

Chapter One

"Helios. You're back." Persephone pursed her lips in a dainty frown and stared at her unwelcome visitor.

Helios was, in every way, amazing. He was the god of the sun; light radiated from him as he moved, and fire sprouted in the wake of his footsteps. When he moved his head the beautiful, golden locks of his hair swung about in a fashion that could only be called magical and when he looked at you, you felt your heart grow and swell and fill with radiant happiness. His face was exquisite, almost too perfect in how beautiful it was.

You could crack rocks with his nose. You could slide down the perfect, chiseled planes of his cheeks. You could get lost in those eyes and drown in their luminous presence.

He wore a loose, flowing exomis. It only covered one shoulder and hung open at the waist so that you could admire the oiled perfection of his chiseled pectorals. Just looking at them, you could feel the raw physical power inside him even though his strength came from his godhood, not his body. His exomis stopped halfway to his knees, cut short and tight so that it showed off his equally impressive thighs, and there were epic poems written by lovelorn women about the incredible precision of his calves.

In short, he was amazing. Nymphs, normally Persephone's attendants and confidants, were literally falling to the ground in awe around him, swooning at the very sight of him. Some prostrated themselves before him and his radiance, others blushed furiously and looked away, unaccustomed to the extreme rush of desire that they felt when looking at him.

Persephone herself was not immune to it. She ached to touch his body, to feel his muscles, to kiss those lips that were so soft and yet so strong.

"Persephone. Beautiful dove of the morning, mistress of spring and master of my heart. I have indeed returned, to gaze upon your radiant perfection!"

"Uh huh." Persephone scowled. Every time he opened his mouth, she was reminded why she didn't fall at his feet and kiss his perfect toes like the nymphs were doing right now. "You've come to see me, have you?"

"Of course!" Without apparently thinking about it, Helios fondled the hair of one of the nymphs who was trying to anoint him with fragrant oils. She sighed in pleasure and fell to her knees.

There, the nymph was granted a view of the other thing that made Helios so desirable: the front of his tunic could not cover the enormous, pulsing erection that he was sporting. His cock literally glowed, tipped with a tiny bit of moisture that sparkled in the afternoon sun.

The nymph whose hair he'd touched fainted.

Persephone did not glance below Helios' waist. As the goddess of fertility and spring, she was used to having that effect on people and had many, many ages ago taken a sanguine view of people's physical opinion of her.

"You've come to bask in my beauty?"

"Yes!"

"You've come to watch for hours and hours as the sun slowly reveals the many facets of my jewel-like countenance? To count the different ways that my lips sparkle as I drink the purest morning dew from the most delicate of Olympian flowers?"

"Uh, yes. Yes, of course."

"Did you want to talk to me also?" Persephone's glare was suddenly ice-cold and livid. Several blooming trees that flanked Helios' impressive figure withered and died, and a lamb that was frolicking across the golden meadow of Persephone's domain suddenly bit Helios on the toe. He didn't even look down.

"Uh, what?" Helios backed up a step, knowing that something had gone wrong and not knowing what to do about it or even what it was.

"A conversation, Helios. Did you want to talk to me? Or were you just going to propose again?"

Helios blushing hid his hands behind his back. One hand was filled with golden fleece, which glowed with nearly as much radiance as the god himself, and the other held a lyre whose strings hummed a heart-rending melody in the gentlest of breezes.

"No, no, I was going to—" Helios backed up another step, trying to cover up a faux pas that he didn't even understand. One of the nymphs who had been about to braid flowers into his perfect hair hissed at him and scratched his face with her nails. The only thing she accomplished was breaking her nails.

"Every time you come here. Every time. You talk about how beautiful I am!"

"You are—"

"You talk about how your heart swells when looking at me!"

"But, I—"

"You tell me how my hair shines and my lips glisten and my eyes look like the deepest, bluest pools in Poseidon's domain!"

"They're very nice."

"And not once. Not once. Not once have you ever given a thought that maybe, just maybe, I'm more than something to be looked at!"

