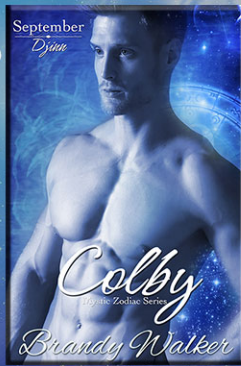
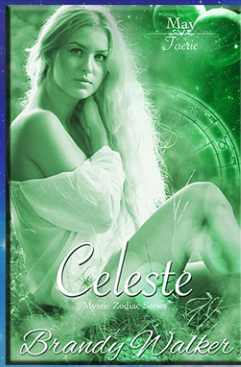
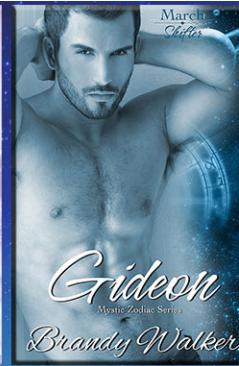


Mystic Zodiac Series



www.brandywalker.net

MYSTIC ZODIAC

THE PROLOGUES

By

Brandy Walker

THANE: JANUARY

On a cold winter's day the Fates: Clotho (Chloe), Lachesis (Lacy), and Atropos (Rose), lazed in the Pantheon, listening to the other Gods and Goddesses singing each other's praise. Arrogant, pompous, buffoons who thought too much of the gifts they wielded over the humans and Mystics, beat their chests like primates in a show of dominance. It never changed on Mount Olympus.

As far as Chloe was concerned, no one would ever be above her and her sisters' station. Not even Zeus himself, though he liked to believe differently. She and her sisters were the ones deciding life, longevity, and death; determining the fate, as it were, of each individual on earth and beyond. She and her sisters should be the ones the other Gods and Goddesses revered and bowed down to. Feared with every fiber of their being.

Lounging on a gold tufted parlor chaise, Chloe eyed a group of women scurrying by. Tall, lithe, blonde-haired nymphs rushing to the entrance of the Pantheon, tripping over each other to be the first to reach whatever bobble-headed goal they had. "This looks marginally interesting," she mumbled, nudging her sister Lacy awake.

Lacy yawned, blinking her owlish brown eyes. "What looks interesting, dear?"

With a long, thin finger, Chloe pointed to the group. They were surrounding someone who had just entered the room; a magnificent, golden-haired, cocky, pain in the ass God—to be exact.

Eros. A shiver of desire raced down her spine.

Lacy grunted before closing her eyes. "That's not interesting Chloe, that's Eros. The man is too full of himself for my taste."

"Yes," she murmured. "We both know you love a man who will kneel at your feet until you tell him otherwise."

That was not Chloe's idea of a man. She liked one who took what he wanted, when he wanted it. That man would have confidence and an edge or arrogance. All of which Eros had an abundance of. Yes, he *was* full of himself. She knew that. It didn't mean she couldn't lust after him though. She yearned to taste his full lips and feel his silky smooth skin beneath her hands. Run her fingers over the hard ridges of his abs. Dip below that flimsy excuse of a wrap stretched tight across his lean hips and hanging on by the grace of Zeus. He never was one to adhere to the typical clothing of the Greeks. He showed off his body for one and all,

reveling in the stares filled with undisguised lust. She could appreciate that display, even though she couldn't stand him on any other level.

Chloe hungered for him the way one craved a decadent meal filled with rich meats, lush fruits, and flowing mead. Eros was a treat she wanted only to taste and have fill her body until she tipped over, drunk on pleasure. That was all. She had no plans to keep the man.

The high-pitched shrieks and giggling of those annoying women skated across Chloe's ears as Eros sauntered by. He stood well above them all, shining in all his glory. He tossed one of his *"I'm beautiful and I know it"* smiles her way, setting her teeth on edge. She couldn't help but seethe over the way he'd rejected her the week before. Brushed her aside for a dalliance with one of Zeus's prized nymphs. A dark-haired voluptuous woman rumored to be the naughtiest of lays, up for anything and able to pleasure a man until the brink of sweet oblivion.

Chloe didn't consider herself to be the hag or old woman, regardless of her age, as mythology liked to claim. Like her sisters she was tall, thin, and strikingly beautiful. She knew women would kill to have her caramel-colored hair that fell in long waves down her back. Or possess her deep brown eyes men said they got lost in and lush red lips as sweet as ripened cherries.

Eros should be thankful she gave him a passing thought to be her lover. That she found him worthy of her time. He should kiss the ground she walked on just to be close to her. Grovel and beg for her attention.

But no, he did none of that. Instead, he had the audacity to laugh in her face as if her proposition were a joke. Did he not understand she could end his life with the snap of her fingers, immortal or not?

Rose roused from where she reclined next to her, a sour look painted on her pale face. "It's gotten too loud in here sisters. We will return home now."

"I agree," Lacy chimed in. "Let us leave this place with its—lower beings—making fools of themselves."

Chloe's sisters rose and began to move away. Slowly, she stood, smoothing out her dark blue chiton while looking at Eros one last time. He threw his head back and laughed heartily at one of the insipid women before wrapping his arm around her shoulders and kissing her soundly. When he released her, his gaze collided with Chloe's. The slow rise of the corner of his mouth set off her fury with him once again.

Without thought she stomped over to where he sprawled with his harem. “You think you are so wonderful, Eros. *The* pre-eminent gift to both man and woman. Using your looks and ability to arouse desire in those around you to get what you want. Other than for sexual entertainment, you’re useless. Even your gift is a joke. You help mortals fall in love. How ridiculously easy that must be. Zeus knows, we wouldn’t want to tax your limited abilities by giving you something that mattered.”

In one smooth movement, Eros rose from his seat. The women surrounding him gasped in unison before closing their silly mouths. He stood in front of Chloe, towering over her, before she had a chance to flee. Not that she would give him that particular satisfaction.

“Oh sweet, Chloe. Still hurt at being rebuffed?” His words came out on a purr. Hatred rose within her. The man oozed sensuality and used it to his advantage.

“Never,” she hissed, knowing full well it was a complete and utter lie. Eros had to have figured as much. He lips lifted, a smirk painted across his face, as he stepped closer. She could feel the heat of his body, though there were still many inches between them. The thin film of her dress did nothing to diminish that heat or stop her body from wanting to melt into him.

“I believe you are,” he stated, regarding her in study.

She pressed her lips together to keep her words at bay. He would use whatever she said against her. It’s how he liked to play. How most Gods liked to get their rocks off. His head tilted to the side, a thoughtful look smoothing his features.

Damn the man for being attractive.

“I have a game for you, a challenge if you will. One I think you’ll quite like.”

“There is no game I want to play with you, Eros. That momentary lapse in judgment has passed.”

He stepped forward, closing the last of the distance between them. Chloe sucked in a quick sharp breath as his chest brushed against hers. Her nipples responded, hardening to rigid points.

“You would never pass up a challenge, I know you too well. Besides, this one has quite a wicked reward if you prevail. Something you desperately want and I denied.”

A flash of arousal burst through her. He couldn’t mean what she thought. She knew what she had been denied and though she would not admit it to him, she still wanted it—

wanted him. She licked her lips and watched as his eyes dilated, tracking the movement. He wasn't as immune to her as he portrayed.

