

hymn of the forsaking god

an Anatheos story



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Released November 2023

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The god knew what the priest was coming to tell him. Nonetheless, he granted him permission to enter, and allowed him to deliver the message.

“Great One,” the priest said, uncharacteristically nervous. “Lady Lucia has encamped outside the city.”

The god nodded, silent.

“She wears the holy raiment you granted her. Perhaps she has come to defend us?”

“You know she does not, Edwin. She has cast in her lot with the mortals, she will never more answer to me.”

“You know best, as always, my liege,” Edwin said, bowing deeply. He quickly took his leave.

Once more alone, the god could only smile. It was funny, in a grim way, just how much his few faithful believed in him despite his waning power. In fact, Edwin and the others trusted him more than he trusted himself.

He had known Lucia was coming for him for some time now. After all, the power she wielded was his own, granted to her upon her creation.

In all the millennia in which he had walked the earth, it was hard to pinpoint when exactly he had started to fade. All of his kind had done so in their time. Dar’oth was the first to be consumed by his own pride. He turned his anger at his waning power against the mortals. He formed an army of walking corpses, a blight that leveled entire cities in its wake.

As the most beloved of mortals, he felt obligated to protect them; but he realized that as his own power faded, he could not do so forever. But, perhaps, if a vessel were made to hold his power, it could aid him in defending his people, even after he passed. For this reason, he created Lucia.

Made of divine matter yet physically alike to the mortals in every way, Lucia was a formidable warrior, blessed with great power and greater calling. When she opened her eyes for the first time, her first words were, “Why have you made me?”

To which he replied, “To protect the people of the earth, so far as you are able.”

The god gathered the people of the island where he dwelt into the walls of his sacred city, and laid in wait for Dar’oth. The fiend’s armies gathered thick outside, waiting for the command to charge. After three days, Dar’oth himself appeared, hoping to put on the greatest display of his strength yet. That was his mistake.

On the fourth day, at dawn, Lucia stepped out the main gate of the city. She was clad in gleaming armor, with a fiery sword in her hand, all glowing with golden light. The enemy forces paused, not knowing what to make of it. In an instant, she was cutting swaths through the horde, directly to where Dar’oth stood in command. She then pierced him right through the heart.

Dar’oth was the first, but in their own ways, each one of his kind would fall to the same madness. Each would be driven to punish the created peoples for forgetting them, and each one would

be laid to rest by Lucia. But that memory stuck in the god's mind for a different reason as well. The fear he had seen in the people's eyes as they fled from the dead was in a class of its own.

Mortals, it seemed, had an innate fear of their own mortality. They hid their bodies away where they should never be seen again. Perhaps gods were not so different. He, like the others, was simply hiding from his own death in a different manner.

His thoughts were interrupted as he noticed Edwin peeking into the chamber. With a sigh, he motioned the priest in.

"Great One, Lady Lucia has entered the gates of the city."

"They simply allowed her in?"

"There was no one at the gate, my liege; our numbers are too few. Still, we are all willing to—"

"There is no purpose in throwing your lives away for my sake," the god interrupted. "Lucia has come for my head and mine alone. Order the faithful to remain in their homes and to not hinder her. I will deal with this alone."

"But, my liege..." Edwin argued. "Only I and few others know this, but your strength is almost gone. How can you hope to—"

"Let the faithful believe that I was slain at the height of my power, then," the god replied, dismissive. He would not allow any more of his followers to put themselves in harm's way, certainly not when he was of no more use to them.

Edwin relented. "As you will it, so it shall be." He bowed deeply and left the chamber once more.

It did not surprise the god that there was no one left to watch the city gate. If anything, he had to laugh at how far he had fallen. He rose from his throne to pace the floor.

He had been there for the people of the world for millennia. And while he had changed very little, the mortals had changed rapidly. Each generation invented its own technologies and its own problems. Over time, they became more reliant on their own devices and less concerned with higher powers.

It would be inaccurate to say that they had forgotten him. In times of trouble they quickly remembered their religion. But even as they cried out for his intervention, they would be scrambling to find a solution of their own. Lucia had always been quick to act. But she preferred the company of mortals to that of her creator, and as the years passed even she began to favor earthly solutions rather than raw divine might.

At a certain point, it became too much. He became angry at them. He had done so much for them, but as soon as they were safe, he was swept out of the way. Only a small fraction of his power remained, but he had enough to give them a forcible reminder of his presence.

When the sun rose on the day of his judgement, the sky was blood red. Not a cloud was to be seen. It was late autumn, but the heat became oppressive. The land was scorched. The mortals all knew exactly who was responsible, but their response was the opposite of what he had hoped.

They remembered him alright, but their memories were overwritten with anger. They cried out in rage, not repentance. What had they done to deserve this? they demanded. Why should they follow a god who tormented them? they asked in their hearts.

In light of this, his punishment only continued. Crops were perishing, lakes drying up, neighbors were turning on each other. Intellectually, he understood that he was doing exactly what he had seen every other fallen god do. But he could no longer keep his anger in check.

Weeks passed. Finally the leaders of mortals came together to create a plan, but they could find only one solution. They would have to march to the holy city and deal with the issue directly. Some suspected that the god's power was waning, but none knew for sure. They prepared for the battle of their lives. But then, the one person most qualified, who had been unseen for decades, suddenly came to their aid.

The doors of the throne room swung open. The god turned to see Lady Lucia, arrayed in full glory, standing between them. Not only was she wearing the sacred armor he had given her, but rather than the spear she had preferred of late, the sword with which she had slain Dar'oth—along with many others—was drawn in her hand.

It was apparent she understood the gravity of the situation as much as he did. If there was any doubt as to her motivations, her equipment confirmed it. She was here to fulfill the mission given to her at her genesis. To protect the people of the earth, so far as she was able. No spoken words were necessary.

The god returned to his seat and regarded Lucia. Both creator and creation were silent. The warrior hung her head, as if sorry it had come to this. But the god did not feel he deserved pity. He had betrayed the trust of those he once loved. He had forsaken his people.

He sat still, hands at his sides, looking Lucia in the eyes. This was it. There was nothing more to be done. His only plea was that his end would be quiet and swift.

Lucia, head still bowed, walked up to him. She pulled her sword back, and silently drove it through his robes directly into his heart.

And in that moment, as his curse was lifted from the land, the god found peace.

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