"Persephone, I—"

"Just want to increase your personal stature!" Persephone was in good form now. With each insult she hurled at the god of the sun she stepped forward. Every step turned blooming vegetation into rotting nothingness, every flash of her eyes twisted the bark of trees and made magpies screech and squawk and take flight.

"Not, it's not."

"You just want to have a little fun with me!"

"Well—"

"You just want to get closer to my mother. My dowry is worth more than all of Zeus' wealth, and you know it."

"Is it?" Helios scratched at the back of his neck and looked away, trying to pretend he didn't know that particular fact. Throughout it all, his cock simply stood firmer and straighter, pointing at Persephone the whole time. If she were being more charitable, she would have to admit that simply talking to her was probably a difficult thing.

She was not in the mood to be charitable.

"You have never once, not once, thought of me as a person!" Thunder crackled and dark clouds rolled in, a spring thunderstorm to bring even the god of the sun to his knees.

"Persephone, listen."

"I am done listening to you. For once. For once you will wait."

And as suddenly as Persephone's ire threatened to turn her immortal realm into a disaster area, she stopped. She looked away from Helios and walked to the edge of her domain. Depending on Persephone's mood, that walk could take days or years or, as was the case now, a

mere blink of an eye. All gods' domains shared space with Olympus, but they were not strictly physical realms. Sometimes Persephone lived in an infinite, sprawling meadow filled with all the plants and animals and joys of spring. When she wanted, that meadow could instead be a plateau that looked out over the central plaza of Olympus.

She did that now, stepping to the cliff's edge and wrapping her hand delicately around an orange tree whose fragrant blossoms sprung to vivid, vibrant life.

"What's that noise?" Persephone stared at Mount Olympus, and within moments so did the other gods. Their realms appeared, one by one, looking out over the mountaintop.

In the distance was a rumbling. It shook the very bones of the mountain, and even made the godly realms tremble as if they were experiencing a real earthquake.

Was that even possible?

"Uh oh." Helios stepped forward and then reconsidered getting close to Persephone while she was still angry with him and stepped back again. "Is he here already?"

"Who?"

"You'll have to see for—"

"Shut up now." Persephone's curiosity was tempered by the remembrance that she hated Helios and everything he stood for. She looked out at the mountaintop.

The shaking got stronger, the noise got louder. Persephone clung more tightly to her tree, wondering if whatever this was would destroy her realm. If it could shake Mount Olympus itself, what else could it do?

And then:

Crack-boom.

The top of Mount Olympus was a barren, inhospitable place. It was essentially a wide circle of rock, a piece of empty ground that served as the neutral meeting point of the gods. They could all step quickly from their realms onto the mountaintop and, when they were in the mood, they could make it more hospitable. When you stood on the mountain, you could always see Zeus' formidable realm rising up above you. There was a long, golden stair that even other gods had to ascend on foot until you came to a palace in the clouds. That palace loomed and shone and reminded you of the infinite power of the king of the gods.

Now, though?

Now the center of the rocky circle that was Olympus burst open. Purple flame, so deep and dark that it might even be black, erupted from a fissure in the ground and so did something else.

Something strange, something amazing. Persephone had never seen anything like it.

It was a lizard: long and thin, with snakelike tail and clawed feet. When it opened its mouth more of the purple flame poured out, and when it roared the mountain shook. The lizard was attached by an obsidian chain to the strangest chariot that Persephone had ever seen. There were only two wheels, one in the front and one in the back, and instead of standing the rider sat upon a throne of dark black iron.

"Oh, who is he?" Persephone leaned against the tree as she felt her knees go weak. She spoke to no one in particular and Helios knew better than to answer her.

The rider—

His skin was pale and his hair was shocking black. His eyes glimmered with dark fire, and he was clearly a god. No one else would be so brazen as to ride his chariot to the top of Mount Olympus. His fingernails looked like they were polished obsidian and his chin looked like it was made of solid marble. He had on a deeply sarcastic smile as he gazed at all of the gods staring at him and he winked.

He was being gazed at by the likes of Hephaestus and Athena, Demeter and Poseidon. The most powerful gods and goddesses of Olympus watched him—and he winked.