She was unable to resist now that she knew. "I do love a challenge," she whispered. She raked his body with a gaze, so lost in him; she jumped when he slipped an arm around her waist, pressing her into him. Her body betrayed her feigned lack of interest in his by quivering in response.

"I *challenge* you to match twelve couples."

She opened her mouth to retort how easy that would be, when his finger landed on her lips, silencing the words that had yet to come out.

"Not until I'm done. Twelve couples, one a month, but they won't *only* be human. I deal with much more than you think. You, my sweet Chloe, will match one Mystic a month for the next year, following the Mystic Zodiac. They must fall in love. If you succeed, as you surely believe you will, then you get *me*. For one...whole...month."

He dropped his finger from her lips, his arm from around her waist, and took a step back. She nearly stumbled, locking her knees before that happened.

"An entire month?" she croaked, her mouth having gone dry.

He grinned like a fool. "Yes. All to yourself. No other playthings to occupy my time. Only you. Would that *satisfy* you?"

The young maiden within urged her to say yes. The wizened woman inside cautioned her. How could she lose though? Helping humans and Mystics fall in love couldn't be *that* difficult. Humans fell in love too easily and too often. Mystics, if they had been on that plain long enough, did as well. It would be a breeze.

"Will I be choosing the Mystic or will you?"

"I will, of course. It is my job to know who will fall and when. I do have more than just one couple a month to deal with. I'll give you the name of the Mystic, but I won't tell you whom he or she is matched to; that you will have to figure out all on your own. Consider it an added degree of difficulty, since you find my *job* so easy. If you're successful, we'll meet again on the first day of the next month and I'll give you the next name. If you aren't successful, that is where the challenge ends."

The deal sounded wonderful in her head and too good to be true. There had to be a catch. Something he got out of it if she failed. No God or Goddess did anything without a return in kind. "What will I owe you? *If*, by chance, I'm unsuccessful."

Eros grinned. “That’s just it. You’ll *owe* me. One favor of my choosing. Doesn’t matter what it is, you’ll have to deliver.”

Chloe pursed her lips and thought it over. It didn’t take long to come to a decision. Confidence was never something she lacked. “You have a deal Eros—and you better be worth it.”

Eros threw his head back and laughed, much like he had earlier. When his laughter died down, he stared at her with a twinkle in his eyes. “Oh, I am Chloe. I am definitely worth it.” Quick as lightning, he dropped a soft kiss on her lips. “I’ll call on you tomorrow.” He spun away, joining the women back on the lush pillow-laden seating on the floor.

Chloe crossed her arms over her breasts, hiding her body’s reaction to him. The fools around her didn’t need to know of her attraction. “Your challenge has been accepted. Give me the name,” she demanded.

Eros chuckled, spreading his arms out to encompass the women around him. “I’m done for now. I have other pursuits to attend to. You can wait, Chloe, or are you that desperate to have me?”

“No one would ever be desperate over you. You give yourself freely to one and all.”

He pinned her with a look that stole her breath. Eyebrow raised, lips thinned. She stepped too far in pushing him. He opened his mouth and she cut him off.

“Tomorrow then,” she snapped. Turning on her heel, she left as quickly as she could without making more of a scene. His voice didn’t ring out behind her with the truth, and for that she was grateful.

“Blast, the damn man for being gracious.”

Eros pounded on the heavy wooden door of The Fates’ home, hoping his visit would be quick. A small part of him was still pissed about the day before. He did *not* fall into bed with any and everybody, regardless of the rumors swirling around his name.

Great thought went into selecting his paramours. What they could do for him or to him? Was the risk worth the reward? Did he want more than a simple dalliance?

The second those words were out of her sensual mouth; he should have demanded they meet at the Parthenon, or the court at Zeus’s dwelling. Neutral territory with plenty of

onlookers would eliminate words of foul play later. It would also hold him in check. His lust for the woman raged within and made him reckless. The knowledge that every word and action was being watched, his only saving grace.

It was too late to alter things now. They were on a collision course with passion.

A small gust of cold air whipped past, chilling him to the bone. Pulling his cloak tighter around his shoulders, he took in the scenery. Though part of Olympus, the area was free of natural beauty. The familiar sights of birds, fruit trees, and grass were nowhere to be found. The bright light of the sun barely made a dent in the gloom. It was no wonder people wouldn't venture to this desolate part of the realm. The populous of Olympus preferred to ignore the Fates and what they represented, as well as steering clear of the oppressive surroundings.

Eros wasn't so bothered by the roles the women played: Chloe, the most beautiful and youngest of the three, created life; Lacy measured time of existence, while Rose, the oldest and bitterest of the sisters in his opinion, represented death. The woman needed a good romp between the sheets, though he was not volunteering for that duty.

Loud creaking of the door snared his wavering attention. Surprise rocked him to his toes upon seeing Rose's rail thin frame before him, a scowl on her face. He imagined a handmaiden would answer his knock, not the death dealer herself.

Her pale lips curved into a smile. "You showed," she cackled. "I'm impressed." Pulling the door open further, she made a sweeping motion. "Do come in boy. We've been hoping for a bit of fun."

His spine stiffened at her words. "I am no boy, Rose," he rumbled, stepping over the threshold, moving deeper inside.

At the loud slam behind him, he jolted.

"A tad jumpy...boy?" Rose's rusty laugh grated against his ears.

Sucking in a breath, he calmed his nerves. There was no reason to feel apprehensive. He was a God, Son of Aphrodite and Ares. Power flowed through his veins from birth. He brought desire and love to those around him. It should be no different here.

Waiting for Rose to walk ahead of him, he took in his surrounding. The inside of the home was vastly different than outside. He was in some sort of overly large entryway. Bright sun streamed through the top of the cathedral ceiling. Warm tapestries hung on the walls,

depicting the various cycles of life. Nude marble statues spanning from the beginning of time dotted the room. Some sexual, some not, but *all* drew in the viewer.

Rose swept in front of him, the long black dress brushing the floor softly as she walked. Her long black hair swished side to side. A thick grey band of it running along the left side of her face, peeking through every couple of steps. "Come along. I'll take you to Chloe."

Eros grunted and followed as instructed. Shock overrode his nerves when they breached the doorway to another room. It was a veritable sex den. Large, plush, deep red cushions littered the floor. Smaller gold, blue and green pillows defined various areas. His gaze traveled to the right where he found Lacy naked, blonde hair cascading over one shoulder, lounging on her belly. A dark-skinned male consort knelt at her side, rubbing oil over her toned body. She looked up at Eros and grinned. "You did not disappoint, Eros. Bravo. Seems my sister owes me now."

Eros's brows furrowed with confusion. "Chloe didn't think I would show? I find that hard to believe."

"Not her you daft man." She pointed to the woman in front of him. "*Her.*" Rose groaned, earning his attention. The women were becoming more peculiar by the minute. He never would have expected this type of behavior from the women who brought life, longevity, and death to all.

"One night Lacy. You may have your turn with my companion, but I expect Torvald to be well cared for and in pristine condition when he is returned."

"He'll be taken care of, won't he Julian?"

When the man next to Lacy raised his head, arousal glittered in his dark eyes. "Yes, mistress. You have my word."

Rose nodded sharply. "You will find Chloe through those doors, Eros. She vibrated with too much energy to be allowed in here." She pointed to the back of the room at two large blue doors. She stepped to the left to another pillowed seating area. A large, muscular man, wearing nothing but a loincloth, knelt in the middle, his gaze focused solely on Rose. She ran her finger along his shoulders, eliciting a shudder from him. Her gaze snagged Eros's "We are not what you expected, are we?"

