

Poseidon's Daughter

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Part I

Darkness ensued while the dreary fog fell and kissed the sea's surface. Resting on a rock, Ejò Omi slowly, gently stroked the water with her pronged fin. Its infinite black scales massaged the waves that gently pushed against her and the rock where she rested. She leaned heavily on her arm as her gaze landed upon her journey's end. Her route up the western coast was harsh and proved difficult though not impossible - Poseidon had been favorable to her. For tonight, she would rest and prepare for what lay ahead. Slowly her body lowered with the weight of her task looming in her mind. Ejò Omi's thick, raven colored mane swept gently over the dark coral that hid her bosom. A sigh, before she knew it, led her to dreams of fantastical and powerful seas which she had traveled in her past. Minutes melted into the wee hours of the night, followed by dawn and then finally the warmth of the sun reached Ejò Omi's copper skin waking her gently. Pebbles rustled behind her and she quickly turned to see what had caused the vibration on the rock.

"Nerodia! What are you doing here?"

"Mistress, I had to follow you to ensure you were safe."

"But how did you manage to follow me the entire way? It has been such a long journey!"

"Don't fret. It's nothing to worry about that, I had help from my friends of the sea. Poseidon was in my favor as well; calm waters and currents that moved me faster and further along than I could have imagined. Have you eaten yet? I found some seaweed and algae for you."

Without hesitation Ejò Omi picked up the offering and within seconds devoured it completely.

"How many days has it been?"

"Over twenty days, but what you gave me should last me a few weeks. Although I am not happy you risked your life to follow me, I am grateful that you are here."

Seeing her mistress nourished and relieved to have company, Nerodia remembered why she had risked her own life to come in the first place.

"Let's go. You don't have time to waste."

Ejò Omi nodded and dived into the deep warmth of the ocean. So many times, she had felt the security and embrace the waters provided her but couldn't help to lament the loss which it reminded her of. Though she could not have lost something she never had, the feelings of emptiness were still the same; its intensity almost unbearable at times. Tears streamed down her face as she swiftly shifted the muscles in her elongated fin;

they propelled her forward, powerfully with incredible speed without compromising her grace. Nerodia had wrapped herself tightly around her mistress's chain that hung below her abdomen; the rest of the journey for her would be much easier than the way it had begun. The sun was at its highest point when they reached the shore. Finding the nearest cavern, Ejò Omi pulled her entire body and fin to the most shallow and smooth rock. She unfastened her chain, allowing Nerodia to be free. At its center, was a turquoise stone, which she pushed out of its pendant. She took a deep breath and hesitated to continue.

"What was she like, Nerodia?" Ejò Omi often asked the same question, yearning to derive pieces to add to the unsolved puzzle which had been present during the entirety of her life. Nerodia's gaze softened as she sighed and shook her head.

"Mistress, I can only tell you the same thi..."

"It's okay..." Ejò Omi cut her off before she could finish her sentence. "I just want to hear it again. It makes me strong. It gives me hope."

"That is what I fear most, mistress. False hope encourages you to continue this preposterous mission. It will not end well. Don't you understand?"

"You're wrong. There is no such thing. There is either hope or the absence of hope. I choose to believe that my fate isn't in the hands of the Gods and Goddesses above or below."

Nerodia closed her eyes ever so slow and began to speak the words her mistress so desired to hear.

"She had beauty that put Helen to shame, but her strength was like that of Troy's army. Any man who laid eyes upon her wished they could lay upon her. She was wise but generous and believed in the goodness of all. Her powers though wondrous and mighty were contained and used only for good. She knew the capabilities that she held and respected them. No other could compare to the tenderness she showed to all."

"Then one day..." urged Ejò Omi unable to contain the words from leaving her lips.

