

Finding Medusa



By Randy Mann

This is a story of a young man living in today's world, who discovers he is a descendant of the Greek gods. To save himself from a terminal ancient prophecy, he must find the legendary Medusa. He soon discovers that the mythological epic tales were changed and finds love and discovery on his journey.

This story is warmly dedicated to my wife Sally, the love of my life, who passed away from cancer in May of 2017. She had a fascination with readings relating to Greek Mythology.

I also wanted to thank my sister, Susan Ayers, and my stepfather, Rich McGaraghan for their edits and suggests for this story.

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CHAPTER 1

The story begins on a small island in a tropical setting. A visitor to this place would see plenty of lush vegetation, a variety of animal life, majestic waterfalls, and perhaps, a single creature no one dares to gaze upon.

It was another warm day in this tropical land. The winds were brisk and anything on this island would feel the warmth of the tropical sun.

Many years ago, three men arrived on a small boat and ventured onto the white sandy beach. They came with swords and metal plates cover their chests as if they were going to war. As the three burly men stepped on to the tropical island, they stop. The largest and most muscular man looks at the other two.

"My brothers, we've arrived. We'll start into the forest and then split up," he says.

The leader points to a slender and younger person. He has a rough beard and seems anxious to begin the hunt. The third man is the youngest

brother, a smaller individual than the other two, who also appears to be timid when compared to the others.

"When we get into the forest, you need to go to the east and you need to move around to the west," the leader orders to the brothers.

The three men slowly begin their walk away from the beach and toward the lush landscape of the island. They stop in their tracks and find themselves staring at the many stoned statues of warriors near the beach. They can't help but notice the expressions of intense fear, forever locked in time, on each statue. The two younger followers now look at one another with great concern and begin to wonder if they should journey on, or head back to the safety of their ship and leave the tropical island.

The leader and oldest brother speaks to motivate his brothers, "Both of you, be alert. Keep your sword in your hand and whatever you do, don't look at the beast. Go find her and bring back her head. When we succeed, there will be great wealth beyond our dreams."

Now with determined looks, the three men go with their original plan and separate. Each move into the forest and carefully peer around the trees and other objects to hide or to prepare for an unexpected ambush. The bearded slender man, who is named Marcus, slowly rustles through the bushes. He tries to stay low, moving slowly and quietly, often turning his head, listening to crackles of the trees in hopes of ambushing the legendary monster.

Venturing deeper into the tropical forest, Marcus continues to cautiously push through the bushes and trees, trying to be as quiet as possible. He searches the ground for any signs of the great beast. He can feel his heart beating faster and faster. He stops as a small rustle in a bush nearby startles the young warrior. With no other sounds of movement for the next few seconds, he then ventures on as thoughts of wealth and fame drive him through the shrubs. Marcus remembers the life in a small village with limited food, his reason why he agreed to this quest in hopes of a better life.

While maneuvering, the cloth of his pant leg gets caught in thorns of one of the native plants. Marcus is startled, looks down, then pulls away the thorns to free himself, ripping another small hole on his right pant leg.

He slowly looks up to continue his quest as sweat drips down his face. Suddenly, a new noise to his left startles the determined warrior. Marcus turns, then stops, then looks toward the noise hidden by the thick brush. Marcus looks away, and he tells himself to not look every time there is a noise.

Then, a sharp bang, as if someone hits a tree with a long stick. Marcus's fear instinctively draws him to the sudden bang as his eyes now grow large. The creature is looking directly at him.

Expressions of surprise and fear overcome Marcus he feels the panic the intense pain of his body changing to stone. In what seems like an eternity to Marcus, is only a few seconds as the metamorphosis from flesh to stone soon overwhelms the young man.

Not realizing what has just happened, the leader named John, is looking to attack the monster from another direction. He carefully walks near the trees with his sword in his sweaty and burly hand, ready to strike at the first sign of the mythical monster.

John thinks of the wealth and respect he will receive when he brings back the creature's head. He will never be forgotten in the eyes of his country by doing what so many have failed.

An expert tracker, John listens for any movement as it is now quiet, eerily quiet. John can hear his heart beating, but his determination for new wealth keeps pushing him to get the mythical creature.

The third member goes by the name of Paul. He is the much younger brother of the two men, who has wanted to prove his bravery to his brothers and a young girl from his native land. After venturing through the thick forest, Paul comes to a clearing and soon finds a small hill. With a brief sign of relief, he feels it's a good strategic position as he can peer over the mounds and see a large section of the island.

The fear of turning to stone grows within the young man and Paul decides to hold his position. Fear rushes through the young man's body, but every few minutes, he looks over the terrain within his view.

From a short distance, Paul sees his brother John moving in and out of the trees. The younger brother now notices another figure moving toward John. He quickly realizes that it's not his other brother.

"Look out John!" he instinctively shouts out.

John stops in his tracks and can hear and feel something closing in on his position. Soon realizing it's the creature, John shuts his eyes and waves his sword. He feels that no target has been hit. He slowly opens his eyes, but only to a squint, and feels the beast closing. He shuts his eyes again and

swings toward his perceived target. He feels the sword hit an object, but not the one he's tracking. John tries to pull his sword back toward him. He is unable to do so as his line of defense has been imbedded deep into a nearby tree.

John is pulling frantically to release the sword from the tree. After several attempts, a hard tug pulls the weapon away as John loses his balance. He goes to the ground sensing the creature directly behind him.

"I'm here," the creature says.

John quickly jumps to his feet, turns around and takes a mighty swing, but failing to hit his target, the momentum once again carries him to the ground. He lands awkwardly and can no longer resist keep his eyes closed. They open briefly, long enough to see the red eyes and the head of snakes of the monster staring directly over him. The second member of the group of brothers has turned to stone.

Paul sees the events, but manages to only look at his brother and not directly at the creature, but does see the monster's shadow. He turns around leaving his back against the hill breathing heavily. Sweat is pouring down Paul's face. He can't help but to think of the beautiful girl he left behind to pursue this adventure for wealth and fame.

Fear is taking over Paul's body. Each breath is now becoming more difficult than the last. Paul tells himself that he needs to make his body work to run to the boat and escape the island.

After a few seconds to regain his composure, Paul starts to run, his eyes focused through the thick forest and toward the beach to reach the safety of his boat. The sword is still in his hand while he moves as fast as his body will take him.

Then, the blade of the sword catches a rock and Paul tumbles to the ground as he loses his balance. Paul is looking down as he is on his hands and knees, unable to move as he feels the pain of a sprained ankle. Frantically, he tries to get up, but again falls to his knees. Now, Paul sees the shadow of the monster standing directly above him.

He puts his hands to his head, kneeling, trying to cover his eyes. The young brother is shaking profusely.

"Please, let me go. I didn't want to be here. My brothers forced me to come to your island. I have a girl back home. I beg you, let me be and I will never return."

The creature growls and snarls directly at the young warrior, "Get off this island and do not come back, or you too will pay the price!"

"Yes...thank you," the young man says, shaking his head, as he forces himself up and limps quickly toward the beach. Not looking back, Paul escapes to his boat and leaves the island.

CHAPTER 2

Many years pass, and it is now present day outside a small store located in a nearby downtown setting with other small establishments. An attractive, slender woman with long black hair enters this jewelry store to pick up a bracelet she left for repair a week ago. Tapping on the bell on the desk, an African-American gentleman of older decent walks up to her and says, "May I help you?"

As she gazes into his trusting eyes and long face, the young woman replies, "Yes, I dropped off my mother's bracelet last week. I was just checking to see if it had been repaired."

"Why yes, Rachel, we took care of it."

"Wow, you know my name," says Rachel.

"I'm pretty good at names and faces," says the older gentleman with the greyish white beard.

He summons his assistant, "Alan, could you bring Rachel's bracelet to the front?"

Alan, a tall, rather thin young man in his early 20s, walks from the back of the store toward the front. Rachel notices the handsome young man with his clean-cut face and short black hair, feels around and eventually grabs the bracelet on the table between the work room and the counter. She realizes that the young jeweler has trouble seeing. Alan then walks and maneuvers toward the front and hands the bracelet to Rachel.

Alan looks at her and presents a boyish-type smile and asks, "How do you like it?"

"It looks wonderful." She looks to the African-American gentleman and thanks him for the great work.

"Don't thank me, young lady. Alan here did all the work. He's the best."

"Wow, seriously? That's amazing since," as Rachel stopped in mid-sentence.

"It's okay," Alan says. "I am blind, but I can see shadows. I've also been doing this kind of work since I was a kid."

"Well, thank you," Rachel says.

The young woman pays for the bracelet and heads for the door. The two men are standing side by side behind the counter and there is a deafening silence for about 3 seconds until Rachel leaves the store.

"You're staring at me again, Julius," Alan says.

"She's cute and she smiled at you. I think she likes you."

With a small smile, Alan says, "They're all cute according to you."

"Alan, don't you think it's time that you get out. Start dating and having a little fun? I think I can handle the store while you're gone for a few hours."

"Julius, when do I have the time for all that? I've got my studies, the store and my crazy family to worry about. As soon as things calm down...."

Alan starts to lose his balance and Julius quickly grabs his arm to hold him up.

"Are you all right, son?"

"Yeah, guess I didn't eat enough this morning. I'm fine."

Julius asks, "Has this happened before? Tell me the truth."

Alan replies, "Just a few times, Julius. Not a big deal. I'm too stressed with everything, including you pushing me to go on dates."

"I think it's time to close up for the day. I'll take you home, Alan."

"Julius, I'm fine. Really. I can walk. I've done it before."

Julius closes the store as they both walk outside.

"Get in the car, Alan, and I'll let you ride shotgun."

Alan looks at Julius with slight contempt realizing it's pointless to argue and agrees to let Julius take him home. Both get into his old truck, parked in front of the store and drive away.

CHAPTER 3

"I could have walked, Julius," Alan says.

"I like driving you around Alan, so don't deprive an old man of his dream."

Alan briefly smiles, "Ok, Julius. But next time..."

Alan and Julius soon arrive at a typical suburban home near the edge of the city, less than a mile from the jewelry store. They pull into the driveway and both get out of the truck. Julius looks over and notices that Alan exiting the vehicle a little slower than usual.

A tall, middle-aged gentleman stands at the door of a two-story suburban home. As Alan is walking toward the house, this handsome, middle-aged man, Alan's father, greets the two men. Then, a young high-energy young man, also in his early 20s, but shorter with brown hair, runs up to Alan.

"Hey, Alan! You've got to check out this new program I've written. It can find anything!"

"That's great, Brian. Can you show it to me later? I've got to catch up on a few things," Alan says in a more monotone voice.

"Yeah, sure, Alan. I'll stop by this evening. You have to give me a chance to get even on that cool video game. Hey Mr. M."

"Brian, good to see you," Julius says with a polite reply.

Both Julius and Alan walk to the door.

"Come on in guys," says Alan's father, the handsome middle-aged man.

"Thanks Perry," says Julius.

Alan walks over to his mother, Sally, an attractive woman with shoulder-length curly golden hair who is preparing her famous spaghetti and meatball dinner. Alan gives his mother a hug.

"Hi mom."

"How was your day? Did you meet any nice girls?"

Julius overhears the conversation and says, "Yes he did!"

A few chuckles fill the room as Alan rolls his eyes and then heads upstairs to get ready for dinner. Julius, standing next to Perry, looks over to him and says in a low voice, "We need to talk. It's happening."

Perry pulls Julius aside out of sight from Sally, his wife, and Alan.

Perry looks right at Julius and says, "What do you mean it's happening! How bad?"

"I don't think this is good at all. He's having the dizzy spells and his energy seems to be draining."