"No. Not in the least," he confirmed. They were nothing like what he thought and he had a feeling he had barely scratched the surface.

“Keep that in mind, boy.” Moving away from the consort, she slid onto a chaise lounge with all of the grace of a ballerina. “Go now before you see something you may wish you hadn’t.” The loud snap of her fingers propelled her man in motion. He rose, standing a head taller than Eros’s six-foot-six frame. Muscles bulged upon muscles. He was a giant, a Nephilim. When he ambled toward his mistress, Eros took off. There would be many things happening he did not want to see—of that he was sure.

Pushing through the doors, he found the one he was there to see. Chloe stood with her back to the door, staring out a window. She was draped in a fine blue silk shift, her supple body evident underneath. Her long hair brushed the top of her ass, drawing his attention to the perfectly shaped globes.

He may have turned down her invitation to join her in bed, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t interested. When Zeus commanded your presence, you obeyed. That the summoning had more to do with pleasure than business was a bonus. Now that his task was complete though, he could move on to what would, no doubt, be the best sexual experience he would have to date.

Chloe was a challenge, one he didn’t plan on backing away from. She handed him the perfect opportunity to turn his pursuit of her into a much better game when she threw that jealous fit. Little did she know he planned to help her win the bet. If failure were in sight, he would make the match happen without her knowledge. It would be a win-win for them both. Oh, how he enjoyed sparring with her, and with a year of it under their belts, their joining would be explosive.

“I see you made it,” she said nonchalantly without turning around.

“You thought I wouldn’t?” He moved to stand next to her; surprised to see she was looking out onto a beautiful garden. *What madness bewitches this place?*

“I meant, made it past my sisters and their men. I didn’t doubt you would show up at our home. You love a challenge as much as I do.” She turned her head to look up at him. Deep brown eyes gleamed at him. She was aroused, excited by his presence.

He turned away, striding to the side of the room where a plush couch sat against the wall. Easing his body onto it, he did his best to act unaffected by her. “I never have a problem with women. You know that about me. I am the God of love and desire. A flick of my wrist...”

“You mean shot of your arrow...*Cupid.*”

He rolled his eyes at the childish name he had been given eons ago by a jealous Roman unable to pleasure his bride. “As I was saying, a flick of my wrist and I could have all of you begging to make love to me.”

Light, bell-like laughter floated through the air. “You are a smug one. You know you hold no power over us.”

Eros patted the seat next to him, beckoning her to join him. “Oh but I do, my sweet Chloe. You want me and I’m prepared to let you have me, once you complete your task that is.”

Chloe glided toward him, the soft rustle of her clothing the only sound in the room. She chose to stand in front of him, ignoring his invitation. She was a stubborn thing and damn if that didn’t turn him on. “Maybe I’m not interested anymore,” she said breezily.

Leaning forward, he grabbed her by the waist, pulling her in close. Pressing his nose against the soft triangle of hair covering her pussy, he made a show of breathing in deeply. “You’re interested,” he breathed out. “You smell like ambrosia; fragrant, rich, and ready to be consumed.”

Struggling to get free, Eros let her go. “Get out,” she growled.

Chuckling, he leaned back, settling into the cushions. “You accepted the challenge in front of all those people. You can’t back out now.”

Stomping her foot, she reminded him of a child who didn’t get her way. She wasn’t used to being told no. He would have to remember that for later. Use the knowledge when they were in bed.

Minutes passed while they stared at each other. The tension in the room rose. Her defiance made his hands itch to toss her over his knee and spank her. To turn her creamy white skin red, make her buttocks burn. She’d enjoy it. He could tell.

A sudden gust of air left her lips. “Let’s get this over with.”

He sighed. No more fantasies. It was time to get down to business. The quicker they started, the better her chances of success. “I’ve decided I will give you both of the names to be matched. You’ll have to figure out on your own how to get them together.”

“Don’t do me any favors,” she sneered, crossing her arms over her chest.

It was a shame to have her breasts hidden from his view. He would bet the deep red of her areolas matched her lips. He gave his head a quick shake. “I’m not. Having both names will expedite the process and it is no less than I give those who work under me. This case is

special though and one I would usually do myself. He is a watcher, Grigori Thane. It's time he earns his wings back."

"A Grigori never loses his wings."

Eros shrugged. "Not in the literal sense."

Tilting her head to the side, she tapped a finger to her lips. Eros was distracted by the move, wondering how they would feel against his again, with her participating, of course. "Hmmm...I remember the name. Slept with one of Zeus's playthings without his permission."

He chuckled. "Yes, that's him. He made the mistake of getting caught. It does not matter now, though. He needs back into the fold."

"Then why not just let him in?"

"It is never that easy. You know as well as I that in order to regain entry into the realm, you must *earn* your way in. He's to protect an Eternal, Amara Hope."

"That should be simple. He is a watcher after all. Have whomever his keeper is tell him to grab the girl and wait to be transported here."

"Did you forget the reason behind my being here? They *must* fall in love," he said a bit exasperated. It was as if she didn't want to play the game they'd set up.

Her brow wrinkled and her lips pinched. "I never forget. I merely do not understand why love is a stipulation of his return."

"Zeus will not let him in otherwise."

"Oh? Zeus usually doesn't care."

"He does with this one. When a Grigori falls in love, he cannot *be* with anyone else from that point forward."

He saw the understanding dawn on her face. Her eyes lit up, dancing with delight. The lips he ached to feel on his flesh, curved into a smile. "It shall be done. I will see you in a month's time. Your place?"

Eros nodded, immediately regretting his compliance. His place would mean they would be alone again. He would not back out though. To do so would put him at a disadvantage. She would know the depth of his need for her then.

PARVATI: FEBRUARY

Chloe paced the ornate oriental rugs strewn about Eros's living room, the soft padding under her feet made her want to kick her slippers off and curl her toes into them. Making herself at home wasn't on the agenda. It had been five minutes since she'd arrived. The servant girl who let her in warned Chloe it would be a couple of minutes before he could join her, but that didn't stop her mood from souring.

He's probably screwing some other woman right now! Not that she had a claim on the man, but that was beside the point. He knew she would be arriving and the time. She'd sent a missive just that morning to ensure he knew exactly when to expect her. The fact that he didn't have the consideration to be available when she showed up stoked the ire bubbling within. There was no reason he couldn't have told her the night before about the next couple. Saying he had only gone to the Turning Ceremony to take part in the festivities wasn't reason enough not to discuss the task.

Take your mind off what he might be doing you fool. Chastising herself, she focused on her surroundings. She needed something to take her mind off him; maybe she would find something of significance to use against him. Something to force his hand in their little bet.

No, she wouldn't use that tasty nugget about using the Grigori and Eternal for their first challenge. While she didn't mind seeing him being blasted by Zeus, she didn't want their game to end, which is exactly what would happen. Zeus's temper, when it came to the things he considered his and his alone, could be—bothersome.

The low-slung furniture in cool shades of brown, and the minimal decoration, were not at all how she pictured Eros living. In her mind, she imagined dim lighting, plush surfaces, and the place reeking of sex and sin: the perfect setting for debauching some young maiden or desperate Goddess. A veritable den of iniquity.