Persephone tore her gaze from him for a brief moment and tried to assess what the others thought of him. Some looked scandalized that this strange god would dare break Mount Olympus, however temporary the damage might be. Some looked bored, rolling their eyes and willing their realms to stop sharing space with the mountaintop. Athena winked back, and Demeter—

Persephone grinned. Demeter, the goddess of summer and Persephone's own mother scowled at the person in the center of the mountain. Glared, really. Her perfectly sculpted eyebrows and meticulous up do and painstakingly crafted nails all screamed disdain, even hatred, for this god who was flaunting himself before the elite of Olympus.

"Hades." Corella, Persephone's personal attendant and one of the few nymphs who could resist Helios' charms, came to stand by Persephone's side.

"Oh? Oh. Him. Really? How do you know?"

"You have only been here a short time, my dear." Corella stroked Persephone's hair; flowers bloomed and swift-growing ivy trailed down across Persephone's delicate shoulder. "He does not usually come up."

"I didn't—when was the last time?"

"When Zeus banished him to the underworld."

"Banished?"

"*He* wouldn't say that." Corella nodded at Hades, who was dismounting from his chariot. Every step he took was full of confidence and swagger, as if this mountain and its residents were beneath him.

His clothing was strange. For one, he did not wear a peplos like most of the men. Instead of a single, long tunic, he had a short tunic that stopped at his waist and pants covering his legs. Each was adorned with buttons and they fit snugly on his muscular form, tracing out his body without drawing lewd attention to it like Helios was so fond of doing. His hair was cropped short and as he looked around Olympus he pulled something strange over his eyes: a long, thin, metal wire that was bent in two places so that it fit snugly over his ears and went in a straight line across his brow. There were two pieces of glass hanging from the wire and covering his eyes, they were dark and it looked like they would block out the bright light of the sun.

Persephone wished she could block out Helios so easily.

"What would he say?" Persephone kept staring, knowing it was rude and not caring.

"He apparently enjoys the job. He guards the titans and rules over the land of the dead."

"Ah ha." Persephone shivered. She was the goddess of spring and intimately connected to the ebb and flow of nature, but spring was primarily a time of life and growth. Sometimes a wolf pup would have to take the life of another creature to grow, but by and large spring was about birth and renewal.

Persephone reached up, plucked an orange from the tree and started to peel it as she watched Hades.

She felt a strange mix of emotions: desire was chief, something that she was familiar with, but this was different. When she looked at Helios she felt a purely animal lust for his body, something she'd long ago learned to ignore, but when she looked at Hades? She wanted to hear him talk; she wanted to know why he dressed so strangely and why he rode such a dangerous looking chariot. She wanted to hear his voice. There were other emotions too: repulsion as she

realized she stared at the god of death, curiosity about what he was doing here, smug satisfaction that her mother hated him so, and a desire to root for him, whatever he was doing.

He was the underdog of the gods, the one who had drawn the short straw and been banished to the realm of the dead where he was cursed to be alone.

When Kronos created the world, he created three realms: Olympus for the titans and their children, the gods; Earth for the mortals; and the Underworld for the mortal's souls. Gods ruled in Olympus and occasionally meddled on earth, but the underworld was strictly the domain of Hades.

Would it be lonely?

Or, Persephone wondered as she chewed the sweet flesh of the orange, would it be freeing? No suitors to deal with, no Zeus to pander to, no Demeter to constantly disappoint.

Just—freedom.

Or maybe it was a cage. The titans' jailer, trapped as they were for some long ago affront to Zeus.

Hades finished surveying the mountaintop, apparently for the first time in a long time, and then strode toward Zeus' palace. Persephone watched him walk; she couldn't not look at him. He moved like a hunting cat, all feral grace and economy of motion. He moved with a confidence that even Helios didn't have. Helios had swagger, he had style, he had an overfull opinion of himself and he wanted everyone to know that he was great, that he looked great, and that his hair was great. Despite the apparent confidence, it belied a bit of hidden terror on Helios' part. He looked like he was worried what you would think of him, that you might think less of him than he did himself, and so he worked hard to try and project an image that he wanted you to see.

Hades cared for none of that.