"I thought you said there wasn't a chance of this happening," Perry says in a low, but panic-like tone.

"No, Perry, I never said this wouldn't happen. Once Alan got through the teen years, it seemed like the blindness was it," Julius says.

"I can't send him to that island, Julius. You have to find another way," Perry says.

"I've already been looking through some of the ancient texts. This is the only way, Perry, and you know that."

Perry sighs and puts his hand to his mouth. He heads toward the living room windows and begins to stare out into the yard, "If he's getting weaker, we're going to have to tell him right away. I don't know how he's going to take it."

Julius walks to him and says, "Not tonight. Let him play his video game with Brian. He needs to stay focused and the game seems to help. Perry, you have an amazing kid and we'll get through this."

"Yeah, he can barely see, but he can play those video games with the best of them."

"Julius says, "Well, he is your son."

As the discussion about Alan comes to an end, Julius and Perry are slightly startled as a petite girl with blonde hair a little past her shoulders, about 16 years old, comes running down the stairs.

"When's dinner, mom? I want to meet up with Jenny at the mall," the girl says.

Sally replies, "You can just wait Autumn. Dinner will be ready in a few minutes. Why don't you put down your phone and help set the table?"

Sally looks down the hallway and sees the two men standing in the living room, "Julius, why don't you stay. I know you like my meatballs."

Julius looks over and smiles, "That's sound nice, Sally."

Sally turns around and works on dinner.

In the living room, Perry looks to Julius, "Do we have to get started on this now? How much time?"

"If we do nothing, a few months," Julius says.

Perry says, "All Sally and I have wanted to do was to protect him."

"Protect him from what?"

Sally has walked up to let the men know that dinner was almost ready and to see what Julius and Perry were talking about.

"We're just talking business, honey," Perry replies hastily.

"Perry, she needs to know," Julius says.

"Know what? Tell me, what are you two blabbering about?"

Perry looking at Sally with a serious face, looks directly into her eyes, "Julius thinks Alan's prophecy is starting to happen."

"What?!? You said we were past that!"

Sally tries to compose herself as her body begins to tremble. Julius tells her, "He almost fainted at the store. It was the first time I saw it, but after pressing your son, he tells me that it's been going on for a while."

Just then, Autumn's voice from down the hall yells out, "Hey, why all the chatting and when are we going to eat? You made me set the table. I need to get to the mall!"

"Yeah, what are you guys talking about over there?" Alan asks as he comes down the stairs.

"Nothing sweetie. We haven't talked with Julius in a while."

"Julius, I told you I'm fine. I just didn't eat that much today," Alan says.

Julius nods his head and offers a small smile. Everyone sits down at the table and starts eating.

Sally says to her daughter, "Autumn, put that phone away. You know the rules! We only eat at the table." And with a stern look Sally says, "Now!"

"Fine, but Jenny's going to be here soon."

The group enjoys Sally's dinner with meatballs, potatoes, green beans and a glass of wine. Alan and Autumn have the feast with juice.

Julius says at table, "There was another cute girl staring at Alan."

"Would you stop, Julius? I don't have time for a girlfriend."

"Alan thinks he'll get cooties," Autumn says.

"It'll happen someday, honey, but when you're ready," Sally says.

"Can we talk about something else? Dad, who won last night's game?" Alan asks.

"Ok, that's enough everyone. By the way, they lost again so I don't want to discuss that either," Perry says.

As dinner ends, Autumn hears the doorbell and rushes toward the living room. As she opens the door, it's Brian. Autumn shows a face of exaggerated contempt, but then notices her friend directly behind him.

"Why Autumn, you look so lovely today," Brian says in a sarcastic tone.

"Stop blocking the door, geek!" Autumn says and then rushes out to see her friend Jenny.

Brian walks in and is greeted by Alan. "Don't pay any attention to her, she's just being her OBNOXIOUS SELF!" Alan says directly at his sister, making sure she hears them.

Autumn ignores the comments and gets into Jenny's car. Brian looks toward the car and says to Alan, "Hey, she talked to me this time. Your sister's starting to like me."

Brian continues, Alan, I've got to show you this new program. Don't forget, you promised a rematch."

Alan and Brian head upstairs to play more video games.

Julius looks at Sally and Perry, "Let's talk about this tomorrow. We still have a little time, but he also needs to start preparing for this journey as soon as possible."

Sally jumps in, "Are you guys sure about this?"

"There's no other way Sally," Julius says.

"Ok. We'll do this tomorrow. Let him enjoy his evening," Perry says as he looks up toward the stairs. As the evening moves into night, Brian heads home and Autumn returns to the house. After a few minutes of general conversation in the living room, the family decides to go to bed.

CHAPTER 4

The following morning arrives, and the skies are sunny. Perry, a bit bleary-eyed from lack of sleep, can hear Autumn and Alan arguing about who gets into the bathroom first.

Sally looks at Perry and says, "I guess we're going to tell him, aren't we?"

"We have to," Perry says.

"Do you think he'll trust us again?"

"He'll have to. His life is at stake."

After getting ready for the day, Perry, Sally and Alan sit down to breakfast. As is often the case, they hear the cries of Autumn who says she just needs a breakfast bar as she has "a full schedule."

Alan says to his parents, "No classes today, so I'll be at the store."

"Hold on son," says Perry. "Your mom and I have something to discuss with you."

"Can't it wait? I've got several pieces at the store that I need to finish."

"I'm afraid not, Alan," says Sally.

"Wow. This sounds serious. What did Autumn do this time?"

Autumn comes running down the stairs.

"I heard that!" she exclaims.

"What are you guys all talking about?"

Perry mutters, "Of all times, she's now more interested in a conversation than what's on her phone."

Sally jumps in, "Perry, this concerns her too."

"Concern? I have to hear this one," Autumn says.

Perry sighs and realizes that he has no choice but to have this discussion with everyone.

"Ok," Perry says.

"Listen up, both of you. This is important and Alan, this is about you."

"Wow, it's about time Alan gets in trouble," Autumn says.

"Hey, why don't you go and get into some of those mindless conversations with those idiot friends of yours?" Alan says.

"Enough!" Sally jumps in. "Listen to us now. Both of you!"

Alan and Autumn now realize the serious tone of the conversation. Both are sitting perfectly still on the couch and have given their parents their full attention.

Perry continues, "I really don't know how to begin. This is not a discussion we were planning to ever have with you."

Perry looks over to his son, "Alan, have you ever wondered why you could do so many amazing things and only see shadows?"

"Is my brother an alien?" Autumn says.

"Stop! Let your father talk," Sally says to her daughter.

"I always thought it was in my genes. Never really gave it any thought," Alan says.

"Son, you and Autumn are descendants of the gods."

"Gods of what?" Alan asks.

"What you have studied in school, the class on Greek Mythology. It's not legend or fantasy," Perry replies.

"Are you guys serious? Alan, mom and dad are losing it," Autumn says in a relatively high-pitched voice.

Alan sits quietly trying to figure out what he just heard. His eyes veer off away from his parents. At that moment, Perry reaches over and pulls out a metal cap from behind the couch. He then hands it to his wife.

Perry says, "In Greek Mythology, do you remember the cap of invisibility, or the Helm of Hades, used by Perseus in the story with Medusa?"

"This is crazy. What are you trying to do here?" Alan says.

Sally puts on the small medieval-type metal helmet on and disappears in front of Autumn, Perry and Alan.

Autumn and Alan have looks of complete astonishment and shock. They quietly look at each other for a few seconds.

"That's so cool! We can be superheroes!" Autumn says.

Alan has a complete look of astonishment and puts his hands to his mouth. He quietly sits for several seconds in what seems like several hours.

Alan can barely muster up the voice to ask, "So if we're descendants of the Greek gods, then who are you guys?"

Sally now removes the helmet and becomes visible.

"We're your parents, Alan, but my real name is Perseus," Perry says.

"Perseus, like the one in the stories?"

"Yes, kids, just like in the stories," Alan says.

"So, you've lied to us for all of these years?! I can't believe what I'm hearing. How can I trust you? How can I believe anything you say!" Alan exclaims in anger.

"Listen to your father, Alan. You were never supposed to know any of this. We never thought this would ever happen," Sally says.

"Happen, what do you mean, happen? You know what, that's it. I'm getting out," Alan says as he starts to get up and head for the door.

Both Sally and Perry try to stop Alan, but he quickly gets to the front door. As he opens it, Julius is standing there.

"Well, I see that you're telling him your history. Get back inside, Alan. You need to hear this," Julius says.

"You're in on this too?" Alan asks.

Julius tells Alan, "Yes, your parents did not tell you about all of this, because I told them not to."

"What?"

Julius and Alan move toward the living room couch and Alan slowly sits down with a continued look of shock on his face. Autumn is also staring in amazement.

"This condition you have of only being able to see shadows, but possessing amazing instincts is all part of the prophecy," Julius says.

"Prophecy? What prophecy?"

Julius continues, "Just listen. Your father is Perseus, the son of the Greek god, Zeus. Your mother is Andromeda. Your father saved her many years ago from the sea monster called Cetus."

"Sea monsters, Greek gods, this is amazing," says Autumn.

Julius then looks to Perry and Sally, "does he know the rest?"

"No, we didn't get that far," Sally says.

"Don't stop now," Autumn says.

"Quiet Autumn," Sally says.

"Ok," as Alan throws his arms up.

"Suppose all of this is true. Why am I hearing this? Why now?" Alan asks sarcastically.

Julius says, "Because your life is now at stake, Alan. According to the ancient texts, the male offspring of Perseus was not supposed to survive past his teen years. But you did, and we thought that the prophecy was wrong."

"How come I didn't see this online? This is also completely different from what we were taught in school." Autumn says.

"Stories were deliberately changed. Are you telling me that you believe everything on the Internet?" Julius asks Autumn.

"I'll ask again. Why you are telling me this now?" Alan asks abruptly.

"The dizzy spells you've been having, Alan. They're getting worse, aren't they?"

Alan pauses and then says, "They have been coming on more often. But I'm working hard with school and at the store. You know I haven't been eating as much."

Julius says in a lower tone, "This is the beginning Alan, and if you don't fulfill the writings of the ancient text, then...."

"Are you saying I'm going to die?" Alan interrupts as he asks in a panicked tone.

"No honey, we're not going to let that happen," Sally says.

"Julius, you know what he has to do, don't you?" Perry says.

"Yes, when I saw Alan almost pass out the other day, I knew."

Julius is interrupted by Autumn who looks at her brother, "What? You're getting sick and not telling us?"

Julius jumps back into the conversation, "He's not sick, at least not physically. But Alan needs to follow the ancient words. Alan, I know this will be hard to believe, but your only chance at a cure and to live your life is to taste a drop of Medusa's blood, and it has to be fresh."

"Medusa, you mean 'the' Medusa?" Autumn asks.

"Yes, Autumn. The hideous mythical creature who can turn anyone to stone with a simple stare," Julius responds.

Alan replies hastily, "You can't be serious. I can't believe what I'm hearing! According to the books and research, Medusa is dead, so I guess I am too. Dad, Perseus, whatever, killed her to save mom."

"That's not entirely true," Perry says.

Perry moves toward Alan. "I did use Medusa to turn the sea monster, Cetus, into stone and save your mother. But, Medusa didn't die. I spared her life on the island and in exchange, she secretly came with me and helped kill the monster. Once she fulfilled the agreement, I took her back to the island where she is today, alive."

"So, if this story had to be changed, then what about the Greek gods? I don't think that they would let that go," Autumn says.