The pretty little thing, the same one that answered the door, came into the room. She giggled and kept her head down, as she brought in a tray with a decanter of mead and two empty goblets. She dropped cinnamon sticks into each cup, before filling them with the steaming drink. She motioned to the couch; but Chloe declined, shaking her head sharply. She did, however, take the goblet from the girl and send her away before she silenced the girl's incessant laughter with a slap.

Chloe was not in Eros's home to relax or let her guard down, as much as she longed to do just that. He would take advantage given the chance and change the terms of the agreement. She had a sneaky suspicion he would play with her emotionally. Make her believe he wanted her, then leave her wanting.

After his visit to her home the previous month, she was left with a pulsing need to be filled. To have his cock drill into her from behind. She'd be forced to take matters into her own hands in hopes of sating the need he'd left boiling in her. She had been unable to play with one of her usual consorts, and cried out in frustration when pleasuring herself did nothing to help. In fact, as she lay on her bed panting after her release, her body ached even more for his touch.

"That will not happen this time," she murmured. Wildly, she looked around for something to capture her attention.

A picture hanging over the couch did the trick. There was nothing stunning or awe inspiring about it. It was a view of the landscape in which they lived. Nothing she couldn't see on a daily basis by simply walking out her front door. The image, though, drew her in as if she'd been ensnared by magic. It gave her something to focus on other than the delectable man she waited for. Leaning toward the picture, she noticed in the corner, on a field of grass, a young man lay entwined with a woman. They were having sex. The legs of the woman were wrapped around his waist. The golden head of the man was tossed back in ecstasy. It looked very similar to Eros's visage; and the woman, though she couldn't see the face, had long brown hair like her own. Chloe shuddered, imagining being in that position with him.

She sucked in a shocked breath when the image took life the longer she stared. He slid forward, thrusting his pelvis against the woman's. She arched beneath him and threw her hands above her head. The male figure grasped her wrists, locking her in place. Without thought, Chloe rubbed her own, wondering how it would feel...the pressure, the inability to touch back. Her core throbbed in anticipation.

"Are you ready for the next couple?" Eros whispered in her ear.

Chloe startled. He had entered the room and walked up behind her without notice. As much as she tried, she couldn't suppress the faint tremor that took hold of her body. Nor could she stop the image of him pushing her forward, making her brace herself on the back

of the couch, so he could take her from behind. With a flick of his wrist, he could have her chiton out of the way and have his wicked way with her.

She'd taken a page from his book, wanting to torture him as he tormented her. Before coming to his place, she'd found her shortest *and* tightest outfit. The dark blue garment cupped her breasts lovingly and barely covered her ass, but it left a lot to be desired in the warmth department.

Taking a steadying breath, she spun on her heel and came face-to-face with the man occupying her thoughts. Eros, as usual, was barely dressed.

Did he do that for her? Letting her see what she desired but was denied. Did he enjoy tormenting and teasing her? Or had it been because he was overheated from a bout of sex with some nameless, faceless nymph that would flit off to find another man to seduce?

She leisurely glanced at his body, taking note of the lack of perspiration on his golden skin. His cheeks weren't flushed, and he wasn't breathing heavy.

No, he had not been with another woman while she waited for him. He had deliberately made her wait, but to what end.

She would not take the bait, if that was what the tactic was meant to do. Raising the goblet to her lips, she sipped the hot drink. It slid down her throat, warming her up from the inside, causing her to moan loudly. She did not realize how cold she was until that moment. Her nipples puckered as the chill chased through her blood. Her toes curled in her slippers.

Eros took the drink from her hand and set it down behind him. He inched forward, allowing his glorious bare chest to brush against her. The warm scent of man wafted around her, and she almost sighed. *Hold it together!*

"Your cheeks have turned the most alluring shade of pink, my sweet, Chloe. I wonder, is it from the mead or from my proximity to you?"

Chloe huffed out a breath, covering up the truth of what he said. "Do not think I am so easily aroused by your appearance, Eros. The mead is hot and the day quite cool. My reaction is merely a result of the two."

"Maybe you should have put more clothing on then." His gaze raked her up and down. The visual caress making her core clench. The corner of his mouth twitched as if suppressing a smile, knowing the affect he had on her.

The urge to punch him in the face passed through her like lightning on a wire and had her fingers flexing. "My clothing and how I dress is none of your concern. I am fine now

that I've had the hot mead." He stared at her expectantly. She wasn't completely without manners. "Thank you."

He snorted in response. "If you say so."

"If we can get down to business," she said through gritted teeth.

"Still eager to be beneath me, Chloe? Do you want me to hold your wrists down like in the painting? Do you want to be helpless in my arms? Allow me to do as I please with your body?"

Clenching her jaw tightly, so no words could fly out of her mouth, she stared at him mutinously.

Eros sighed and took a step back. "Since you are not in the mood to play, let's discuss the challenge."

"Yes, let's do that now, since you would not the night before." She skirted around him and sat on a nearby chair. It would prevent him from touching her, and her from grabbing onto him like she desired. Today was about a battle of wills, not bodies. He tempted her too much, and she had an idea he knew it. There was no need to further enhance his knowledge of that.

Leaning back, she adopted an air of nonchalance. "Are you saying there will be a challenge at some point? As you witnessed last night, matching up the Grigori and the Eternal was entirely too easy."

Eros shrugged and sprawled on the couch. His bare chest was highlighted in a beam of sunlight streaming into the room. The thin cloth wrapped around his waist had edged up, and she wondered if she would get a peek at his nether region. It was surely short enough that she could, if only he would turn his legs a bit more her way.

"... ease you into things."

Chloe forced herself to look into his face. She had missed the beginning of what he said, so she took an educated guess. "Really? I find that hard to believe. Making things difficult is second nature to you."

"There's still plenty of time for that. You do have eleven more couples." Eros tapped his fingers against his leg. Her gazed snagged on the movement. She would love to run her hands up his solid thighs and feel their strength. Search out his cock and balls to gently fondle until he was hard and mad with need.

“...a lesser Goddess.” Enthralled with his body, Chloe found she was, yet again, left guessing as to what he talked about.

“A lesser Goddess? That will be easy as well. I thought you said there would be a challenge at some point.”

“And I wondered if you were even paying attention. Are you that distracted by me, Chloe? Should I summon a servant and have her bring me more clothing?”

She rolled her eyes at his preposterousness. It was the only alternative to screaming *no* and begging him to take the rest off. “There is no need for you to cover up, Eros. I am not *that* taken with you. Your body intrigues me, that is all.”

Eros snorted. “No. I believe it more than intrigues you. I inflame you, my sweet Chloe. Your nipples are beaded and arousal colors your cheeks. Blame the mead if you want, but I know the truth. You want me with every fiber of your being, or you wouldn’t be here playing this little game. Admit it, you want me and would do anything to have me.”

He was right, but there was no need to tell him. She still felt the need to be aloof. To act as if this bet didn’t matter to her, if only to save her pride.

Over the past month, she had done nothing but lust after him. She dreamed of him. Looked for him when she was out. Images of his naked body haunted her at every corner. His body was a playground she wanted desperately to explore.

She forced a lighthearted chuckle out. “This bet means nothing to me. Owing you a favor would not kill me. I am amused you think so. You are nothing but a hot piece of ass I want for a small amount of time. If it doesn’t happen it won’t be the end of my world. Someone else will come along that catches my fancy and beg to be my toy.”