"Then one day, ten men aboard a small ship crossed paths with her. They stopped, mesmerized by her beauty and began to call her to them. Wondering if they were lost she drifted towards them cautiously. Without remorse, they grabbed her and hauled her body onto the ship's deck. For days they held her captive, ignoring her pleas for mercy. Each having their way with her until the eleventh day when they grew tired of the cruel game they had played and pushed her overboard. Her body, bruised and bloody did not attempt to fight back. Although she

knew her own powers could avenge her, they had damaged so much more than just her flesh. Her spirit was compromised. She fell heavily to the ocean's floor and wept. Days had passed, when she was finally found."

"And my father?" questioned Ejò Omi angrily already knowing the ending to this tragic love story.

"He did nothing."

"You are wrong. He did do something! He allowed them to survive! He helped the men that ravaged his love."

"Lust and love are not the same, mistress. And yes, you are right, he did do something."

"And now it is my turn to take action. It is me who will do something now." Ejò Omi whispered under her breath as she slowly began rubbing the bright stone upon the darkness of her tail. Instantly, it began to flicker uncontrollably in the air. The eternity of its darkness began fading into a sun-kissed bronze as the scales flattened and merged. Moments later, she slowly lowered her back flat against the rock and breathed quickly as sweat dribbled from her forehead. Closing her eyes, she clenched her fist tight and let out a shriek. Finally, it was over.

"Mistress? Are you in pain?" Nerodia quickly slid to her side.

"I'm okay. It's over." Ejò Omi slowly turned onto her abdomen and pushed her torso towards the sky. When she reached the top of her stretched arms, she brought her legs in, one at a time, towards her chest. Her head fell, and she rested in a squatted position; though it was only moments that had passed, it felt like an eternity. It had been many moons since she last felt the pain of her dual existence. She rose slowly and ran her fingers through her hair as she lifted it towards the sky. At the peak, her hair slipped through her fingers changing into a fiery red; in her hands appeared a long piece of white fabric that she would use as her dress. Quickly, she wrapped the soft, silky material round her body. She bent down towards the ground and scooped up the chain and the stone placing it back into its pendant. She, once again, fastened it on the lower half of her abdomen this time outside of her clothes rather than atop her fin.

"It's time." Nerodia spoke softly.

Together they headed towards the caverns exit in the direction of the bright sunlight. As they reached the top of the rocky hill, both stared intensely at the land that lay before them: Athens.

Athena sat on her throne in the capital of her beloved namesake. Golden chariots carried fruits and spices all meant as gifts for the Goddess of all that was wise in warfare and in life. She had many possessions, but of them all, her most prized was hidden deep in the walls of the capital's main structure. A beloved hero had bestowed this gift to her and for that she treasured and revered it with all her might. Though it was not in her nature to boast, she became reckless and began displaying this treasure for the town to see once a year during the festival honoring all the Gods and Goddesses of Mount Olympus. She lived freely between both worlds, not heeding the cautionary tales of her predecessors that fell victim to complacency. She relaxed in her lush throne on this hot summer day. The festival would soon commence and the treasure which so many looked forward to seeing on this day would soon be brought out on its very own chariot.

"Have you prepared the mirrors?" Athena asked a young man who approached her throne with urgency in her voice.

"Yes, my lady. The mirrors are ready and in place. Would you like to go to the festival's center? You can await your masterpiece there."

"No, I will wait until it has already been placed. Will you come and fetch me when it is done?"

"It would be my pleasure." Replied the young man as he bowed and turned to walk away. Serving Athena was every Hellenes' dream for she was the most beloved Goddess of them all.

It had been twenty years since the acquisition of her treasure and yet she was still fascinated by the danger it presented and the sheer force of its power. Her excitement grew, and she tried to contain her emotions by making herself rest. Kronos did miraculous wonders while people slept. One could close their eyes and although an entire night could go by, it would feel upon awaking, as if one just shut their eyes moments before. As Athena drifted into a deep slumber, a dark cloud suddenly overcame Athens. Thunder rolled and crashed against the backdrop of the city's view. As large, round raindrops fell, Athena dreamt of storms wildly spreading across the sea. The waters were tumultuous and unabiding in their ferocity. Suddenly, the ocean began to rise and devour everyone and everything in its path. The city flooded, and the people were all massacred by the wrath of the waves. Serpents swam through the currents and swallowed the bodies of the victims whole. Only traces of crimson lingered in the water after the creatures slid away. Athena gasped for air as she awoke startled. She sat up quickly while softly holding her head in her hands. It had only been a dream - no, not a dream. It had been a terrible nightmare. But

why? Without another thought, she gathered her white flowing gown and stepped off her throne. She headed towards the nearest beach and kneeled in the hard, wet sand. She lowered her head and began speaking in a tongue native to her kind yet foreign to any mortal of Earth.