"Oh, the gods were furious with Perseus over that one. Because your father was the son of Zeus, they had let it go, but he and your mother were told to never return to the island of Medusa again," Julius explains.

"So how, exactly, am I supposed get to this island? Oh yeah, and how do I get a drop of Medusa's fresh blood? Just walk up to her and say, 'hey Medusa, how about a drop of blood to save my life?' I'm screwed."

"No, you're not!" Autumn quickly states. "Your geeky friend can help."

Julius says to Alan, "I have an ancient coin that can get you passage to the island, but it's only for one round trip and room for one passenger. I'm afraid you have to do this alone, Alan."

"You can't come with me either, Julius?"

"I'm afraid not. Only one person can go, and it must be you, Alan."

Alan says, "Remember, Julius, all I can see is shadows. And anyone that looks at Medusa turns to stone."

"Alan, you don't have a choice. You just don't look at her," Julius says.

"He's right son," Perry says, "You don't have that choice. Medusa did honor our agreement. I did spare her life. Maybe she'll help you."

"Medusa is a monster. Why didn't you kill her, dad?"

"I was planning to, but when I saw her reflection in my shield, I saw into her eyes and realized that I just couldn't raise my sword."

"You saw her and didn't turn to stone?" Autumn asked.

"His shield protected him, honey," Sally said.

Alan looks at Julius, "So what do the ancient texts says about this? Do I have a chance?"

Julius says, "Nothing else is said in the texts about your destiny. If something is written, then I don't have it or probably don't exist."

Julius puts his hands onto Alan's shoulders. "Go make your own destiny son. You need to do this in two days. That's when the moon is full and when the journey must be taken."

"Two days, that's it?" Alan asks.

"Yes, Alan, but you can do this. You have to do this," Julius says.

Alan stands up, then and Perry and Sally get up from the couch and hug him. Autumn continues to sit.

CHAPTER 5

It's the next day, the sun is out again, and Alan and Autumn are heading out the door of their home to the jewelry store.

"I don't understand why you insist on working today, Alan," Autumn asks.

"What am I supposed to do, sit home and think about this?" Alan replies.

"Don't you need to do some training? You think this is going to be easy? She's a monster, Alan. She can kill you in a second."

"I know," Alan says in a low voice.

Before Alan and Autumn leave the yard surrounding their home, they both hear, "Hey guys, where are you going?"

Brian, Alan's friend, rushes over. He looks at their faces and asks, "What's going on?"

"Alan's in trouble, geek. You need to help him," Autumn says.

"Autumn, let's not drag any more people into this," Alan says to his sister.

"Dragged into what? Alan, you've got to tell me. We're friends," says Brian.

"Brian, you're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you. But, Autumn is right. I think I'm going to need your help with this. You mentioned a program that can find anything, right?"

Brian says, "Yeah, it works with GPS, plus I put in my own special sauce. This can find anything. Why, what are you looking for?"

Alan tells Brian about the discussion with his parents, Julius and Autumn from the previous night.

Once Alan is finished, Brian looks at him with concerned eyes and says, "ok, what do you need me to do?"

"That's it! Just like that. You're going to believe everything my brother just told you!"

Brian looks at Autumn, "Yep. I always knew your brother was special. He's almost completely blind and yet he can do things that people with 20/20 vision can't do. Wow. A descendant from the Greek gods. I knew something was up with him, but you Autumn a descendant too, no way!"

"Shut up geek!" Autumn snaps back.

"Alright, you guys, stop!" Alan says.

"You're supposed get Medusa's fresh blood? The story says that your dad killed her to save Andromeda," Brian states.

"Yeah, I guess I forgot to mention that Andromeda is also my mother and my dad let Medusa live."

"So, your dad saves your mom, allows Medusa to live and now you have to go to this mysterious island and get her blood to save your life," Brian says.

"That's what he just said, geek, weren't you listening?" Autumn says.

Brian shakes his head in brief disgust and looks toward Alan, "But that's different than the legend. Medusa was supposed to have been killed by your father!"

"This whole thing is not making a lot of sense to me either. Apparently, the story got changed by accident or on purpose," Alan says.

"I don't understand why mom and dad kept all of this from us. Now you have to go to an island that's not even on a map and try not to get turned to stone!" Autumn says.

"I know. It's crazy. Brian, do you think this new device can track me to the island?"

"I don't know. This whole thing is weird. We may be dealing with temporal shifts, another universe, island cloaking, whatever. I'll look into this right away and see what I can do," Brian says as he looks directly at Alan.

Just then, Alan closes his eyes and puts his hand toward his head. He is fighting for his balance as Autumn quickly grabs him from falling to the floor.

"You okay, man?" Brian asks.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Let's get started on this," Alan says to Brian.

"Hey geek, please help my brother," Autumn asks with a slight voice crack.

"We'll figure this out guys, somehow," Brian replies.

Alan and Autumn now proceed to walk down the sidewalk passing the other small establishments toward the jewelry store.

"Alan, this is getting worse, isn't it?"

"A little, but we're going to get through this, I promise."

"You better, you're the only brother I've got," Autumn says fighting back tears.

"Gee Autumn, I didn't know you cared," Alan says with a quirky smile.

Alan and Autumn arrive at the jewelry store and walk in. They hear the bell ring as the door opens. Both see Julius finishing up with a customer and wait for the person to leave.

Julius looks at Alan, "Come here, I need to show you something."

Both Alan and Autumn head toward Julius.

Julius looks to Autumn and then to Alan, "I don't think you should involve your sister."

"Too late Julius, I'm here to help my brother."

"Then you need to understand, there could be consequences for your actions."

"I don't care. Yesterday I found out that I'm related to Greek gods."

Julius sighs and then shows Alan the ancient gold coin.

"I don't have to remind you that this journey is extremely dangerous, Alan. I'll give you this coin before on the night of the full moon and it will get you to the Island of Medusa. There's only one coin, so only one can go and return. You must go to the dock tomorrow night. With the coin in hand, you will see the Traveler who will take you to Medusa's island. Remember, son, you only have from the start of full moon to the end of the dark moon to make it over and back," Julius says.

"I need to go with him, Julius," Autumn exclaims.

"No Autumn. Julius is right. It's too dangerous and there's only room for one," Alan says looking directly at his sister.

Alan then turns to Julius, "what happens if I miss the window?"

"Don't miss the window. There's plenty of food to survive on Medusa's Island. But keep in mind, Medusa is a survivor. She knows how to handle a sword and won't hesitate to use it or turn anyone to stone who invades her domain."

"I told you Alan that she was a real monster," Autumn says.

"She is and it's a good thing your father spared her," Julius replies. "Alan needs to get that small amount of blood and remember, it has to be fresh to break this curse for you to live a normal life."

"Does this mean I will get my sight?" Alan asks.

"I'm not sure, but I think so. This is all related and inter-twined. Alan, this is probably the most difficult thing you'll ever have to face. I wish I could go with you, son. Don't forget, use your amazing instincts. Listen to the world around you and you'll have that chance to make it home."

"Julius, did you find anything more on what ancient texts says about this?" Autumn asks.

"I haven't found anything else. However, it seems we're rewriting history as we speak."

Autumn decides that it's time to go and let Alan work. She gives him a big hug, turns around and leaves the store.

"This is hard on her too, Alan."

"I know it is."

CHAPTER 6

It's now the evening before Alan makes his journey to Medusa's island. After a pleasant and uneventful dinner at Perry and Sally's home, a discussion

begins to emerge to strategize Alan's eventual confrontation with Medusa. Everyone is attending the discussion, including Julius and Brian.

Brian starts with the conversation, "Hey guys. I worked last night and today on this. I think there's a way for Alan to at least send a message from the island. It would have to be short and will probably work only one time. There seems to be some kind of temporal shift, so I'll use my new program to send the message."

Brian pulls out several satellite pictures.

"Take a look. Notice the slight difference in the island. Most would think it's a small smudge or a bad picture. That looks like some kind of phase shift. That's your chance, send it right before the dark moon."

Julius looks over to Perry, "That's not bad." Now Julius looks at Brian. "Good work, Brian."

"Yeah, good job.... geek," Autumn says with a bit of sarcasm.

Brian smiles at Autumn. Sally looks to Perry, "Are you sure there's no way you can go with him? Medusa knows you."

"You know I can't, honey. Both of us are forbidden from that island. That was part of the agreement with the gods for sparing Medusa and changing our destiny," Perry replies.

Brian jumps in, "Yeah, it seems that you guys have changed many things. The story of Perseus and Andromeda says that you had 7 children, not two."

Perry and Sally look at one another.

"Yes, the story couldn't be changed to preserve all the god's history and to maintain balance," Perry says.

"Hey Autumn, I researched everyone's real name. I guess yours is Autochthe, or is it Gorgophone. I like Gorgophone, it suits you better," Brian says.

Autumn looks over to her mother with a horrified look, "Is my name Autochthe? Please not Gorgophone."

"No sweetie, it's Autochthe."

"Let's get back to the subject at hand," says Julius.

"Alan, I can't tell you enough on how dangerous this is. I told you this before, but Medusa is a monster and will stop at nothing to kill you and everyone else around her," Julius continues.

"What about interference from the gods, Julius? They obviously know that Medusa is still alive," Perry asks Julius.

"Since you're the son of Zeus, I don't think there will be any interference, at least at this point. The rest of the gods wanted Medusa dead. They weren't happy that you didn't fulfill the destiny of the ancient texts, Perry."

"Are you guys saying that I have to look out for Medusa and the gods too? What chance do I have against all of that?"

Sally interrupts, "Alan, honey, you can do this. You have to. Yes, the gods are very powerful, but some of them can also be distracted. Don't panic if you get yourself into a bad situation. Remember, you're a special young man with special instincts. So, you go and put an end to this curse."

Perry looks over at Sally, "That was good, especially the distraction thing."

Sally replies, "You're not the only one who reads the texts."

Perry turns to Alan, "I will get you my shield. It protected me against Medusa and should do the same for you."

"It's too heavy for me, dad. I found it several months ago and could barely lift it," Alan says.

Alan asks Julius, "how is he supposed to protect himself?"

Julius looks down and pulls out an old knife from his jacket pocket. Julius then separates the knife from its holder.

"Wow, I haven't seen one that like before," Brian says.

"That's because it's a one-of-a-kind," says Julius.

Julius turns to Alan.

"Alan this is a special instrument given to your father by the gods that will do the job. Medusa's skin is tough as it's covered with scales. It's so strong

that bullets can't even penetrate it. Also, once you get Medusa to bleed, it will probably kill her, so that's why I don't think the gods will interfere. Remember, she's not human and I found one writing that says that if there is a breakage to her skin, she bleeds out."

"How certain are you about this?" asks Alan.

"I'm fairly certain," Julius replies.

"Tomorrow you leave for Medusa's Island, the night of the full moon. You must return during the dark moon, about two weeks later, or the Traveler will not come for you again. It's very important you understand this Alan. You can't fail because you know what will happen," Julius says to Alan.

"I got it," says Alan.

"Yeah, we do too," Autumn says while looking at Brian.

Brian smiles at Autumn.

"Don't get any ideas, geek!"

Perry says to everyone, "I think it's time Alan gets some sleep. Let's finalize all of this tomorrow."

Everyone agrees to the idea and Julius and Brian head out the door while the rest head to bed.

About an hour later, Alan is in his bedroom. The room is dark with a small nightlight near the doorway. Alan can hear the cracking of the floor as if someone was heading toward his room. He looks at the doorway and sees the shadow of a figure.

"You can come in, Autumn," Alan says.

"How did you know it was me? Never mind."

There was a deafening silence for a few moments.

"It's going to be fine, Autumn."

