

Avarice

By Avarice

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Prologue – The Dawning

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Drip, drip, drip. Water plummeted from the darkening skies with the speed and consistency of a waterfall, their pear-shaped forms reflecting the sun's dawning rays like crystals, before shattering onto the broken rocks of forgotten fields. Fields of open soil and carnage, with the echoes of those who died atop of them still disturbing the silence. Among these endless stretches of scattered stones and harsh vegetation, columns of pure white stone rose high into the sky, like rays of moonlight cutting through dark water. They were worn from age and the rain that beat upon their surfaces day after day, year after year, until they were but shadows of their former glory.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ In this dank scene of ancient times, no animals were to be found, only the sickeningly bent that clawed up at the sky with skeletal branches, and leaves that were rotten long before reaching the blasphemed ground. The land's very essence stank of death and destruction, even after the eons that saw the scenery untouched by both humans and gods.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ The god's themselves detested the airs that were emitted from the undisturbed soils, and humans had long learned to fear it.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ But human kind was growing, flourishing in both spirit and strength. As minds moved forward to the future, the stories of the past were left forgotten, and thus life slowly crept back into the desolate battle field yet again.

First there was a farmer, ignorant of the land's histories, only thinking of having a life for him and his family. Then there was a village, full of strange sightings and stories as the trees and stones of the past were cleared away, to reveal the untouched riches beneath. Then there was a city, its houses and halls reaching towards the sky with the full glory of ancient Greece.

The grasslands were rich again, the forests were vast, and the gods appeased. ^

Culture, trade and prosperity were all that resided in the city of Avarice, where poverty was buried deep,

and riches stacked high in vaults of golden stone. In a city such as this, misfortune was always looming on the horizon, looking even more bleak when the view was so high. The cause of its misfortune was to be at the great city's very core, like a fruit rotting from the inside. The king, Perisius, was an arrogant and greedy man, who cared little for those below him and even less for those above. He had grown uncaring in his wealth, proclaiming that the gods had no hand in his fortune, and that they deserved no payment.

This angered the king of the gods, Zeus, but his love for man-kind prevented him from taking action at so small of a statement, and he ventured to forgive Perisius for his arrogance. Zeus's lack of action however, was seen as a sign of weakness rather than mercy by the aging king, and believing the god could do them no harm, on the night of the festival of Zeus, Perisius instead burned down all of his temples, and beheaded his statues in a final sign of defiance.

This could not be forgiven. Zeus, enraged by the king's actions, yet compassionate for the innocent civilians, decided to exact revenge more artfully than pure destruction, which his fellow Olympians craved.

The king's daughter, Onoria, was the most beautiful lady in the land, but was known for her inconsistency and unfaithfulness. So, one night disguised as one of her many lovers, Zeus entered her chambers and infiltrated the very centre of Perisius's family.

This went unknown as the king plotted and insulted the god's power, but when the oracles recognized that the princess was pregnant, they also foretold that it would be the child of a god. Perisius was enraged and disgusted with his sole offspring, and heartlessly banished Onoria from Avarice to never return again.

But, foreseeing this and knowing of the oracle's vision first hand, Onoria had fled the city before the order was given, taking food, money and clothing enough to support herself. She fled alone through the surrounding woods, using up her rations slowly and wisely, until one day she came across a farmer. Unknown to her, they were the descendants of the very first Avaricians, the family who came to the dark lands of waste long before the king. But that bloodline was meaningless now, as they heaved the heavy burden of unreasonable taxes and high demand.

They welcomed her to stay, but she promised to be gone within a day, knowing that her presence would make their situation dire. But, it did not go as the princess had planned. On her second day she gave birth to the demi-goddess, with only the help of the farmer's old wife to comfort her. The child was born, and in the following night the princess left it and fled, leaving only her gold as payment to the family, and a name.

Athena.

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