"Poseidon - God of the Sea, Waters, Earth's tremors, and of horses - if you can hear me, please respond to this plea. Be merciful and just in your ways, for today is a day in which we celebrate the greatness within us Gods and Goddesses alike. Do not unleash your waters and provoke unnecessary deaths."

Athena's words were more like a prayer than a plea. Before long, she felt the cool edge of the shore's water on her knees.

"Fear not, my comrade Athena. I hold no ill sentiments towards you or the people of Hella on this glorious day. The sun is high and the seas I've kept calm for all the travelers voyaging back home to take part in the festivities. Have I not been merciful enough?" Poseidon's thunderous voice shook the sea and the whites of the waves splashed wildly in the air.

"It was only a dream and not a prophesy then. Forgive me, old friend, I was mistaken. I hope to see you in the celebration..." Athena signed with relief. With that, the water's shore receded back into the sea, and the calm of the ocean was apparent once more.

"Goddess! Goddess! The mirrors are in place and the statue has been delivered." The same man that had helped her earlier that day returned, running onto the sandy beach. Athena quickly arose and began floating towards him.

"Thank you. Let's go and see the wonders my possession holds." She smiled as they headed towards the festival.

As they neared the center of the festival, the crowd had surrounded the miraculous display. Curtains covered the mirrors that shielded Athena's gift. Upon seeing her, the crowd erupted in whispers, "Look! There she is!", "It's her! Athena has arrived!". The reverberations of the crowd's excitement was palpable. Athena took her place on a pedestal in front of the statue to be unveiled.

"Behold, Hellenes! Before you stands the greatest and most powerful gift ever bestowed to me. Its abilities so devastating, that none of you nor I have ever seen it - we have only the capability to see it by its reflection. One look directly into this wondrous monstrosity and you would surely meet your death. It will only lead you to Hades door." The crowd gasped with anticipation as the servants headed towards the curtains. The heavy, black material enveloped the mirrors entirely. Nobody could get a glimpse of what the fabric concealed.

"Behold people of Hella, the generosity of Perseus!" She turned and signaled the men standing in their assigned places.

"Alright men! One! Two! Three!" With tremendous force, fifty men pulled the curtains off the mirrors. Athena waited for the applause that had always followed the unveiling but was left standing in silence. Whispers of confusion began to spread through the crowd.

"Who is that girl? What is she doing?" A bystander exclaimed in utter shock.

"How can it be? She is draped over the statue! Have we been fooled? Athena proclaimed that anyone who looked at the statue would turn to stone." A woman protested pointing to the figure that could be seen through the mirrors reflection. Athena turned to examine what the commotion was all about. As soon as her eyes met the reflection of the mirror, she could see nothing more than a flowing gown covering her precious stone and fiery red hair blowing wildly in the wind. Who was this immortal being? Why had she risked spending an eternity trapped in concrete and stone? Suddenly, the woman let go of the statue and turned to face the crowd. Her beauty was stunning, the sultry yet thunderous voice that followed was captivating.

"Citizens of Hella - gather round for today you shall know the truth of Athena's prized possession. This is not merely a

statue but is the head of a woman who once lived on Earth as a Demi-God. She was beautiful, powerful and generous with her gifts. She did not boast and helped anyone whom crossed her path. In time, this being was betrayed and violated by the very people she tried to help. When she unleashed her wrath towards those who had treated her so unkindly, she was beheaded!