"You can't do this alone. How long ago was your last dizzy spell?"

"I haven't had one in a while, so that's a good sign," Alan says as he tries to play down his condition.

Autumn is becoming more upset.

"There must be something I can do to help," Autumn says in a cracking voice.

"Help Brian," Alan says. "He's working on a Plan B."

"What Plan B?"

"I don't know yet. This all happening so fast. Do you remember when you were running through the house when you were a kid and knocked over mom's lamp? You spent hours trying to glue the thing back together," Alan says.

"Yeah, I remember that, and mom never said anything about it. I guess I fooled her."

"No, you didn't. It was cracked everywhere. She figured it was punishment enough for you to put that thing back together."

"At least mom admired my determination."

"Maybe, but she hated the lamp. It was a good excuse for her to get rid of it."

Autumn chuckles and agrees it's time that both go to sleep for the night.

"Good night, Autochthe," Alan says with a quirky smile on his face.

"See you tomorrow, dear brother. Love you. Just don't tell mom or dad I said that."

CHAPTER 7

The next day arrives and Alan is preparing for his journey to Medusa's Island. Alan is putting clothes, the knife and other supplies into his backpack.

"You got your toothbrush, razor and other essentials?" Perry asks Alan.

"I think so," Alan replies.

Just then, Alan starts to stumble. He holds up his arm toward his father.

"I'm ok. I got this."

There's a pause of silence in the room.

"Dad, I can do this. I don't have a choice. You told me that."

Perry replies, "Yes I know. Look, perhaps you can talk to Medusa. I did save her life a long time ago. Maybe she'll listen. But you do what is necessary to survive. Don't forget, she won't hesitate to kill."

"Why didn't she kill you on your journey from her island?"

"We made an agreement and Medusa didn't want a worse fate with the gods by hurting me."

"Maybe Medusa wanted to help you."

"I doubt that. On our camping trip many years back, I taught you how to stake out a situation. Know your target and be patient."

Brian and Autumn come anxiously into the house.

Brian begins talking while almost out of breath, "Alan, I think I've got something. This device scans all frequencies and I even programmed it to send through a number of phases."

"How did you do that?" asks Perry.

"Simple. I just calibrated the known frequencies with other possible frequencies and had the device merge..."

"Ok. Brian. We get the picture. Nice work," Alan says.

"This is good. This gives you a better chance, Alan," says Perry.

"Hold on," says Brian. "There is one problem. On this island, battery power is precious. There are so many frequencies that you can only send a short message. The shorter the better. Your best option is just one word."

"That's it? One word?" Autumn states. "I thought you knew what you were doing?"

"Hey, this has never been done before. You try doing something like this?" Brian says with a slight anger.

"Brian, it's good. It's something. I'll do my best to communicate if I need to."

Sally comes in to join the conversation. Julius also shows up at their door. Perry welcomes his long-time friend and Julius tells everyone that it's time to take Alan down to the dock.

Sally grabs Alan and hugs him tight.

"You be careful, and you come home. I love you so much. Don't forget to use those instincts." Sally says tearfully.

"Don't worry mom, it will be fine. I promise."

Sally pulls out a pendant from her pocket and hands it to Alan.

"Carry this with you, Alan. It's always brought me luck."

Alan clutches the pendant and hugs his mother one last time. Then soon separate and Sally grabs a tissue to wipe her eyes.

"I'm proud of you son," Perry says as he hugs Alan. "Remember what I told you."

"I will dad."

"Here, take the helmet. Use it wisely. You can only wear it once. That's why it worked for me since your father used it to save me," Sally says.

Alan looks to his father, "Mom never put that on?"

"No, she was saving the demonstration for a special occasion. I guess this was it."

"Hey, don't be too long. I've got a great new video game for you to check out. I may even get your sister to play assuming she can put her phone down," Brian says.

Alan chuckles a bit.

"Don't pay any attention to the geek, Alan," Autumn says.

Alan's sister also hugs him and then runs to her bedroom.

"Time to go Alan. You don't want to miss your ride," Julius says.

It was decided that only Alan and Julius would go to the dock. Alan looks back at his parents and the sanctuary of his home. They get into the truck and begin the drive to their destination.

Out of the city, the two men find themselves on dirt roads surrounded by fog.

"It's going to be ok, son," Julius says.

"I hope so," Alan replies in a low and concerned voice.

"You know Alan, things seem to happen for a reason. I just have a feeling that all events in your parent's life and yours has led to this moment."

Alan is feeling the pressure and fear of his journey. The conversation goes quiet as both Julius and Alan get deeper in thought.

Julius soon looks up at the darkened sky and notices the bright full moon above. They arrive at the dock and fog is settling in to the shoreline and becoming thicker by the minute. The mood has become darker and Alan feels a sense of new urgency about his situation.

Julius pulls the ancient coin from his pocket.

"Here's the coin, Alan. Give it to the Traveler and he'll take you to Medusa's Island. You have to come back during the dark moon."

"You mean the new moon? Yes, I remember, Julius."

"Alright, son. It's time for me to go. Good luck. I'll see you when you get back."

"Hey Julius, you've been like a father to me too," Alan says as he gives Julius a hug.

Julius almost looks uncomfortable with the embrace, but has a fond look on his face.

"Thank you, son, you mean the world to me. Go find your destiny and come home."

Alan notices Julius's shadow leave. He hears a noise in the water and turns around to see a small boat floating toward the shoreline. Since Alan can only see shadows, he does make out a figure on the small vessel wearing a dark hooded cape. Alan stands at the edge and begins to break out in a cold sweat.

CHAPTER 8

The sound of breaking wood and waves fills the air as a small boat reaches the shoreline. A tiny, almost dirty-like hand comes out of the black cape and then opens up. Alan carefully places the ancient coin into the hand, trying not to touch the Traveler. The Traveler, with the coin, slowly closes its aged-looking hand and steps aside for Alan to board the boat with his backpack in hand.

The Traveler looks down and begins to slowly paddle. Alan tries to sit calmly, trying not to rock the small vessel, but is too anxious to be still. He soon notices that the shoreline is fading in the fog. The young man fully realizes that he will soon be on Medusa's island. He can feel his body tensing up, but manages to remain relatively still.

As the shoreline's shape no longer becomes visible to Alan, he turns to the Traveler and nervously asks, "how's business?"

The Traveler looks up to Alan for a brief moment, and then looks down to continue to paddle.

Alan only sees a small shadow and realizes that the Traveler does not want to engage in conversation. He senses this being may not be human and decides to sit and wait as calmly as possible for the journey to end. He feels his watch and realizes the time is a few minutes after midnight.

After what seems to be many long hours of moving across the relatively calm waters, Alan begins to catch shadows of the infamous island. The sun is beginning to rise and Alan's gaze to this new world is making him more uneasy. He's feeling his heart beat faster as he wonders if Medusa is waiting for him on the other side of the beach. He tries to look and make out any unusual shadows. Nothing appears out of the ordinary.

A few moments later, the aging vessel arrives. Alan begins to exit, but stops quickly to hold on to whatever he can find to keep from falling. He realizes

that it's another spell that seems to be coming more frequent. After a minute, Alan regains his composure and steps off the craft. He turns to the Traveler as the sun begins to appear in the eastern sky.

Alan says to the Traveler, "back here at the dark moon."

The Traveler slightly nods, turns his head to the east and starts to paddle. A blanket of fog rolls in from the west and the Traveler is now nowhere to be seen. Alan fully realizes that he's on his own and may have to do the unthinkable to preserve his life.

The tall slender young man takes small steps as he cautiously walks along the beach, looking for a shadow that is moving. He senses nearby trees thick enough to hide from the monster of the island. Alan sees the shadows of the trees and ducks in, putting his backpack aside.

Alan now leans against a tree, trying to shield himself. He's desperately trying to control his breathing as it has become faster than usual.

"Just keep it together, Alan."

Alan now starts to speak sarcastically.

"Sure, Alan. This isn't a problem. Just kill the monster, get her blood and live happily ever after."

After a few minutes, Alan's breathing returns to normal. He pulls the helmet out of his backpack, puts it into his right hand and cautiously ventures out of the thick brush and trees and slowly maneuvers to the island's open interior. Alan keeps walking, each step becoming a greater task than the last. He comes up to another batch of bushes and trees and hears a crack to his left. Alan quickly jumps to his right, and hits something that feels like someone else.

Alan is gasping, wondering if he has backed into the creature Medusa. He quickly turns his head and feels the human-like figure. The figure is too hard to be one of flesh, but his shadowed vision makes him realize he's now touching a statue that he has read about.

Alan shuts his eyes tightly. The fear continues to take over his body as sweat pours down his face. He can also feel the wetness in his right hand that's holding the mystical helmet. Alan clinches his hand tighter and stands still for a few minutes, unable to make his body move. The young man says to himself, "ok, control your breathing, just like dad taught you."

After calming himself down, Alan runs his left hand and feels the statue is made of stone. He looks around and notices other statues in his field of limited vision.

"These aren't statues. These are warriors turned to stone!" Alan thinks to himself.

Alan now believes he's entered the den of Medusa. Alan stumbles and scrambles back toward the beach with the helmet in hand. The panic and fear are returning as he decides to quickly make it back to the sanctuary of the thick tropical forest. Alan moves quickly as his feet are going as fast as they can.

Overcome with determination to reach sanctuary, Alan suddenly trips over a small log and lands face down as the helmet flies from his hand. Realizing he may have attracted attention, he rolls over with his hands over his face. Slowly, Alan slowly removes his hands and sees the shadow of the sky above.

"Medusa is not here."

Alan makes his retreat to the thick forest to consider his next move. Once back to the sanctuary of the trees, he realizes that the helmet was lost in his fall. The young man begins to frantically check around his immediate location as he realizes the precious helmet given to him by his mother Sally was lost in Medusa's den of stones.

Alan has now decided to stay within the trees and try to calm his nerves and regain his focus. He locates his backpack, grabs some food and sits against one of trees that he believes conceals him from Medusa's den.

Alan thinks to himself, "I've got to get it together, go back in the den of stones, find the helmet and get Medusa's blood. It's the only chance I have. I'll try tomorrow."

Night moves in over Medusa's island. Alan is within his sanctuary and thinking about retracing his steps to locate the helmet of invisibility. Exhausted from the ride to the island and the mental strain, Alan falls asleep.

CHAPTER 9

The next morning brings sun across the land. Alan awakens to see only shadows. Alan feels that he has regained his composure and determines that he has to know where Medusa is lurking before trying to locate the helmet.

Alan thinks to himself, "I can't be distracted when looking for the helmet. I need to find the monster, make my move and find it."

Alan, for the second time, comes out of the thickness of the trees. As he retraces his steps toward the open area of the island, he sees the shadows of the many statues of people, mostly men, who have tried to claim Medusa's head. Using the stone figures as a shield from view, Alan quickly moves from one statue to another looking for the creature that may be able to save his life.

While moving around the open area of statues, Alan sees the shadow of a small hill ahead of him. He gets down to the ground and literally crawls to the top of the hill in hopes of avoiding detection. He looks down and in the distance, he can sense and eventually makes out the shadow of someone. From his very limited vision, he can make out the strands of movement from this person's head. Alan has discovered Medusa. He estimates that she is far enough away from his position and probably didn't notice his presence on the island.

Alan's heart is beating faster and faster. His breathing has become more rapid. He can feel the sweat building again on his forehead. He tries to remain as calm and still as possible, but can feel his heart beating in his chest. Alan watches Medusa move along in and out of the trees near the clearing below the hill.

"Now's my chance," Alan quietly says to himself.