Eros flinched fractionally as the hurtful words spewed from her mouth. She would have missed it if she hadn’t been watching closely for a reaction. She was being crass and downplaying how much she wanted to crawl over to him and beg for the pleasure he promised with one dark look. Only pleasure wasn’t what she was seeing in his eyes now.

They were narrowed, and she felt the look he passed over her body again. It was another heated caress that made her pussy cream. When his gaze lingered on her breasts, before tracking back to her face, she was forced to sit still. Act as though it did nothing to her. Inside she squirmed to feel his physical touch. Could imagine his large hands drifting down to her breasts, where he would pluck and tease the already hard points.

He crossed his impressive arms over his chest, as a smile cocked up one side of his mouth. "I do not believe you, but will let that go for now. I think it best to get on with things. The female for this month's fun and games is one of my own. Parvati is a lesser Goddess of love and devotion. She yearns to find the man she will fall in love with and [who will](#) be hers through eternity. As I am pleased with all she has done for me, I have decided it is time to grant her wish. She is fated to fall in love with a human named Colin."

Chloe waited for more, but realized he would not be any more forthcoming. "Nothing else?"

Eros stood. "No. As I told you before, I will only give you the names. The rest is up to you." He stood and stared down at her. "We will meet at the Parthenon next time."

Surprise at his words stole her breath. Had she pushed him too far with her declaration? Chloe stood and faced him, not willing to let on that she was frightened she had ruined things. "Afraid to be alone with me, Eros?" She sassed.

"No, but I have decided we need to have witnesses to this bet. I wouldn't want you to cry foul when you don't succeed."

Her head came up a notch, and she did her damndest to look down her nose at him. Hard to do when he towered over her. "A Goddess of love and devotion is not going to turn down love. She will jump at the chance when it is presented to her. You should have given me a better couple."

"A human is more complex than you assume, Chloe. This will be plenty challenging for you. And, I won't change my mind about the Parthenon. An audience would be best suited to future meetings."

She noticed his tightly clenched fists by his sides, and secretly knew there was more to it than that. Conceding, for now, was the best move for her. "As you wish. I will see you at the beginning of March. Your goddess and her human won't know what hit them."

Eros watched as Chloe strode out his front door. "*A hot piece of ass,*" he mumbled after the door slammed shut. He was more than that, and he would have her on her knees apologizing for that remark. "She *will* be begging for forgiveness."

Storming into his bedroom, he flung himself on his bed. Childish, he knew, but what else was he supposed to do? The second those words were out of her mouth; he wanted to demand she take them back. Demand she tell him the truth, which was that she loved

verbally sparring with him more than she desired his body. That it built the rising tension between them.

She would come to regret those words when they met next. He would make sure of it.

GIDEON: MARCH

Eros made sure to get to the Parthenon early, finding the perfect spot to keep an eye out for Chloe. He didn't want her to have the advantage of surprise over him. Not when he knew she had completed the last challenge in two weeks time. He expected her to gloat about that particular fact and possibly use it to her advantage.

He never doubted she could do it. She had been correct in her assumption that Parvati would fall in love with her fated mate with speed and ease.

It was the human that he hadn't counted on falling so quickly. The man was older, in his mid thirties, and well established in life. There had been many chances for him to find someone and fall in love, yet he hadn't. The man's mother even attempted to set him up, but to no avail.

All's well that ends well though. Two months were complete with 10 more to go. The next couple would be a bit more problematic just based on the timeline. He'd get into that as soon as Chloe showed up.

As casually as possible, Eros glanced around the huge open building. People milled about chatting and conducting business. Others lounged and enjoyed the mead, fresh fruits and meats being carried around by servers. He had yet to see Chloe's dark head enter the room. The regal air about her was forever causing people to move out of her way. It was that and the fact that she held their lives in the palm of her hand. One wrong word and the Fates would come together and reevaluate your life.

As if by magic Chloe appeared before him. The statuesque brunette glided across the floor, her dark blue filmy dress catching on the breeze she created with her movements, fluttering around her ankles. She was truly a vision to behold. His cock started to fill and he had to force the sensation away. Their clothing did little to hide how the body reacted. Letting her see she affected him to any degree would be suicide when it came to their game.

Eros eased back into the pillows he was on as he waited for her. The raised corner of the room he'd picked was brimming with blankets and cushions. A few strategically placed pieces and she would never know what was happening beneath the thin cloth wrapped around his waist.

"Eros," she stated, head tilted up slightly.

“Chloe,” he drawled.

“I didn’t know you knew this hour of the day existed. It won’t be midday for another three hours.”

Eros chuckled and swept his hand out in invitation. “Come join me.”

Chloe eyed the pillows speculatively, hesitating longer than he appreciated. “Don’t worry, my sweet, I have no intention of doing *anything* with you.” His pride still smarted after their last meeting. *You are nothing but a hot piece of ass I want for a small amount of time.* Chloe’s words had screamed through his head at the most inopportune times during the last month. He was determined she would pay for them. If that meant dinging her pride, then he would—for now. He wouldn’t allow her to leave in anger though. They would need to work together to speed things along this time.

Her surprised gaze whipped to his face. He masked the hurt that beat through him, plastering on a smug grin. Her eyes narrowed and she snarled.

Chloe dropped down onto the cushions in one graceful move. She opened her mouth to speak.

He cut her off before she had the chance. “Congratulations on your latest accomplishment.”

She blinked rapidly, stunned by his words; mouth opening and closing without a sound.

“But then you said it wouldn’t be difficult to match a goddess of love and devotion and I agree. Parvati’s match was one that needed to be done. Not truly a challenge.”

“None of your so-called matches will be. As I told you before, your gift is a joke. These humans and Mystics fall too easily. A trained monkey can do it.”

Eros laughed loudly. “I shall let Zeus know you think so. He’s up for fun and games. But tell me, Chloe, how difficult is *your* job. You are one of three. You decide life and that is it. Your sisters have the harder tasks of figuring out how long someone should live and when they should die. You only plant the seed.”

Chloe moved to get up, and he grabbed her by the wrist stopping her. Rubbing his thumb along her delicate skin, he felt her pulse pick up. “Ready to give up your spot so soon?” He nodded to the cluster of women behind them. He’d known they were there, waiting for the moment they could join him. His popularity preceded him, and all knew when he was in the Parthenon he was looking for company.

Tugging on her lightly, he shifted her closer. “It isn’t so nice to have someone tell you your job means nothing.”

She pursed her lips in a sexy little pout and nodded slightly. He knew she wouldn’t take the words back. He didn’t want her to. They were what got them where they were, and he wouldn’t have it any other way. Sparring with her excited him in a way he never felt, not even with the most skilled courtesan at his feet.

“Let’s move on.” He released her wrist and saw a flash of disappointment in her eyes. He grinned and let out a contented breath. “You will have less time this month to match my couple.”

“I think I’ve already proven I don’t need the entire month,” she said smugly.

He snorted. “It wouldn’t matter in this case. Two weeks will go by before they even make first contact. They will need to fall in love quickly.”

“That shouldn’t be a problem. Your Mystics are proving just as susceptible as humans. They desire love and acceptance just the same. With it being March, and the month of the shifters, all I need to do is get them in the same room. I doubt you would put together two who are not true mates. One whiff of the other and my job will be done.”