Betrayed by her lover and beheaded by a supposed hero...this statue that you see here is of my beloved mother...Medusa! I am here to avenge her death and bring her back to life!" The crowd stood silent and motionless. Athena, thinking of nothing else, shrieked at the top of her lungs, "Enough!". She shivered in anger as she spoke:

"You are an imposter! A liar! Medusa only had two sons - Pegasus and Chrysaor. There was no daughter! And if there was, who then, dear girl is your father?"

"In time, his identity shall be revealed but right now the moment has come to awaken this soul that has unjustly been frozen in time!"

Ejò Omi reached into a fold of her dress where Nerodia had been hidden the entire time. She gently grabbed her by the head and pushed her mouth open. Fangs protruded, and with them she pierced the serpent hair of the stone. A tear fell from Nerodia's eye and touched the top of the statue. The concrete

began to tremor and slowly pieces of it came falling to the ground. The statue continued to crumble bit by bit, piece by piece. Instantly, the statue levitated in the air and a dark cloud of smoke whirled around it quicker than lightning itself. There was an explosion and in the next moment the black cloud had disappeared and so had the statue. Screams began in the crowd and someone yelled, "Look! On the ground! It's a body!"

As the smoke cleared, the audience fell quiet once again. Soft hissing could be heard; as the minutes passed, the hissing grew louder. Clouds began to loom and slowly cover the bright sun. *Drip. Drip. Drop.* Large round raindrops fell slowly and methodically from the sky. Athena looked up and held out her hand. As she felt the chilled droplets touch her flesh, she could not help to think of the dream she had earlier that day. None of it made sense.

"There they go! Stop them!" Athena's thoughts were disrupted by shouts from the crowd. She turned to see the figure that was once on the ground stand and begin to run towards the shore. The red-haired woman was following close behind her. In an instant, they both dove into the sea. Waves began to rise, and the tide became uneasy. The crowd ran towards the shore, despite the dangerous rolling waves that splashed angrily towards them. The sea looked empty and just as the citizens of

Hella were about to turn and head back to the city, someone spotted it: In a flash, they saw the prongs of a black fin peak out of the water making a massive splash and go back in once again.

Part III

The storms that had begun in the hour that passed continued. Ejò Omi looked up towards the surface of the sea to see if the rain was still falling steadily. Her heart raced as she glanced behind her and saw her mother; beautiful, tender but aged by the sorrows she had felt the last twenty years of her sentence. Immediately disrupting her gaze was the thought of Nerodia. Where had her guardian gone? She quickly looked around hastily searching for any sign of her serpent angel. Her heart began to race as moments passed and she was unable to find her. In a moment of panic, a glimmer caught her eye. When she looked at her mother's wrist, there she saw Nerodia wrapped tightly around a bracelet. She let out a sigh of relief and headed towards the surface once again. The three brought their heads above the water and found themselves in the very cavern where Ejò Omi had transformed before. Already in her natural form, she drifted towards the edge of a rock and leaned on it. Medusa slithered smoothly to her in the water and gently placed her hand on the crook of her daughter's neck.

"Never could I have imagined you so beautiful. How I longed to meet you, to see you, to embrace you. I thought I would spend an eternity as stone and wished that I could just have a moment to look into your eyes." Medusa spoke softly as tears flowed down her face. She smiled gently as the wind blew her raven black hair across her face. Ejò Omi raised her hand and softly swiped the hair away from her mother's cheek and chin.

"Mother, how I've missed you. Without knowing you or without ever seeing you I missed you." She threw her arms around her mother and the two embraced for a long time.

"Mother, where are the serpents in your hair?" Ejò Omi ran her fingers through her mother's soft, silky hair.

"Legends are not always correct - the serpents only show themselves in times of need or danger. It is only then that my gaze can turn mortals and immortals alike into stone. If there is not threat, if there is no need, there are no serpents. This is how it has always been."

Shocked at this revelation Ejò Omi breathed deeply. She had so many questions, so many things she wanted to say, yet was unable to find the right words. As if a Legilimens, her mother began to speak, "I know you must have so many questions and I want to give you all of the answers you have longed for. But right now, I must rest. Nerodia, dear friend, I am so glad to see you!"