He begins to move back toward the open area where he lost the helmet. Swiftly walking toward this area, his right foot slips which loosens some rock on a nearby hillside. Alan quickly stops, still hearing the beating of his heart that feels like it's going to come out of his chest. He remains still, listening for any kind of unfamiliar movement. The area around him is generally quiet.

Alan's amazing instincts help to finally locate the area where he fell the previous day.

"It has to be here," Alan says to himself as he is crouching down and scanning the terrain. Alan, hunching down, moves a bit on his knees and hears a crack in the leaves.

Uncertain of the noise, Alan begins to reach for the long knife strapped to his side that was given to him to get Medusa's blood. Very slowly he unclips the flap and puts his trembling and sweaty hand on the knife's handle. He begins to pull the knife out and then is hit from his left and forced to the ground.

Alan is dazed as he is lying face down on the ground. He is also experiencing another dizzy spell and realizes that he is helpless against this foe who just attacked him.

A hand reaches over his back, grabs his shirt and forcibly flips him over on to his back. Alan's eyes are closed tight. His body is stiff and unable to move. He now hears a low, crackly voice.

"Is this what you're looking for!" the voice says.

Alan turns his head to the side, opens his eyes, and sees the shadow of the helmet in the hand of this creature and the moving objects on top of this person's head. He quickly realizes that Medusa has discovered his presence on the island and his life may end up like the other souls who were turned to stone.

"Answer me NOW!" Medusa says.

Alan is trembling. His eyes have closed tightly as he feels her sharp sword pressed against his throat. Medusa is on top of Alan. He is pinned down and unable to move as Medusa's incredible strength has the young man defenseless.

"Yes. It's mine." Alan says in a crackly voice.

"Well then, look at me and it's yours. If you don't look, then I'll cut into your throat until you do!"

Alan knows that in his weakened state that his only chance is to look at her, knowing that he will turn to stone. But, fear keeps his eyes closed tightly.

He now feels the increased pressure from Medusa's sword on his throat. He reaches for his knife with his free hand on his side, slowly opens the flap and quickly pulls it out. Alan thinks this is his only chance to survive and lunges the knife toward the creature.

Without hesitation, Medusa hits his arm and redirects the path of his knife across Alan's leg. The pain of the knife's superficial cut forces a reaction from him to open his eyes.

Alan's eyes are now wide-open, staring directly at the face that so many advised him not to look at. Although all he can see is a shadow, the terrifying movement of what appears to be snakes on the top of Medusa's head are snapping at him, making him shudder. Alan can now feel the piercing stare from the creature into his soul as his body tingles.

Alan thinks, "This is it. I'm turning to stone like the others."

But, he soon realizes that he can still move his body. He hasn't turned to stone. Alan tries to struggle against the strength of the creature on top of him.

Alan is unable to make out any facial features of Medusa. There is a pause and then he hears, "Why haven't you turned to STONE!" It was a slow and low crackle. Medusa is speaking to him and the terror in his body keeps him silent.

"Answer me or I'll slice your throat! Why haven't you turned to stone!"

Alan quickly says, "I'm blind. All I can see are shadows."

He feels the blade against his throat getting tighter and realizes that he needs to come up with something to tell this creature to preserve his life.

"I need your help. Perry, I mean, Perseus sent me."

"Perseus!" exclaims the angered Medusa.

"How do you know Perseus?"

Alan tries to swallow and speak further as Medusa's sword against his throat gets tighter.

"He's my father."

Medusa leans back easing the pressure of her sword on Alan's throat. She then lunges forward again and says, "So where is your father?"

"He was told to never come back. Something about an agreement," Alan replies in a quick and almost panicked-like tone.

Medusa's face leans in further to Alan. The many snakes on the creature's head are continuing to lunge at the young man, missing his face by mere inches.

"Leave this place...SON! Don't come back! If I ever see you I'll make you wish you never stepped foot on this island," Medusa says.

Medusa stands up above the shaken Alan, still pointing the sword toward his head.

"I assume you came by way of the Traveler. Make sure you're on his boat on the night of complete darkness. Stay in your bushes and trees and stay away from me!"

Alan, almost completely paralyzed, sees Medusa's shadow walk away. He notices the figure of the helmet in her hand as she heads toward her den. Alan realizes he does not have much of a chance to get her blood without the helmet. To Alan's surprise, though, Medusa did not take his knife as it lays on the ground.

CHAPTER 10

The young man makes it back to his sanctuary. Badly-shaken, he determines that he must regain his composure. He grabs a t-shirt, rips it, and then uses the torn portion to cover and treat his wound. He has survived Medusa's encounter and feels he may have an advantage. She can't turn him to stone and the knife needed to get her blood is still in his possession.

Alan starts to remember the many hunting trips he was on with his father. He recalls the techniques of knowing his prey, their movements and habits. Alan thinks that he can watch Medusa, learn her routines, and get that helmet.

Alan chooses to stay in the sanctuary for the rest of the day and night. The darkness was peaceful, but he was on edge. "Could Medusa ambush him in the middle of the night?" he wonders.

The morning comes without incident. Alan is exhausted, but determined to complete his quest. Alan feels his body weakened from the encounter from the previous day. As the sun continues to rise in the sky, he slowly ventures out of the sanctuary and moves toward the small strategic hill to find Medusa.

He notices the shadowy figure in the distance as he peers into the valley. It was her, the monster that attacked him. Alan watches Medusa and thinks, "well, at least the snakes make it easier to see."

Alan is startled by the crackling of twigs in the valley. He notices another shadow heading toward mythical Medusa. This time, though, this shadow has four legs. This new creature seems unafraid as it slowly heads toward Medusa.

Alan continues to look and make out the shadowy figures as best as he can. He sees the two shadows get close to one another. He continues his stare and realizes that it's a deer or similar animal eating out of Medusa's hand.

"This can't be," Alan whispers as he continues to look in amazement.

"This monstrous, killing machine is feeding an animal, and it's not afraid of her," Alan says to himself.

Alan now hears more crackling, but much louder. He ducks behind the hill as begins to hear voices. A group of men are yelling and running into the valley. He peers again over hill and sees a dozen shadows closing in on Medusa. He can see her figure grab a sword and run toward the trees as the animal makes a quick escape toward the woods.

Alan realizes that Medusa is under attack. He wonders, "This may be my chance to get her fresh blood if one of the attackers can kill the creature."

Alan tries to make out the many shadows moving around Medusa. He observes the creature having almost cat-like reflexes as she moves around the army of invaders. He notices some of the attackers literally stopping in their tracks as they try to get close to Medusa. Alan senses that some of these warriors have been turned to stone.

The young man can see Medusa fighting off her attackers with her sword. But, he realizes that there may be too many in this army for Medusa to fend off.

From Medusa's point of view, attackers are coming from all sides. She is engaged with two warriors. One warrior slips to the ground and Medusa takes the opportunity and turns him to stone. However, another one soon takes his place to fight the creature.

Another soldier sneaks up from behind Medusa, aiming to slay her. Distracted from the attackers in front, Medusa is unaware of the masked soldier as he takes aim for her head with his sword. The invader swings his arm back and takes aim to make the mighty blow on the unsuspecting Medusa. As the invader begins to swing, he feels the piercing of a sword through his leg. Dropped down in agony, the soldier looks up and does not see the person who deflected the aim of his sword.

The distraction of the sound has the other two attackers instinctively look at Medusa and both turn to stone from her piercing eyes. The third one, on the ground, grabbing his injured leg, eventually looks up to the creature and suffers the same fate as his comrades.

This victory for Medusa does not last long. There are more attackers coming toward Medusa. But the invaders are met with a being they cannot see. It is Alan who has found the helmet and now using it to help his prey, his single opportunity of using the magical helmet.

Despite the advantage of invisibility, Alan is relying on pure instinct, countering every move of the attackers as they swing violently in every direction. Alan lunges his sword, injuring the invaders who challenge him.

The army of invaders is dwindling as the number of stone statues of different positions are increasing. Alan tries to fight off the last of the remaining invaders. His remarkable skills are saving himself and Medusa. But, Alan's reminder of his fate surfaces as he begins to stagger and lose focus. One last invader challenges Medusa. He slumps over as the helmet falls off revealing his image to the attacker.

The invader, seizing the opportunity, swings his sword across Alan's stomach. Alan now feels the pain of the object that moved across his body. Alan drops to the ground, holding his stomach area, feeling the wetness of his blood. The intruder now stands over Alan and raises his sword.

The burly warrior now plunges the sword down to avenge the death of his comrades, but his weapon is intersected by another sword and its motion is stopped before slicing into Alan. The soldier looks up and stares into the piercing eyes of Medusa. The soldier can feel the boiling of his blood, the numbness of his limbs as his body becomes paralyzed. The pain becomes too intense. He drops his sword and last sees his body turn grey as he is transformed to stone. The battle was over.

Alan realizes that Medusa has saved his life. The pain from his stomach and leg were too much for the young man to take, as he begins to pass out. His

last image is of Medusa, standing over him with the hair of snakes moving about her head.

CHAPTER 11

A day has passed, and Alan awakens in unfamiliar surroundings. He's not in his sanctuary or in Medusa's den of statues. He senses a different structure, surrounded by the elements of the island. Alan can make out the bamboo holding up what he senses is a hut of leaves. He feels the animal skin covering him as he lies on another layer of soft skin.

Alan slowly gets up. He examines his injuries and discovers that they have been treated. His stomach area and leg are still painful, but not enough to stop him from getting up and walking toward the door of the hut. He slowly opens the hut's door and makes out the shadow of Medusa stirring a liquid in a pot over an open fire.

Alan is startled and steps back, getting the attention of the monster of the island.

"Don't concern yourself, if I wanted you dead, you wouldn't be here."

"Good point," Alan replies.

Medusa points to a log on the ground near the pot on the other side where she is stirring.

"Go sit there. You need to have this soup. Get your strength back so you can leave this island during the dark moon," Medusa says.

Alan slowly walks toward a log, focusing his limited vision on Medusa to make certain there are no sudden or unexpected moves. He sits down carefully and winces as the pain from his abdomen reminds him of the recent battle.

Medusa grabs a bowl-like object, made of the island's leaves, puts the soup in and walks toward Alan. He can hear the hissing of the snakes as she gets closer.

She puts out her hand with the soup and says, "Here, eat this."

"Thank you," Alan says with a face of amazement.

"I don't mean to sound ungrateful," Alan starts to say.

"Then DON'T BE!" Medusa jumps in.

Alan holds up his hands with the soup on his lap.

"Ok, but why did you save me, sew me up?"

"Because you helped me so now we're even!" Medusa says.

She continues, "Didn't you come to this island to kill me like all the others?"

"Not exactly. I needed your help."

"What help? What could I possibly do for you!?"

There is a pause in the conversation. Alan remembers that if he were to cut Medusa, she may not survive and doesn't want to anger the creature.

"I was looking for a plant to cure my condition. My father told me it might be here."

"You lie!" Medusa says hastily as she grabs her sword next to the log.

She points the sword directly at Alan's throat, "You're not here for a plant!"

"Yes, yes I am. My father also said you may be able to help. He did spare you a long time ago, did he not?"

"I know of no such plant, but you can try to find it," Medusa says more calmly as she lays down her sword.

Hunger pangs set in Alan as he tries the soup that was prepared for him. He holds the bowl up to face and takes a sip. He winces and says, "What's in this?"

"I don't think you want to know. You'll get used to it. Eat up."

Alan takes in more soup. He coughs many times from the bad taste, but manages to finish off the soup.

"Go back to the hut and rest. The Traveler comes in ten days." Medusa says.