“Not so fast, Chloe. This shifter’s mate is human, she won’t react to him the same way a shifter would. Gideon will know on contact, but she will not. He will have to convince her not only to be his mate but to take on the changing as well. That may not be too difficult, but the goal of our monthly challenge is to get them to fall in love. Gideon likes his life exactly how it is and has no intention of changing, even for his mate. He doesn’t believe in love.”

“If she is his mate then love will surely happen.”

“It may over time, but you must make it happen in the span of fourteen days. That’s *if* they meet the first day she is out there.”

Chloe worried her lush, deep red bottom lip. Eros fought the urge to lean forward and soothe it. To run his tongue over the spot, tasting the sweetness he knew would be there. “What do you mean by that? Meet when she first gets out there. Is she heading to his woods to prowl around?”

Eros reached out and grabbed a lock of her caramel-colored hair, wrapping it around his finger. “She is heading for a solo trip into the Grand Canyon. Hiking and camping for four or five days. I would need to double check the research on her, however.”

Chloe wrinkled her nose. “Why would she do that?”

“That’s the kind of woman she is, and one of the reasons she is meant for Gideon.”

“I don’t see how I can help in the matching. Theirs sounds like one of pure luck.”

“This is where the fun part of my job comes in. Since it is you making the match, you will have to travel to the earthly realm and mingle with the humans.”

A fire of excitement lit her eyes. Sitting up straighter, Chloe moved closer to him. She was within kissing range. Two months ago he’d placed a quick, soft kiss on her lips in this very room. It had been a momentary lapse in judgment, for after it was over; he’d wanted to do it again and again. There had been no chance before now. He breathed in slowly, pulling in her soft scent. His cock responded, twitching beneath the cloth again. He could easily tumble her onto her back and take advantage of her surprise. He’d finally feel what it was like to have her body beneath his. It would also put an end to their game, and he was far from ready to give it up.

“Mingle with them,” she said, awed as if she never thought to do it. She probably didn’t. Her life would have never given her the opportunity to travel outside Olympus. She had no need to be with commoners and those lesser than herself.

“Yes, I know what I had planned to help them along. Would you like to figure something out on your own or have me tell you the best way to go about it?”

Chloe tapped her finger to her lips. “It is already the first of the month. Do I have time to come up with a plan?”

“You do.”

Chloe nodded sharply. “Since the couple will not meet until later this month, I will send a message in a week to let you know what I have decided.” She rose and Eros felt his heart drop. He wouldn’t be getting that kiss this time either. “Until then,” she said and left.

The gaggle of woman waiting for Chloe to leave approached, all collectively holding their breath. Eros frowned and stood. “Not today.”

He followed Chloe’s path out of the Parthenon and took off for his home. He was not in the mood for simpering bobble heads. This made two straight months where he felt no desire for them at all. None of his usual playthings intrigued him the way his tall, gorgeous Fate did. This was going to be a problem.

LISA: APRIL

Chloe smoothed her soft, sky-blue chiton over her hips. Loving the feel of the fabric brushing against her skin, the way it danced around her delicate ankles. The sharp V-neck plunged low to her waist, showing her ample bosom. An enticing lure for her prey. Eros would be hers at the end of the year. She knew it down to the marrow of her bones.

Thoughts of Eros heated her blood as the memory of the previous day raced through her mind. Such excitement, mingling with humans and wearing the clothing of their realm. Eros's burning gaze as she pranced around in the tight foreign pants stretched across her backside. She glanced at the stiff canvas fabric draped on her chaise, her eyes fluttered closed at the remembered feel of him standing behind her. His thick erection pressing into her cloth-covered flesh.

It had been a stolen moment in time. She wasn't even sure he knew what he had been doing, and she dare not tell him for fear of breaking the spell.

Tearing her gaze away, she picked up a fat brush, pulling through her hair one last time. Pleased with the outcome, she tossed it on the counter before ensuring her appearance was acceptable. The last thing she wanted Eros to think was that she primped for him, yet she couldn't help but do just that. She was riding the high of stepping out of her box and enjoying the time she spent with him. It wouldn't do to have him realize she saw him as more than a delicious piece of man candy.

He unexpectedly challenged her on an intellectual level, which, in turn, aroused her beyond reason. Most men didn't dare stare into her face and talk down to her. Most men didn't resist her wants and desires. Most men were not Eros.

Chloe arrived at the Parthenon with only a few minutes to spare. Breezing through the door, she unwrapped her cloak, handing it to the servant girl waiting at the entrance. She dipped her head in respect, stroking Chloe's ego.

Chloe made her way across the room in search of the tempting as Hades man. Eros lounged in the same pillow-laden area as before. Chest gleaming, arms spread wide, muscular legs stretched out in front of him. His blond hair looked as though he'd run his hand through it time and time again. He looked freshly from bed after a night of debauchery.

Jealousy twisted in her veins and she struggled not to show it. She caught his regard as she approached, a nonchalant smile plastered on her face. Chloe immediately noticed the

usual lackadaisical air that surrounded him was nowhere in sight. He grinned, yet it didn't meet his eyes. His smile was forced, and she wondered what could be wrong. Panic welled in her chest. Could he be tired of their game after only three months? Did he want to beg off? Refuse to continue now that she'd proven she was adept at matchmaking?

There was no use stressing over it. She'd find out soon enough.

"Eros," she greeted him, keeping her cool exterior pushed to the surface. Showing concern would mean showing him her vulnerability towards him.

"Chloe." He stood fluidly. "We will not have our usual time to banter today. I have been summoned by Zeus and am expected within the half hour."

"Ah. That explains the uneasy air swirling around you." Being summoned by Zeus could be good or bad. Knowing Eros, she would err on the side of bad. "Have you been cavorting with one of his consorts again?" As flippant as she tried to sound, she knew the truth. Inside she seethed at the thought. She should have known it would be too much to expect him to abstain from sex for the year of the bet. But secretly she hoped he would.

A genuine smile lit his full lips, softening the lines around his eyes. "Fear not, my sweet Chloe, I have not played where I shouldn't in quite a long time. I'm sure it is only time for my quarterly update."

She hummed noncommittally. She knew nothing of the quarterly updates other Gods and Goddesses had to endure. It was one of the perks of being a Fate. No one in the realms knew whether Zeus had control over the Fates. There was speculation running across the board as to who was really in charge. Chloe was not one to relinquish the answer. It kept others guessing and in fear of them all.

"How very...human," she murmured. "Let us get on with it then. You can be on your way to your Master and I can see if someone here catches my fancy for a few hours of entertainment."

Eros stepped within a breath away. His eyes narrowed, snapping with fire. "You will do no such thing," he said through clenched teeth. "While there is this bet, you are not to indulge your whims."

Chloe was pleased to hear his anger that she might be with someone else, yet bristled at his highhandedness. No one told her what to do. Even her sisters refrained from trying. "Then neither shall you," she said, her head tipping up a notch.

They stood staring at each other, neither willing to break contact. It wasn't until the corner of his mouth curved into a sinfully wicked grin that she realized she'd made a mistake.

“Nice to know you care, my sweet. Your next couple should give you grief. She is a repressed nymph and he is human. They each have a secret—but I'll let you figure it out. You have until the end of the month, as usual.”

With a swiftness she wasn't expecting, Eros clutched her to his hard body. Arm wrapped around her waist, he melded their lower halves together, grinding his erection into her soft belly. His free hand threaded into her hair, seconds before he attacked her lips like a savage getting his first taste of a woman. Lips meshed, teeth clashed. He slid his tongue into her mouth, stealing her breath. Pulling away, he bit her lower lip.