Medusa raised her arm to eye level and brought the serpent towards her. She buried her nose into Nerodia's tiny face. Nerodia smiled and closed her eyes.

"Twenty years seems like a lifetime, yet, Kronos and his tricks make me feel as if I was just speaking to you yesterday of our plans."

"That is true. And look...look at the beauty that came from our preparedness. Thank you for taking such good care of her. Without you, she would not be here."

Listening to this exchange, Ejò Omi's head shifted quickly to meet eyes with her mother and Nerodia.

"Maybe this one story?" Nerodia asked mischievously.

"Okay," Medusa gave in - she could not resist the telling of how her greatest joy came to exist in this world. "You were born the moment my head was severed by Perseus. Your brothers, Pegasus and Chrysaor sprung up and pushed off my clavicle. You, however, grew inside the very pulse of my being. When I perished, you were enclosed in a pocket of air and floated down to the depths of the ocean unnoticed by anyone. Before Perseus decapitated me, I yanked a strand of hair from my scalp and clenched it with my fist. When you were left alone, the hair

transformed and Nerodia swam to the ocean floor to find you, care for you and to raise you.

"You were just a tiny larva floating in the vast eternity of a sea. You grew fast and strong and it wasn't long before I had to work to keep up with you instead of you trying to keep up with me." Nerodia continued to talk whimsically as she nostalgically recalled the very beginnings of Ejò Omi's life.

"Mother, I have dreamed of this day for so long. Feelings of hatred for those who betrayed you inspired me to take life into my own hands. I want you to meet my clan. For although Nerodia raised me, she always kept me around my kind. We are a force of power and strength. I have told your story and we have taken control of our lives, of our destiny. We lure those who make the sea their home into our island and devour the poor souls who cannot resist the enchanted songs we sing." Ejò Omi's eyes brightened as she spoke. Her hair rhythmically yet subtly shifted from side to side. Her smile faded as she saw a look of concern on her mother's face. "Why are you sad, mother?"

"Hatred will consume you, daughter. Don't allow the tragedies of my past to control the triumphs of your future."

"My triumph is my ability to consume. We can never be taken advantage of again. It is in your name that we draw strength.

Why would you think of allowing those who ravaged you to possibly mark another's fate?"

"It was not all Mariners who are controlled by lust and sin, daughter."

"I am not willing to take that chance."

"Medusa, try to understand," interjected Nerodia when the discomfort became unbearable. "She has only known your story, your absence, your tragedy."

"I suppose so. Let us meet your clan then - if they are family to you then surely they will be mine too."

"But first, let us plan for what we will do when we confront my father." Ejò Omi's eyes were wild and wide. A sly grin spread across the fullness of her lips.

"Ejò Omi..." Medusa began pleading but was cut off by her daughter.

"Don't tell me that you do not plan on confronting the one who betrayed you in the cruelest of ways? He left you to die, mother!" Ejò Omi pushed her body away from the rock and away from her mother.

"There is still so much you don't know, daughter. I never said that we would not talk of all these things, simply that I

needed to rest. I need to recover my strength daughter. If any plans are to be made, surely, they cannot be executed at my weakest."

Although not entirely satisfied, Ejò Omi could see her mother's struggle. Her face softened, and she tilted her head to the side as she breathed in heavily.

"Yes, mother. There is no rush, we have an eternity to be together."

"You are wise my daughter - much wiser than she who hoisted me on a shrine and foolishly allowed you access to me. That too, will need planning." A similar sly grin spread across Medusa's face.

"We should start our journey back. We can travel for some time and rest when we get to the cave where we were reunited, Ejò Omi."

"Mother, hold on to me, I see you are tired. I will carry you home."

"Home. That sounds like a dream."

The three creatures dived back into the cool depths of the water and began their journey back. Though she had only known a life as an orphan until now, Ejò Omi felt as if a piece of herself had been restored. Although hatred lingered in her heart, the

love she felt in the moment far surpassed. Even then, as they drifted deeper into the sea, a slight hiss could be heard traveling through the current.