Alan decides not to argue with the creature that has helped him, rather than kill him. He heads back to the hut and lies down. Alan then quickly falls asleep from the effects of the soup and exhaustion of the journey and battle.

CHAPTER 12

It's the next day and Alan awakens after his long slumber. His wounds continue to heal as he is experiencing less pain. Alan comes out of the hut and looks around at his surroundings, but Medusa is not seen.

He turns back into the hut and sees the shadow of his knife on the ground. He leans down and picks it up and wonders what his next move will be. He turns toward the hut's door and standing in his face is Medusa.

"What are you planning to do with that knife?" Medusa asks.

Alan quickly responds.

"I'm planning to go out into the trees and find that plant that my father described to me."

Medusa hands him another bowl of the foul-tasting soup.

"Make sure you eat this before you go."

Alan starts to eat the meal that was prepared for him. He still tries to hold back the cough as he takes in the bad-tasting breakfast. Alan is also relieved that Medusa did not ask him what type of plant he was seeking.

Alan quickly finishes his bowl, sets it down and turns to Medusa, "Thank you. I'm feeling better. I'm going to see if I can find what I'm looking for."

"You do that. Be back before sunset. You don't have your helmet to protect you anymore."

Alan carefully strides away as he still feels the discomfort of his wounds. He eventually walks by the many statues of stone and stops for a second to examine one. By using his hands, Alan notices that the facial features of the army of stoned men he battled with Medusa do not resemble human features. He is puzzled, but decides to head out to his old sanctuary and figure out his next move.

Alan explores the rest of the island. He's facing his new dilemma. "I need Medusa's blood to survive, but there's a good chance she'll die."

This new dilemma was something Alan did not expect. The young man journeys around the island wondering about Medusa's fate. Alan thinks to himself, "The writings and stories about Medusa are wrong. So what am I supposed to do now?"

After many hours of exploring and thinking, the sun in this tropical land is slowly sinking in the sky. It was time for Alan to return to Medusa's hut.

The creature comes up from behind him and asks, "Did you find what you were looking for?"

Alan, briefly startled, says "No, I'm afraid not. I'm going to try again tomorrow."

"It's time to eat again," Medusa says.

"How did you get used to such a grotesque meal?" Alan asks as he's trying to fight the soup down.

"It's either that or die," Medusa replies.

"Well, I may have something a little better," Alan says.

He goes back to the hut and brings out his backpack. He sets it on the ground, unzips the top.

Medusa jumps back in defense and grabs her sword.

"Whoa, whoa, wait a minute. It's just a zipper," Alan says.

"What is this zipper?" Medusa asks.

"It holds my stuff together, so it doesn't fall out of the bag. I'll show it to you."

Alan starts to zip and unzip the backpack as if he was playing a game. Medusa now seems slightly intrigued. He reaches into the backpack and pulls out a candy bar.

"This is candy," Alan says as he points to the candy bar made of chocolate and caramel.

He pulls apart the wrapper, and takes a small bite. He looks over to Medusa, "Um, good! Here, have some."

Alan tosses the candy bar to Medusa. The creature appears curious about this object of food. The snakes on her head are trying to bite at the candy and Medusa uses her hand to swat them back. She slowly takes a small bite. Alan can only see the shadowy figure move her face as she chews. Medusa then crams the rest of the candy bar into her mouth and chews fast.

"I guess you like that," Alan says.

"Yes."

"I have more."

Alan puts his face almost into the backpack.

"I've got more chocolate, dried fruit, some nuts."

"Stop. I don't want more!" Medusa says.

The conversation abruptly ends. Medusa walks away from her camp. Alan watches Medusa as she fades from his view as day turns to night. He picks up the backpack and begins to head toward the hut. Alan stops for a second, reaches into the backpack and finds another chocolate candy bar that the creature seemed to like. He places it on the log on which she was sitting and heads into the hut.

CHAPTER 13

The next morning, Alan awakes and peeks out of the hut and sees Medusa's shadow next to the fire. He slowly comes out and heads toward the log where she is sitting.

"May I sit?"

"You may. I ate the candy bar."

"Glad you liked it," Alan says.

He looks toward Medusa and says, "Are those things going to bite me?"

"Not unless I instruct them to, and I just might."

Alan sits down on the same log as Medusa. Staring at the fire and tells her, "I can only see shadows. Never the blue sky of the day or the stars at night."

"And yet you can fight."

"My mother tells me I have good instincts. A gift from the gods she tells me."

"Your mother is Andromeda," Medusa says.

"Yes. My father Perry, Perseus, told me the story of how you turned the giant creature to stone and saved her. But the story says he killed you. Why the secret?"

"Because that was the agreement we made. I help your father and he tells the world I was killed. This way, no more attacks. Until yesterday! Thanks to you."

"Thanks to me?" Alan asks.

"Yes. All of the gods know I'm alive since you came to the island."

"So, the ones who didn't know about the agreement sent a small army after you?"

"Yes, and they're going to keep coming," says Medusa with an angered voice.

Alan now realizes why stoned figures he and Medusa once fought were not human.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know. Do you know which one of the gods are sending these armies?" Alan asks.

"Probably Poseidon."

"Medusa, what happened to you?"

"You know what happened, just read your precious stories!"

"No, I want to hear it from you. Please tell me what really happened."

Medusa pauses, gazes over to Alan.

"I was a young and beautiful girl a long time ago. This is what happens when you cross the Great God of Athena."

Medusa, for the first time since her transformation from a young, beautiful woman, is having a deep conversation with another person, a feeling now unfamiliar to the creature of the island. She pauses again, but decides to continue.

"I served under Athena. Granted her every wish and command. I was supposed to marry one day, but ended up like this."

Alan delicately says, "I read that Poseidon tried to attack you in Athena's Temple."

"He tried, but I held him off. I refused his love. Poseidon was furious, he was screaming, ranting about control and got Athena to believe that I disrespected her while I was in her temple. That's when Athena turned me into the monster that you see with your shadows. She condemned me to this island for eternity."

"Wow," Alan says. "I don't know what to say. This isn't right."

"It doesn't matter if it's right anymore. This is my fate. This is the monster you see."

"I don't see a monster," Alan says. "I see that terrified young girl trying to survive."

"Don't say that! I do not need your pity!"

"Fair enough. You said that Poseidon was ranting about control. Do you remember what he said?"

"I'll never forget that day. Poseidon said that by refusing his love, I'll never have the ability to control him or anyone else."

"This doesn't make sense. Why would the God of the Sea be so concerned about you controlling him?"

"I do not know. Poseidon always had a temper. Never made sense."

"I'm sorry Medusa, but was there something out of the ordinary about that night?"

Medusa stops for a second, "Not that night, but the one before. We were all told by Athena to stay inside and don't go out into the darkness."

"Did you go outside?"

"No, but when I thought everyone was asleep, I just looked through the blanket in our room covering the window to the outside."

"You must have seen something."

"All I remember is the blood moon. I've seen it before, but didn't understand why we couldn't look at this one."

Alan says with some excitement in his voice, "there has to be something to this. You saw something you weren't supposed to see. That's how this got started."

"Enough! I don't wish to discuss this further!"

Medusa gets up and walks away. Alan continues to sit and tries to think about Medusa's story. After a few minutes, he decides to give Medusa a little time and ventures around the island again.

Alan feels his purpose to come to Medusa's island has changed. He no longer desires to kill this creature to preserve his life. But, not getting Medusa's fresh blood will end his. Alan wonders more about the night of the red moon. Alan returns at the end of the day and both he and Medusa retire for the night.

CHAPTER 14

It's a new morning on Medusa's island. Alan wakes and gathers wood for the fire. He is fascinated by this creature who seems to be different than what history and other stories have described. Alan's curiosity keeps him close by, just in case other armies invade the island.

Alan holds the wood in his arms as he heads toward the fire. The shadow of Medusa suddenly jumps in front of him. He is startled by the figure and the numerous snakes moving atop her head.

"Just put the wood over there," as Medusa points toward a small pile of wood sticks.

Alan walks over and carefully drops the logs in the pile.

"So, tell me why?" Medusa asks abruptly.

"I thought you would need more wood and wanted to help out," Alan replies.

"No. Why are you still here?" Medusa demands.

Alan shakes his head.

"I don't know. Feels safer here and I sort of like the company."

"You're telling me you want to be close to a monster? I could kill you at any time."

"Well, I live with my sister who acts like a monster, so I've got a little experience."

Medusa's expression doesn't change, but says, "Fine. Just make sure you don't get in my way."

Alan then sees Medusa walk back toward the hut. Days pass and the tensions between Medusa and Alan disappear. There are occasional and generally brief conversations between them.

On the third day before the dark night, Medusa and Alan's conversations start to become more personal.

"I bet your girlfriend will be happy to see you when you go home," Medusa says.

"No girlfriend for me. Just been too busy at the jewelry store and my studies."

"What is a jewelry store?"

"It's a place where I work to make things out of stones and metal."

Alan pulls a pendant out of his bag that his mother gave him for the journey.

"See, I made this for my mom."

"Why don't you make these pendants for girls?"

Alan sighs, "Just not very good around girls, I guess."

"Haven't you tried? You talk to me, why not others?" Medusa asks.

"Just didn't meet the right one."

Alan is starting to feel a little threatened and says, "And, I do talk to other women. I have to since I work at a store. Everyone is trying to fix me up on dates almost on a daily basis."

Wondering what a store is, Medusa is silent, but vaguely shows a sign of amusement.

CHAPTER 15

The next day, Alan is aware that there is only one day left before the dark night and the Traveler will be waiting for him.

On that morning, Medusa is quiet. Alan tries to ask about the fire or food supplies, but Medusa does not acknowledge his questions.

The afternoon arrives, and Alan is sitting on the log going through his backpack. Medusa walks by, again not recognizing his presence.

"Wait," Alan says as she walks by.

"Why won't you talk to me?" Alan asks.

Medusa turns around.

"Why do I need a reason to talk to you!?"

Alan replies, "Well, something is wrong. Tell me."

"I don't have to answer to you! Start getting your things together, you'll have to leave soon."

"So that's it. You think I'm leaving. We'll maybe I won't."

Medusa seems visibly angered by his comment.

"What!? You can't stay here. Go home Alan. Go back to your world."

"My world is darkness and shadows. Time for me is running out."

Just then, Alan grabs his head and starts to collapse from another spell.

Medusa quickly reaches out and grabs him to keep him from falling to the ground. Alan is startled as he can feel the scaly skin of Medusa. He lets her help him to the log.

After a moment, Alan says, "thanks, I'm fine. It'll pass."

"You see why you need to go. Where's the plant you needed? Did you find it?" Medusa asks.

"No. I'm afraid it's not here."

"Then, I don't see any reason for you to stay," Medusa says.

"I can think of one," Alan replies softly.

Medusa sits down, next to Alan. The snakes are moving on her head, but don't come close to Alan.

"I am a monster. Look at all of the men I've killed and turned to stone. I don't want you here. You are healed, and I have paid my debt to you," Medusa says.

"You say you don't want me here, but you don't act like it," Alan says.

"I'm not going to say this again!"

Just then, out of impulse, Alan quickly moves in and kisses the beast. This lasts several seconds. Medusa is stunned and then angered. She pushes Alan away and grabs her sword.

"You had your chance, boy!"

Then, Medusa drops her sword. Her body starts to tremble. Alan can only see the shakiness of the shadowy figure. Medusa lets out a mighty scream and then collapses to the ground.

Alan tries to scramble to Medusa. A bright and blinding light surrounds the creature and holds Alan back. After a few moments, the light fades and then is gone. Alan cautiously heads toward Medusa, wondering if she was still alive.