Hades moved with the power and grace of someone who was so utterly confident in themselves that they, quite simply, did not give a fuck what you thought. When Helios walked across a space, he wanted everyone to look at him and be in awe. When Hades walked across that same space, he didn't care whether you looked at him or if you understood his worth, he simply assumed that you would.

Persephone shivered and finished her orange and made up her mind. She needed to meet him.

That's all she wanted. If she was going to be forced to spend all this time being wooed by idiots like Helios, until she finally chose a husband and settled down and got Demeter off of her back, then she was at least going to do something for herself as well.

Was that too much to ask?

Mind made up, Persephone turned and hoped that Helios would be gone so that she wouldn't have to deal with him.

He was not. In fact, he stood in the same place that he had when Hades arrived, with one difference. One of the nymphs, Katrina, was now kneeling before him with his cock in her mouth. She had her eyes closed and her face was one of pure bliss as she worked her mouth up and down and up and down the length of his immortal shaft. Helios had one hand on her head and was massaging her scalp, encouraging her to keep lavishing attention upon him.

"Helios. Really?"

"Persephone. Do I have your attention again?" Helios looked straight at her and spoke as if he did not currently have his cock in another woman's mouth.

"Do you—listen, are you—phh!" Persephone stuttered and blew out a long breath of exasperation as she tried to figure out what she wanted to say. "Are we going to talk about the fact that Katrina is currently going down on you?"

"Is that her name? Oh. I suppose. What about it?"

"Is that—yes. That's her name. Did you not even ask?"

"She was, ahem, busy." Helios smiled down at the nymph, who was not even paying attention to him. She was too busy running her lips and tongue across his golden member, tasting every inch of the velvety skin and giggling each time a bit of his glowing pre-cum touched her tongue.

"Right. Do you not. Ahem." Persephone closed her eyes, mentally counted to three, and opened them again. Helios was waiting patiently for her to finish her thought. "Do you not see what's wrong here?"

"What? She doesn't seem to mind."

"Of course she doesn't mind. She's a nymph. Sex is, like, how they say hello." Persephone made a wide gesture at the idyllic spring meadow that stretched off behind Helios.

Grudgingly, the god of the sun looked backward to see what Persephone was gesturing at. All around him were fawning nymphs, some lying on the ground trying to catch their breath,

others batting their eyes at him or blowing him kisses. Beyond that inner ring of nymphs, though, the larger nymph population didn't seem interested in Helios anymore. They were busy having wild and creative sex with each other. Groups of two, three, even six were lounging under flowering trees or splashing through babbling brooks or simply lying in the grass, all engaged in constant, almost never-ending acts of lust.

Helios looked back at Persephone and nodded.

"See? That's what I'm talking about. Nothing wrong." He closed his eyes briefly and Persephone could see his cock starting to swell and grow as he got closer and closer to his orgasm. Katrina, transported by the ecstasy of having her mouth on a god, moaned in pleasure at the sensation.

"Nothing. This, this is what I'm talking about, Helios. This right here is exactly why I've been yelling at you!"

"You, um, don't want me to have sex with your nymphs while we talk?"

"Exactly. Yes. Listen, you come in here and you, you want more than you're entitled to, that's it. You come in here hoping for sex but asking for marriage. Because you can't see the difference!"

Helios sheepishly held out the gifts he'd brought for Persephone. The gesture was somewhat ruined by the fact that he, suddenly and powerfully, reached climax. Katrina cried out in pleasure and fell backward to the ground, her face glowing with Helios' godly cum. Persephone neatly sidestepped the ensuing spray of Helios' seed and frowned at him.

"Gifts, huh. You think—let me get this straight. You think that a few gifts are what's going to make me want to marry you?"

"I. Ahem. I did." Helios' stepped back a step, then realized he couldn't. Nymphs were all around him, caressing his back and massaging his shoulders and running their hands through his admittedly gorgeous hair. His erection had not gone down even the slightest bit after he came on Katrina, in fact it might even be straighter and taller than before.

"See? See. Come on. This is bullshit. If you had come here looking for casual sex, then no problem. No problem. You're handsome, I like it, case closed. But you don't. Not once have you come here asking for that, you've always hoped for something more without really—without really putting the thought into how you might try and show that you're worthy of it!"