“Nine more couples Chloe and I'm yours,” he said roughly. His voice thick with arousal and need.

She shivered in his hold and slid her tongue over the spot he bit, and then smiled. “The things I'm going to do to you,” she whispered huskily. She stepped back and took a much-needed breath. “I'll see you next month, Eros. Don't have too good of a time at Zeus's.”

Forcing one slippered foot in front of the other, Chloe glided out of the Parthenon. She wouldn't be staying like she'd told Eros. She was going home to play the encounter over and over again in her head, where no one could see her happiness.

The servant girl met her at the door, dipped and handed Chloe her cloak. Flinging it around her shoulders, she walked out the door and into the cool air. The slight breeze a blessing to her overheated body.

CELESTE: MAY

Eros pounded on the door to Chloe's home impatiently. He would not idly wait for her to show up at the Parthenon. News of her spending time with the Great Watcher, Gabriel spread like wildfire through Olympus; and truth be told, he was jealous. He would never breathe a word of it to her, but deep in his soul, he seethed.

He was certain the bet would kill him. How foolish he had been to think he could hold out for an entire year. He'd assumed he would be able to find pleasure with his dalliances, not turned off by the prospect of someone other than Chloe touching him.

Unexpectedly, the door burst open. He stepped back half a step before he caught himself. Chloe stood in front of him; hair flowing around her shoulders, looking freshly tumbled from bed.

All thoughts of reining in his jealousy evaporated when he caught sight of her flushed cheeks and bleary eyes. His hands moved of their own accord, grabbing her upper arms and pulling her body flush against him. He crushed his lips against hers, sweeping his tongue along the seam. She gasped. He plunged. Taking her sinful taste into his mouth. Swallowing her down like the ripest nectar in all the lands.

When he had his fill, asserted his dominance, he released her; but didn't let her get too far. "You drive me insane," he growled, his nostrils flaring, chest heaving.

Chloe's hand drifted to her lips. Surprise gleamed from her luminous brown eyes. She blinked rapidly, and he watched her emerge from the fog of lust—driving straight into outrage.

"How dare you," she hissed.

"Oh, my sweet, I dare much." He pushed inside the house not bothering to wait for her invitation. Hands wrapped around her arms, he steered her backwards and against a wall. Her back made contact with the soft surface of a tapestry, as he pressed his body into hers. "I told you, during this bet, you are mine and mine alone. You do not find someone to fill your time. To bend to your will."

"And I have not!"

Eros shook his head slowly. "That is not what is being said; and I warn you, I will *not* be made a fool. For if I am, your punishment will not be as pleasurable as you'd wish."

Chloe sucked in a breath, pushing her breasts out and further on display.

Eros's gaze dropped, his hand moved. He slid it over one of her breasts and squeezed lightly. The nipple pebbled beneath his palm instantly. Adjusting his hand, he pinched and pulled the beaded nub, pulling a moan from between her lush lips.

“This, my sweet, is what you want. The touch of a lover bringing pleasure and pain. *My* fingers playing your body to elicit the reaction *I* want.”

Chloe's mouth dropped open, and her eyes glazed over. The jealousy eating away at him subsided for the moment. With one simple touch, she was his. With one simple touch, he knew he could have her.

He kissed her briefly before pulling back. “Are you ready for more?” He said, letting the husky edge of arousal fill his voice.

“Yes,” she moaned and writhed against him.

Eros dropped his hands away from her and took a step back. “Your next task is a faerie and a wood elf. Celeste Kincaid and Owen Foster. They have no chance of ever meeting.”

Before he could do anything stupid, Eros turned on his heel and left.

WILLOW: JUNE

Eros sent the panicked young maiden away to answer the door; after she came scurrying into his room with news someone was approaching. Visitors were not expected at such an ungodly hour. The shades were still drawn, and he lounged in bed contemplating what to do to his sweet Chloe when he saw her again. All rendezvous had come to a halt after the bet began; yet, he wondered if that had been such a good idea. Chloe didn't seem as inclined to curb her lusty nature.

He knew she had seen the Great Watcher again, though not the extent of their time together. The handmaiden he had bribed to spy on her came back with news that Gabriel had been at Chloe's home. She saw him lounging outside, as if waiting for something or someone.

Eros knew he would have to find a way to loosen Chloe's luscious lips. Possibly with heated kisses and nibbles of her soft skin. He would arouse and seduce to get the information he wanted.

The girl scurried back into his room with the object of his obsession hot on her heels.

"I do not need you to announce me, girl. Leave us."

The girl's eyes widened, and he could see fear and indecision warring in them.

"Go," he said, and the girl practically ran from the room. He placed his hands behind his head, ensuring the sheet slipped down, showing off his chest when he moved. "You can't go around scaring off all my help, Chloe. Who would take care of me then?" He pouted, sticking his lower lip out.

She rolled her eyes and planted her hands on her hips, thrusting her chest, those glorious breasts toward him. "I imagine you could find some *other* young maiden willing to wait on you hand and foot. As a matter of fact, I may have a handmaiden ripe for the job, seeing as she will no longer be in *my* household."

Damn. Eros worked to keep his disappointment at his spy being found out from his face. "Oh dear, what happened? Did she make a play for your Great Watcher?" *Double damn.* This time he grimaced when he saw the look of victory on Chloe's face. Well, he would wipe that smirk right off.

He flung the covers off and stood, showing off every inch of his six foot six, well-endowed frame.

Chloe's gaze dropped straight to his straining erection, a by-product of thinking of her, and her expressive brown eye's grew huge. Her mouth opened on a hitched breath, and he had a moment's pride fill his chest.

"You," she said with a harsh whisper.

"Me," he said and smirked. Her nipples pebbled against the soft fabric of her chiton, pushing against it, calling to him. He knew exactly what he wanted to do to punish her for seeing another man.

"I was going to give you an easy couple this month, mainly because things got a little—out of hand in May." He waited for her to argue that they hadn't, but she didn't respond.

"Chloe?"

"Hmmm," she hummed, eyes still riveted below his waist.

"Eyes up here."

Her glazed gaze lifted to his and he smiled. It did wonders to his slightly bruised pride to see her so enamored. He may not have liked her calling him a hot piece of ass, but he knew when to use it to his advantage.

He moved forward and into her body in a bid to help her concentrate. Too bad he didn't think it all the way through. The unbelievably soft linen of her gown brushed against his heated skin; sending a shiver down his spine. He wrapped an arm around her waist, unable to resist.

He cleared his throat, it coming out more pained than anything. "As I was saying."

"Yes," she said, her voice husky. "As you were saying."

"I planned to give you an easier couple. One destined to meet."

Her forehead furrowed slightly. There was the argument he had been waiting for.

He cut her off before she could start, though. Much longer pressed up against her body, and he might end up taking her to bed, nullifying the bet altogether. It sounded fantastic to his cock, but he wanted more. He wanted to see her win. To see the triumph glimmering in her dark eyes. "But, since you did such a wonderful job, I thought I would give you a real challenge."

He pressed his lips to hers quickly. "For the month of the witch, I will give you one who worships many Gods and Goddesses, to include my mother. Willow's intended is the bane of her existence, Cedric Stone. A warlock who could be even more promiscuous than me."