Alan gets closer and notices that the shadowy figure is different. There are no snakes on her head. She seems a little smaller. He slowly reaches over to barely touch her arm. Medusa's arm does not have scales, but soft skin.

Alan now sees the shadow of a young woman, still unconscious. He shakes her arm.

"Medusa, Medusa, wake up!"

The woman coughs and slowly awakens. She takes a deep breath as if she had been holding it for several minutes. Medusa's eyes are focusing on the young man who has been on her island for nearly two weeks. She looks down and discovers her body has changed.

"Oh, oh my! I'm not a monster!" Medusa says as her hands touch her face.

Tears start rolling down the woman's face. Alan is staring in complete shock. The creature that cared for him has now changed into a beautiful young woman.

Medusa quickly moves about and runs to the beach. She drops to her knees and peers into the water to see her reflection. Crying, she says, "I thought I would never see my face again."

Medusa stands up, walks back toward Alan. She stands silently in front of him. Alan stands up too, but is uncertain of what has happened or what is about to happen.

Medusa comes face to face with Alan and puts her arms around him and hugs him as tight as she can. Alan is startled, but slowly wraps his arms around a now beautiful Medusa. The creature's spell has been broken.

Medusa pulls away from Alan, but kisses him intensely. He decides not to resist and now enjoys the moment and the new Medusa.

"I can't believe you saved me, Alan."

"Wow, I thought this only happened in Disney movies."

"What?" Medusa asks.

"Nothing," Alan replies.

Medusa tries to compose herself. She looks at Alan as she wipes the tears from her face.

Alan is smiling at her and says, "You're a beautiful woman, Medusa."

"How can you see me, you said all you saw were just shadows."

"I wasn't talking about the outside."

"Alan, I'm sorry. What about you? What about that plant? We need to find it."

"Hold on Medusa," Alan says.

"No, you said that time is running out. You're dying, aren't you? Is this why you came to this island? Were you trying to kill me?" she says in a solemn voice.

"No. As the son of Perseus, I have this condition as written by the ancient texts."

Alan turns away from Medusa.

"I was supposed to get a sample of fresh blood from you. I was told that it will cure me."

Medusa grabs Alan by the shoulder, turns him around. Then she grabs the knife, cuts her hand and puts the blood from her hand to his lips.

"What are you doing?" Alan asks abruptly.

"I am giving you my blood, so you can live."

Alan and Medusa are still, practically immovable, waiting for something to happen. After a few moments, Alan grabs his head once again and has to sit down.

"I don't understand," Medusa says.

"I think I needed the blood of the creature Medusa," Alan says.

"Then why didn't you tell me sooner? I could have saved you!"

"Because the texts say that if your skin was cut, you could bleed out and die. I couldn't ask that of you. You've been through too much."

"You mean you were going to sacrifice yourself to let the monster live."

Alan looks at Medusa sheepishly.

"Yeah."

Medusa comes over and kisses Alan again, more passionately than the previous kiss.

She steps back, "My goodness, that means you're going to die."

Alan says, "I've been thinking, there may be another way."

Alan looks directly at Medusa's beautiful face.

"You told me that you saw something that night before Athena turned you into that creature. That may explain Poseidon's rage and his statement of control. When I was a child, my mother told me a story of an amulet that can control the gods. I just thought it was another story, but it seems to make sense."

"There is another way," Medusa says.

"What's that?"

"I go to Athena's Temple and have her turn me back. I can then give you the blood you need so you can live."

"No!" Alan bursts out.

"That's not going to happen. We're going to figure a way out of this. But, we're going to have to get off the island."

"You're going to take me to your world?"

"Oh yeah."

Alan grabs Medusa by the shoulders.

"I think the amulet is real. It has to be. We just have to find it. We've got to try."

"Alright, but what if it doesn't work?"

"It will work, Medusa."

Alan grabs Medusa's hand and walk along the shore to the place on the beach where the Traveler is expected to be waiting the following night. As both approach the water, Alan hears the churning of water.

"Oh no," Medusa says.

Alan can make out the shadows of violent waves near the shore.

"Poseidon," Medusa says. "He knows I'm alive and he's making sure I don't leave this island."

Alan says to himself, "we'll see about that."

Both Alan and Medusa, holding hands, walk back to her camp.

After arriving, Medusa and Alan separate. She is standing next to the hut while Alan is pacing up down the camp.

"You're going to wear out the sand, Alan," Medusa finally says.

Alan looks back at her. "My father took you off this island to save my mom, how did he do that?"

"It was a winged horse. He called it Pegasus, I believe," she says.

Alan rushes to his backpack, tripping over branches in the camp. He hastily unzips it and pulls out the device that Brian gave him before he left.

"What's that, Alan?"

"This is a device that my buddy Brian gave me. He told me that it may be able to send a short message to my world."

"A very unusual thing you call a device. How short a message?" she asks.

"Maybe a word. But if I send Pegasus, then maybe they'll send him to us. It's a long shot, but we have to try."

Medusa nods and Alan feels with his fingers and enters Pegasus and sends off the message.

"I need this to work," Alan thinks to himself.

CHAPTER 16

Back at the home of Alan's family, a short time later, Brian runs up to their door and begins banging furiously.

"I got a message from Alan!" he says excitedly.

The door flings open with Perry on the other side. Sally comes up behind him.

"You heard from him?" Perry says.

"Yes, he's alive."

"Did he get the cure?" Sally asks.

"I don't know. But he sent only a word, 'Pegasus,'" Brian says.

Just then, Autumn comes down the stairs.

"Is Alan back, is he ok?"

Perry looks to Sally and Brian.

"I think I know what he wants. Let's get into the car. We're going to take a drive," Perry says.

Autumn jumps in, "I'm coming too."

Sally says, "You get to the car, I have to get something, and I'll be right behind you."

"Hurry mom, don't take all day," Autumn says.

Autumn, Perry and Brian get into the 4-seated sedan. A minute later, Sally rushes out and gets into the vehicle. Perry, behind the wheel, starts up the car and drives, heading out of the city. Once in a rural area, Perry drives everyone to a small farm with a barn. The car stops, and Perry, Sally, Brian and Autumn step out and look around.

"Is this ours? Autumn asks.

Sally says, "It's been in the family for a long time, honey. We've had to keep it secret. Let's go to the barn and you'll see why."

Perry unlocks the barn door and opens it. Brian and Autumn's eyes widen to see a white horse feeding on hay. Sally walks up to the animal and strokes the side of the horse's head.

"There, there, that's a good boy," she says.

The large, beautiful white horse suddenly spreads its wings.

Perry looks to Brian and Autumn and says, "This is what Alan was talking about. This is Pegasus."

Autumn and Brian's eyes are wide.

Brian says, "Wow. Does this horse do what I think it does?"

"What are you talking about geek," Autumn exclaims.

Perry says, "Yes, Brian, Pegasus can fly to Medusa's Island. He knows exactly how to get there."

Autumn steps up to her father, "You mean we have a flying horse and you didn't tell me?"

Sally says, "That's right, honey. Having you or anyone else know about Pegasus is too risky. There are many who would take or hurt Pegasus. Now we have to use him to get Alan."

Perry says, "We have a problem. Someone has to ride Pegasus to the island. I can get close, but I will have to jump off into the water before he lands. Don't forget, I'm not allowed to step foot on the island again. That was the agreement."

"What agreement?" Brian asks.

"It's complicated," Sally says.

"Ok, I'll go," Brian says.

Perry looks at Sally.

"I don't think we have a choice," Perry says.

"How about me? Why let the geek do this?" Autumn asks.

"No, Autumn. Brian should go."

The horse is pulled out of the barn and stretches out his wings again. The sight of the horse with wings halts Brian and Autumn in their tracks.

"Whoa! That's amazing," Brian says.

"Why don't you get on the horse to let him get used to you. Then tonight, you'll ride off. We can't have anyone seeing you or Pegasus."

Brian then tries to get on the horse. Pegasus starts bucking and whining. The animal clearly does not want Alan's friend to ride him. Brian quickly backs away.

"Let me try," Autumn says as she quickly jumps on the horse.

"Wait!" Perry says, but then notices the horse is not resisting Autumn.

"Pegasus knows that she's your daughter. You know I would go, but I'm banned from the island as well." Sally says.

"This is too dangerous for her. She's not old enough for this. We may lose Alan and I'm not going to lose her too," Perry says.

Autumn gets off the horse and steps close to her father.

"I can do this dad. I think this is what I was meant to do. You can trust me. Alan needs us, and we can't let him down."

Sally looks to Perry, "What choice do we have? She's right. Pegasus will take care of her."

"It's bad enough she makes the journey, but what happens on Medusa's island? Have you forgotten that there's a monster that turns people to stone?" Perry says.

"We have to trust our children," Sally says.

"Dad, I can do this. Alan is obviously ok or he wouldn't have sent that message. I'll be careful, I promise." Autumn says.

Perry reluctantly agrees, "Ok. We wait until tonight."

CHAPTER 17

Night arrives at the farm. An old truck pulls up. The group is startled at first, then they notice Julius comes out of the vehicle.

"Did I miss something?" Julius asks.

"You got my message," Perry says.

"What's going on?" Julius asks.

Perry explains the message and sequence of events that is leading Autumn to take Pegasus to Medusa's island.

Julius turns to Autumn. He has a jacket in his hand and puts it around Autumn.

"This should keep you warm on your journey Autumn. The night is clear, and Pegasus knows the way. You get there and take care of Alan."

"I will, Julius," Autumn says.

Autumn jumps on the horse. She situates herself on the winged animal.

"Wow, I can't believe I'm doing this and everyone else is letting me."

Perry walks up to the head of Pegasus and says, "Get my daughter to Medusa's island and bring both of them back."

"Be careful, honey, I love you," Sally says.

"Autumn, you can't send any messages. The device can only work once. And one more thing, try not to embarrass us?" Brian says.

"Don't worry geek. You've already done plenty of that. Bye you guys."

Just then, Pegasus spreads his wings, takes a short gallop, and flies into the night sky. Julius, Perry, Sally and Brian stare at the flying horse as he slowly disappears from view.

CHAPTER 18

The sun is now coming up on Medusa's island. The new Medusa and Alan are literally walking side-by-side, holding hands, as they head toward the beach.

"How did you sleep last night?" Medusa asks.

"Not very well. I kept wondering and hoping the message got through."

"Tonight, is the moonless night, or dark night. You have to go back with the Traveler."

"I've made my decision. If Poseidon is not going to allow you to pass, then I'll stay here."

"You can't Alan! You have to go back to your world and find that cure," Medusa says.

"No. I want to stay here with you. I'm not going to change my mind."

Medusa gets distracted and looks to the sky, "You may not have to."

Her voice gets noticeably excited, "I think it's Pegasus! Can you see his shadow in the sky?"

Alan looks up and spots the shadow of the winged horse.

"Yes, I can. But, I think someone is riding him. Can you see who it is?"

"It looks like a girl," Medusa replies.

"It can't be my mom as she is forbidden from the island. That can only mean one other person," Alan says. He then pauses and adds, "No way! That can't be Autumn. She hates to fly. We could barely get her on an airplane."

"What's an airplane?" asks Medusa.

"It's a..... never-mind. I'll tell you later," Alan responds.

Medusa and Alan stand on the beach and watch Pegasus approach and land with its passenger.

Autumn attempts to get off the horse, covering her eyes.

"Alan, I'm here. I can't see anything. Have you seen Medusa? Where is she? She's not turning me to stone!"

Alan walks to Autumn, helps her down from Pegasus, pulls her hands down from her face and hugs her. Autumn hugs back and tries to fight the tears of seeing her brother.

