife as she gently placed a hand on his arm to bring him to a

stop. Facing the Seer with a look of clear determination the King waved a hand and dismissed all in attendance from the hall leaving himself, the Queen and the Seer alone in silence; the only sound at all was the fading laughter of Molus.

Shifting uncomfortably, the Seer waited for the King to settle and ask the question, knowing in his heart the path now laid out before him.

Staring at the now lone child in the crib the King asked, in a voice no more than a whisper, ‘Can we rescue our child? Do we have enough time before the effects of Aruna extinguish the power of the gods within?’

Sighing, the Seer spoke gently but clearly to ensure no confusion, ‘No, my King, there is no time left. The moment Molus took the child down to Aruna the effect would have been immediate and unchangeable.’

Below, amongst the mortals of Aruna, the sky and earth rumbled as a piercing moan of sadness and sorrow ripped across the winds; the mortals, unaware of the grief being experienced by the King and Queen of the gods at the loss of their child, looked to the sky cautiously.

The Seer stood, shocked at the sight of the Queen crumpled on the floor sobbing over the loss and the King, shattered at the news, sliding down next to his wife, unable to speak. The normally hardened rulers seemed inconsolable at the statement made by the Seer

and, realising it was time to act, the Seer placed a hand on the remaining infant who, despite the turmoil around, had fallen back to sleep and closed its eyes. Garnering his strength, the Seer sent himself into the future of the now absent child and started to search for a glimmer of hope to grasp onto.

Seeing the Seer bent over her child the Queen regained some of her composure and, gathering herself, stood and moved forwards quietly so as not to disturb either child or Seer, recognising what the Seer was attempting. The Queen, although desperate for some hope, even the faintest of slivers, knew that the Seer was undertaking an exceptionally dangerous feat, one that no Seer had ever been able to accomplish; to gain sight of the future of a fallen god.

Standing still the Queen glanced at her husband as he rose and joined her. Together they looked on at the scene unfolding, the King, like his wife, wondering at but unable to yet grasp onto the chance of hope in front of him. The Seer started to rock as though falling and, unaware of the unconscious movement, was unable to stop himself. The rocking seemed to get more violent as the couple stared on feeling hopeless and unsure of what to do. All of a sudden a light seemed to wrench itself out of the gap between the infant and the Seer and, unable to contain herself, the Queen gasped and went to move towards the Seer and rip him away from her precious child. Seeing the movement, the King whispered in a hoarse voice, 'Wait,' at which point the light disap-

peared and the Seer collapsed onto the floor, unconscious.

Coming to, the Seer opened his eyes, and, glancing around, saw the King and Queen watching both the infant and himself with clear signs of anxiousness. Looking down, the Seer noticed that he was seated in a comfortable armchair with a small table and a glass of water next to him; summoned by the King or Queen whilst he lay unconscious. Reaching for the glass the Seer gratefully drank the water in one go, realising that he was thirstier than he had ever felt before. Placing the empty glass back on the table he looked up into the King and Queen's eyes and, summoning his speech, blurted out, 'There is a chance.'

The words were barely out when the King and Queen started firing questions at the Seer, the cacophony of sound making it impossible to distinguish one question from the next. Holding his hands in the air, slowly the pair quietened, looking expectantly at the Seer.

Looking from one to the other the Seer began slowly. 'There is a chance that the child may be able to restore the lost power and, through an act of true selflessness, earn its rightful place amongst the gods.'

The Queen got in first with a sneer, 'Earn? Our child should not have to earn what is theirs by birthright.'

The Seer, not surprised by the tone or response, responded firmly but respectfully, 'You are right, my

Queen, your child should not have to prove themselves worthy, but the actions of Molus and the laws of the gods have taken us down a path never trodden before. But this child, your child, is different.’ Pausing for breath the Seer continued, ‘The union of your two bloodlines has never before occurred and the power the twins may one day wield is uncharted for our people, but what I can say is that these children have a tremendous destiny ahead of them.’

Staring at their sleeping child once more, the King looked at the Seer with a penetrating stare. ‘What must we do? There must be something we can do to ensure our child has the best of chances to return to us.’

Nodding, the Seer continued, ‘Yes my King, there is something you can do, but you must work quickly, as the timing of this is imperative. The child must be found by a loving family and given a nurturing environment in which to grow and develop as naturally as possible and in doing so open the doors of chance.’

Sweeping to the doorway the King shouted up the hall for the guards to attend them at once. Appearing and forming ranks quickly, the King advised them to prepare themselves to go down to Aruna as they would be leaving in ten minutes. Moving back into the hall the King looked at his wife and their remaining child and confirmed what she was already thinking, ‘You stay here and protect our innocent child and I will find this family to protect and love our other as their own.’