

Nothing if not a Corpse

by S. McKiernan

Of course I was a virgin when we first met. I was young but not stupid, ignorant perhaps, but my beauty was not last on me. I saw the way the towns men would gawk, their mouths and eyes wide, rude thoughts, turning into cruder yells and gestures. He was powerful, almighty, larger than life itself. He took a step and the earth quaked, the oceans rose with the wave of his hand. I was in the temple, *her* temple, and he grabbed me by the hair... I blame him for his actions entirely, but Posiedon, despite being a God, was a man. Athena, despite being a woman, was a God. I died once, and I could die again. She certainly made sure of that. The transformation left me in agony. He stole my purity, and for that she stole my life. Athena was my entire reason for being. She exuded confidence in every step she took. She did not seem belligerent, she seemed... benevolent. I had dedicated my life to her, my spirit, my purity, I devoted myself to the will of the Gods and I was left with nothing.

It was not as if I had much to live for at that point anyway. The scene of him raping me in the sacred space of my virginal deity would be too much for me to bare if I stayed, and the exile bothers me no more than the ostracization of the towns people would have. I'm glad I will never have to see him again, and I'm glad no one has to see me. If it were not for the excruciating pain of live snakes ripping through my skull and my own flesh decaying around me I would think she had done me a favor. Perhaps in her own twisted, vengeful way she did. No one can hurt me anymore than I already have been, and she made that possible. Or she may have just grown tired of murdering citizens and my ongoing screams were far more entertaining. The Gods work in mysterious ways, and men, believing they are Gods, are just as unknowable.

I know they pursue me. I understand they do not come with broad swords and shields to have a cup of tea. The heroes, the conquerors, the warriors. The rapists, the killers, the sick bastards.

The men. My garden is filled with statues of them, I like to look them in the eye despite their already frozen features. There's something about eyes that always fascinated me, conceivably another thing Athena knew, they say they are the gateway to the soul, I want to see what they felt. Although I have the powers of a gorgon, my mortality remains consistent, my *morality* however... questionable perhaps. I want to know where theirs went as well, when exactly they began to see me as a monster and who else would have suffered because of their perception. I cannot help but wonder once more, despite my hatred of the idea, the positive attributes of this curse. Do these men come to me because they must no longer live in the world? Is their quest for violence their ultimate downfall and I am just a pawn in our cruel mistress of wars plan? I know of the one they call Perseus, he must have my head to fulfill whatever fantasy it is that consumes him. Why do I feel as though when he succeeds my theories will all be a foolish monster's last plight for mercy? I wanted so badly for my life to have some sort of meaning. I served Athena to give myself a purpose, I did not want to be another piece of meat for the townsmen to bargain over but I miss the blissful ignorance of never having to wonder if I was given this hair and this face for a reason, I miss simply having hair and a face.

Posiedon wanted me for my beauty, Athena was upset by this and took it away, now a man named Perseus wants me for my... what? I cannot make this story anymore simple, yet its moral eludes me. How many times must a woman be killed for a man to be satisfied? Maybe I am not even a woman. Maybe life has no meaning, and the Gods and men are not truly mysterious... but misguided. And horrible. And treacherous. And if I am to live to the best of my ability I must find meaning in my own actions. I am a mortal woman and I am a monster, but I am nothing if not a corpse, desecrate me if you please, or rather, if you can. I am Medusa, I kill without lifting a finger, I have looked dozens of men in the eyes in their final moments... and I saw fear.