"Umm. All right, I can see that you're mad. So, about the casual sex thing—"

"Ahh!" Persephone shrieked in exasperated rage and stomped toward Helios. Storm clouds once again grew overhead and, like that, the nymphs were no longer pressing themselves excitedly against him. They shrank away and hissed at him, a few picked up Katrina, who was insensate from her experience with the god, and moved her away from the source of their mistress' rage. "You are infuriating. I want you gone!"

"But—" Helios thrust his gifts forward but didn't finish the sentence.

"That's—ha. Ha, ha!" Persephone's sudden laugh had no mirth in it. It was cold and harsh and made Helios shiver. "After all this, you're going to try and invoke the right of Hospitality on me?"

"Well, I did bring—"

"Fine. All right. Fine. Fine, fine, fine. I'm going out, though."

"Why?"

"None of your damn business!" Persephone looked around at her realm. Rain was pelting down, flowers were withering, and fruit was dropping off the vine. The nymphs who had moments ago been frolicking in carefree lust with one another were all crouching in the grass, hissing at Helios.

Persephone drew in a long breath, closed her eyes, and counted to three again.

When she opened them, the storm was gone. Clouds still whirled overhead, reflecting her general dissatisfaction with everything at the moment, but otherwise things were going back to normal.

"Helios, I accept your generous, um, gifts." Persephone held out her hands and Helios put them into her hands with a flourish and a grin, apparently still hoping that she would like them.

Persephone stared at them. Fleece and a lyre. What use did she have of either? She already had dozens of lyres of her own, and no need to specifically make clothes because she could simply conjure them up herself. One of the benefits of being a god. They were beautiful but, as far as Persephone could tell, completely useless.

Just like someone else she knew.

"Thank you, sir. Now, you may enjoy the hospitality of my realm for one day and one hour, in accordance with custom. You may move freely about and do here what you will. The law does not allow you to bring harm to any of the beings or things under my protection." Persephone glanced specifically at the nymphs as she said it. "And I have one other caveat."

"Oh?" Helios looked unsure of himself, there were not usually caveats to the rules of Hospitality.

"If you look for my house, or if you touch me in any way, I will tear off that preening cock of yours and stuff it down your throat!" Persephone's voice was low and violent as she spoke, and her fingernails were suddenly long and sharp and wicked, pointed directly at Helios' raging erection.

Helios gulped and took a step back.

"Now." Persephone was all smiles and light again. "I must be off on some business, but I trust you will make the most of your visit."

Despite her hatred of Helios and the way he'd gone about trying to woo her, Persephone could not deny her nymphs the pleasure of his company. He was handsome, and reportedly a good and attentive lover, and she'd been serious about the casual sex remark. To enjoy him and his body without having to deal with the overstuffed brain that rested on top of it would have been a joy.

"Ladies." Persephone looked at the nymphs who were, once again, lavishing attention on Helios but refraining, oh so powerfully, from doing anything other than fawn over him. Their attention snapped to Persephone and she could see the hope in their eyes. "You are free to, ahem, engage our guest in conversation."

At that moment, it was hard to tell who was happier: Helios or the nymphs.

The nymphs turned to Helios with lust in their eyes and smiles on their faces. They all took a step toward him and for a moment it looked like there might be fighting for his attention. After all, he was a beautiful god and could probably go for much longer than one day and one hour, but there was still only one of him.

Then two. Two of Helios, smiling that same smile, wearing that same tunic and sporting that same Olympically hard cock. Then three. Six. Twelve.

The nymphs giggled in joy, and the many different copies of Helios all winked lasciviously.

Persephone turned and left before the sound of excited nymphs and one very annoying god became too much for her to bear. A part of her wanted to join in the fun. Orgies with the nymphs were a nightly occurrence in her realm, but she knew that any indication from her that she was anything other than furious at Helios would lead to bad things.

It would certainly lead him on and encourage him to come back.

At this point, he might even take a friendly smile to mean that he had a chance at winning her heart and her hand in marriage. She couldn't take that chance. And, besides, she had someone she wanted to meet.