Chloe licked her lips, and he knew she was gathering his taste. "Impossible," she said. "No one is as wanton as you."

Eros slid his hand down her back to cup her buttocks. He pulled her as close as he could, and ground his erection into her stomach. "Is that your way of saying you want to find out? Right." He kissed her. "This." He kissed her again, but lingered a little longer. "Second." His last kiss had him sinking into the warm depths of her mouth. Their tongues tangled and when he found he needed air to breathe, he pulled away and nipped her bottom lip.

Chloe's fingers went to her lip, and her eyes flared with banked heat. "Oh my," she whispered before turning and fleeing.

Eros chuckled at her retreating figure. That surely had to remind her of what she wanted, what she needed from him. He fell back onto his bed and took his cock in his hand. Bringing himself to orgasm with the remembered feel of her body pressed against his.

AMBER: JULY

Chloe stood in the small hidden clearing of her garden soaking in the sun and floral notes brought in by the breeze. She loved heading into the hedgerows and getting lost in her thoughts. It was her place to think on the events of the day, week, or month—whatever was bothering her at the time.

Her bet with Eros was officially halfway over. She had matched six couples.

A Fallen Angel and an Eternal.

A minor Goddess of love and human male.

The Alpha wolf of the Keystone Predators and his surprising human mate.

The Nymph and the human who had no clue he had the blood of a Great Watcher flowing through his veins.

The near disaster matching of the Faerie and the Elf.

Then there was The Witch and the Warlock—fated to be together from birth, and her most recent accomplishment.

Some fell easier than others, but at the end of their designated month, they were all very much in love. In truth, matchmaking wasn't as easy as Chloe had anticipated. Humans were loose cannons, allowing their fragile hearts to drive their decisions. How Mystics managed to interact with the fickle creatures day to day was beyond her. She would take the capricious Gods and Goddesses of Olympus any day. At least with them, she knew what to expect. Knew they plotted to further their place in the realm by any means necessary.

That was neither here nor there at the moment. Her goal was in sight. She was on the downward slope. Six more months and she would have Eros in her bed for an entire month. Her deepest desire, at least the one at the moment, would come true.

Thoughts of Eros had her heading back inside her home. She was expected at the Parthenon soon, and she would use the next few precious moments to ready herself. She had made a mistake going to Eros's residence the month before. Seeing him lounging in bed sent her lust into overdrive. When he stood and pressed his naked form against her, all thought fled.

He had reduced her to a scared, young virgin being presented her first cock. That would not do if she wanted to maintain the upper hand. Something she felt was tenuous at best.

Stepping into her room, she was brought up short by the sight of Eros lounging on her bed. His golden chest was bare and on display. His long, lightly furred legs stretched out in front of him. Images of crawling on top of him bombarded her. Sucking and nibbling his skin. Running her hands up his legs and under the lined fabric wrapped around his waist. Taking his member into her mouth to learn the taste and feel. He was sin incarnate waiting to be feasted upon.

“Hello, my sweet,” he drawled, looking wholly unconcerned at being caught in her room. “Lacy let me in. Such a sweet woman. I wonder if she would be interested in joining me in my bed at some point.” A small smile flirted with the edges of his mouth. His lush lips pulling up slightly at the corners. His audacity to say such a thing set her off.

Chloe’s temper flared. Rage boiled within, setting her blood on fire. All rational thought ceased to exist. Her words flowed from her mouth unfiltered. “*Never*. I forbid it. You are mine and I will *not* share.”

His smile turned into a knowing grin. “Jealous at the thought?”

She tipped her head up and scoffed. “I do not have a jealous bone...”

Eros swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood. He was in front of her within three determined steps. His well-formed chest brushed against her breasts, her nipples puckering in reaction. “Don’t even think of finishing that sentence.” He brushed his knuckles along her cheek. “Your jealousy is easy to see, so do not deny it.”

They stared at each other, the air thickening around them. Being within reach of the object of her obsession was Heaven *and* Hell. Her fingers itched to touch. To trace the muscles in his chest and arms. Slide her hands over his abdominals, then down to his cock.

It had been a thing of beauty. Long, thick and uncut. His erection curved upward toward his belly, and practically begged for her touch. Chloe shuddered, her eyes closing as she imagined how it would feel in her hand. Soft, velvety skin over his hardened length, slipping through her fingers and over her palm. Had thoughts of her gotten him in that state? Did he imagine her hand wrapped around his cock as he masturbated?

Too many questions with no answers. Voicing them would give him power over her.

Eros dipped his head, brushing his lips against Chloe’s ear. “Is it a good fantasy in your head, my sweet? Your nipples are pebbled, and I can smell the sweetness of your arousal. Are you remembering how it felt to be pressed up against my naked body? The heat of my skin seeping through your chiton. My hard *cock* searing your belly. I’ve thought of nothing

else this past month. I've taken my cock into my hand and stroked it until I shot my seed over my bare chest so many times I've lost count."

A shudder slipped down her spine, and a moan broke free. She opened her eyes, locking gazes with Eros. Heat, lust, and arousal glittered from the blue depths. Her body drifted closer. It wasn't until she realized she'd slid her hands over his chest that she remembered why he was in her home.

Chloe locked everything she was feeling down and took a step back. The tension between them eased slightly. Another step and she turned away, gliding to the window that overlooked her garden. *Focus on the bet, not the prize.* She took a second to relax her shoulders. Breath eased from her chest. "Your mother says hello."

Eros chuckled. "And how is the old battleaxe doing?" Chloe didn't miss the note of affection in his tone.

"She is well. Found a Warlock to play with last night on the earthly realm. The Witch and the Warlock you tasked me to match have made a good union."

Eros stepped up behind her, heat radiated from him in droves, soaking into her even though she knew he was still inches away. Her body clenched in reaction, waiting for him to place his hands on her. Expecting his expert touch in the most benign way. When it didn't come, she forced herself to relax yet again.

"I knew they would, so it is not a surprise. Knowing such things *is* part of the job you so frequently tell me takes no skill. You're ready for your next couple then?"

Chloe turned and nodded. Intense blue eyes bored into her. Lust prevalent, but there was an undercurrent of something else—pride? She couldn't be sure; because that was an emotion she was not familiar with. At least not when it came to someone feeling it for her. She struggled to keep her eyes on his face and mind on what he was saying.

"What is July?" He paused, tapping a finger against his kissable lips. "Ah, yes. The fiery month of the Siren. Lovely creatures. Sensual. Intoxicating. Resistant to settling down. If I remember correctly, and I always do, the woman I have picked for you is older. Amber is thirty-two. Definitely of the mindset that a Siren never commits to one man *or* woman for the rest of their unnaturally long lives. Her love interest, or should I say *mate*, is from an ancient line of wolves stemming from Greece. Proud. Demanding. Dominant. Tell me, do you think that will be challenge enough?"

“A piece of cake, as the humans say,” she smirked and straightened her spine. She could only hope that it would be. No longer would she anticipate an easy time. If the previous six months taught her anything, it was to expect the unexpected on the earthly realm, and to handle things personally if need be.

She thought Eros would take his leave then; but, instead, he took her by surprise and laid a kiss on her lips potent enough to weaken her knees. She wrapped her arms around his neck, holding on for dear life. Breaking the kiss, Eros stepped away, offered a respectful bow, and strode from the room and ultimately her home.

To be continued.....