Alan backs away and steps aside, so she can see the full view of Medusa.

"Autumn, I would like you to meet Medusa."

Autumn quickly covers her eyes again. Alan pulls them down and says, "It's ok. Just look."

Autumn is amazed to see a beautiful young woman wearing white with slightly curly brown hair just past her shoulders. Alan's sister stares at her for a few seconds, before looking to examine her body to be certain she didn't change to stone.

Medusa walks toward Autumn, "It's great to meet you Autumn. Your brother has told me so much about you."

"I don't understand. I thought she was some kind of hideous monster." Autumn then looks to Medusa, "No offense."

Alan says to Autumn, "Stop. It's different now."

Medusa cuts into the conversation, "It's all right. Let's go toward camp. We have a lot to talk about."

Alan, Medusa and Autumn now head toward the camp after tying Pegasus to a nearby tree. On the way, Autumn literally stops in her tracks to see the numerous statues of stone.

"Did you do this? I mean, what happened?" Autumn asks.

"Autumn, I told you to stop." Alan says.

Medusa says, "It's fine. Yes, Autumn. I turned these men to stone. Some of them were not even human. They were sent to kill me, so I didn't have any choice."

"Wow, there are a few people I'd like to turn to stone," Autumn says.

"Let's get back to camp before Autumn says any more stupid things," Alan says.

Medusa has a small smile on her face as they walk toward the hut in her camp. The three approach the log which has served as a sitting area. They sit down, and Autumn looks around to comprehend the new environment.

"Are you ok?" Medusa asks Autumn.

"Yeah, so what happened? You're a beautiful woman. Is this some sort of shape-shifting?"

"No, I'm afraid not," Medusa replies with a chuckle.

"Your brother, Alan, saved me. I was that hideous creature you described, but your brother saw past that. He kissed me and broke Athena's curse. What you see is how I used to look."

"What? You kissed her?" Autumn says as she looks to Alan.

"We couldn't get him to go on a date. We thought there was something wrong with him," Autumn says.

"Autumn, I swear," Alan says to her.

"Wait, if Medusa is cured, you're cured too, right?" Autumn says to Alan.

Alan replies, "No. I needed the blood of the creature Medusa."

Autumn has a look of horror on her face. "But, that means..."

Alan interrupts her sentence, "Maybe not. That's why we need to get Medusa back to our world. I think she saw something during the night of the blood moon before Athena changed her and banished Medusa to the island. There may be an amulet that can somehow control the gods. So, we need to find the amulet and use it to get Athena to cure my disease."

Autumn shakes her head, "Ok, then let's go."

Alan says, "Not until tonight. The all-mighty god Poseidon won't let Medusa leave this island. But, thanks to mom, we have the magical helmet. Medusa will ride back with you and I'll go with the traveler. If Poseidon doesn't see

her, then he'll think we left Medusa behind. At least I hope that's what he thinks."

Autumn looks to Medusa, "Ok, I'm in!"

CHAPTER 19

Day is now turning to night on Medusa's island. Medusa has the helmet in her hand. Before she puts it on, she kisses Alan and then whispers in his ear, "I love you, Alan. I promise to help make you well."

Alan is almost taken back and kisses her back, a little more passionately.

"I'm standing here," Autumn says.

Medusa pulls back and smiles at Autumn.

"Your brother is special, Autumn."

"Did you hear that, sis?" Alan says sarcastically.

Autumn looks at Medusa, "Sure. He thinks he's special anyway."

Medusa now puts the helmet on and disappears.

Autumn says, "that is so cool."

"Since the helmet can only work one time and we've all worn it, I guess you'll be the last one to use it, Autumn. Hopefully, you're never have to," Alan says.

"That is so cool. I'm going to wait until the perfect time. Right in front of all my friends."

Medusa's voice comes out, "Autumn, this helmet requires great responsibility. Don't forget that."

"I'm just kidding, guys," Autumn says.

It is now dark and the night of the black moon. The fog is rolling into the beach. Alan sees the shadow of the Traveler coming to take him back to his world. Alan looks to his sister.

"Ok. The waters are calm. So far so good. Wait a little while, then take off. I'll see you back at shore."

Alan slowly boards the old boat that originally brought him to the island. He's careful not to touch the Traveler as he feels his way onto the vessel. Once Alan is on board, the Traveler looks the other way and begins to paddle. The old boat slowly disappears into the fog.

Autumn and Medusa wait for Alan to get far away from the island. Time goes by and Autumn is silent as they don't want Poseidon to know that there is another passenger on Pegasus.

Autumn now feels it's time to head back. She moves the rope from the tree that was attached to the winged horse. She boards the animal, stroking the face. Autumn can then feel Medusa jump on behind her. Pegasus doesn't resist the other passenger. Autumn gives the winged horse the signal to fly back.

At the dock, Julius, Perry, Sally and Brian are anxiously awaiting Alan's return. They know it's the moonless night and he must come back.

Alan is more anxious on this trip than the first one. He keeps looking at the shadows of the waves on the ocean. He wonders if the mighty god Poseidon has figured out his plan. It was the longest ride of his life.

"Come on, this is taking too long," Brian says.

"It's going to be fine, Brian. Alan's coming back." Sally says.

"How can you be so sure?" Perry says.

"Because I know my son and so do you."

"I know. There's just so many thoughts going through my head," Perry says.

Julius is standing with the others and notices a change in the fog.

"Look, I think that's Alan!" Sally says.

"You are right Sally. He's coming!" Julius replies.

The old boat is coming through the fog. Alan can be seen by the others and they can see the sigh of relief on his face. Alan quickly jumps off the boat and the Traveler turns back into the fog.

Alan walks onto the beach. His mother, Sally, runs over and embraces him.

"I knew you would come back." Then she pauses, "Where's your sister? We sent her to you."

"It's ok, mom. She's fine. She's riding back with Pegasus to the barn. We need to get there right away. By the way, how many more secrets to you have?"

Just then, Alan starts to stagger.

Perry grabs him and says, "You didn't get your blood, did you?"

"No, but there may be another way. I'll explain when we get to the barn."

"Son, I need to know now."

Julius says, "Let's get to the barn. I have a feeling that all will be revealed when we get there."

He looks to Alan, "Am I right, Alan?"

"Yes, Julius, nothing ever gets by you. Come on, let's go," Alan says.

All get into Perry's car, except Julius, who follows them in his old truck.

Alan pats Brian on the shoulder in the car as he's sitting next to him.

"Your device, or whatever you call it, worked great, Brian. Good job!" Alan says.

"Yes, Brian. Perry and I are grateful to you," Sally says.

"Not a problem. Glad to help. So, what happened, man?" Brian asks.

Alan tells him of his arrival and the stone statues on Medusa's island. He fills them in the details of looking for Medusa and the great battle he fought.

"You fought those soldiers? Are you hurt?" Sally asks in a slight panicked tone.

"I'm fine, mom. They were taken care of."

"That's good, son, but did you find Medusa?" Perry asks.

"I found Medusa, but there's so much more. I'll explain when we arrive at the barn."

CHAPTER 20

The car drives up to the barn. Julius follows close behind. The vehicles stop, but keep their lights on. They see Pegasus, but no rider. All get out of the vehicles and walk toward the winged horse. There's no sign of Autumn. Perry and Sally rush to the winged horse.

"Where's Autumn?" Sally asks.

"Mom...dad!"

Autumn's voice is heard from around the barn. She comes running from the side and embraces her mother. Perry joins in the hug. Brian tries to hug the group too, but Autumn says,

"Hey geek, I don't remember asking you, but it's ok, this time."

Julius walks toward the group and stops abruptly.

"Well I'll be..." he says.

He now notices the young woman in white slowly walking toward the group. The rest of the family looks toward her.

"Who is this?" Perry asks.

"Dad, it's Medusa, and she's not a monster!" Autumn says with excitement.

"I can see that," Perry says after a few seconds.

"How's this possible?" Sally asks.

Alan walks over to Medusa and grabs her hand.

Brian is standing in shock and drops his phone trying to comprehend what he sees. He reaches down to pick it up and puts it into his pocket.

Autumn looks at her parents, "Look at them, guys, and guess what, they're in love!"

Medusa and Alan almost have a look of shy embarrassment as the eyes of his parents widen with disbelief.

Julius looks to Perry and Sally and says, "Well, this explains a few things."

"What are you talking about, Julius," Perry asks.

"Alan obviously broke the spell on Medusa."

Medusa says, "Yes, he did. I'm so grateful."

She then lets go of Alan's hand and walks to Perry.

"Thank you, Perseus. Thank you for sparing my life. And this must be Andromeda."

"Yes, Medusa. I guess I owe you a debt of gratitude as well for turning that giant creature to stone. Oh, and you can call me Sally."

Perry jumps in and says, "I'm a bit shocked by all of this, but let's get back to the house so we can talk more."

"House? What's a house?" Medusa asks.

"More explaining to do," Alan says.

All agree as Perry puts Pegasus into the barn, makes certain the horse has food and water and then locks up.

"This is a strange carriage. What pulls it?"

"There's so much of this world to show you and it's so cool," Autumn says.

Brian, Autumn and Julius ride in the one vehicle, while Perry, Sally, Alan and Medusa are in the other.

Medusa is clearly fascinated by the vehicle she is sitting in. As she holds Alan's hand, she looks through the window to see the lights of the city and other cars on the road.

She begins to feel overwhelmed and says, "There's so much to your world. I've never seen or heard about anything like this."

"It's going to be ok. I'll help you get acquainted. You'll be fine." Alan assures Medusa.

The rest of the ride home, Perry and Sally say little. They do look at each other several times with wonder and concern. Perry wonders if he can trust Medusa.

CHAPTER 21

It's the late evening and everyone is now at the home of Perry and Sally.

"This is your home? You live in this?" Medusa asks.

Alan steps over to her.

"Yes, and at least for now, it's your home too."

Sally says to Medusa, "Yes dear, you're welcome here for as long as you need."

"Thank you so much, you are all very kind to me," Medusa says.

Autumn runs to Medusa, "Hey, you have to check out the TV. We've got hot water. You get hungry, just go to the refrigerator."

"Ok, Autumn, let's not overwhelm her too much," Perry says.

"We need to come up with a plan for Alan, but it can wait until tomorrow," Julius says.

Medusa keeps looking around, trying to figure out the new environment she's in.

Perry looks to Alan and Medusa, "So let me get this straight. You looked directly at Medusa in her previous form and didn't turn to stone. You fought alongside her, got injured and then she nurses you back to health. Then you kissed her?"

"Yes, Perry. Your son saw past the curse of Athena and broke the spell," Medusa says.

Julius jumps into the conversation, "I told you Perry that your son was special."

Perry looks over at Julius, "Do the ancient texts say anything about this?"

"They do talk about Athena's son in phrases that I'm looking into, but I did find something about the amulet. I thought it was just legend. I'm not so sure now," Julius says.

"We have to find that amulet to save Alan," Sally says.

"It's getting late and we need to get started to find the amulet first thing tomorrow. Time is getting short," Julius says.

After the discussion, the family and Julius try to let Medusa get used to her new surroundings.

As it gets later into the night, all agree it's time for sleep. Sally directs Medusa to her room and shows her the bed. Julius leaves the house.

"Here you go, Medusa. There are some clothes that should fit you in the closet. Sleep tight."

"I get to sleep on this?" she says.

Medusa goes to the bed and pushes on it. "It's so soft. I've never felt anything like this."

"You'll like it. The restroom also is down the hall."

"So much to learn in your world," Medusa says.

"And you will. See you tomorrow."

"Sally, I didn't know that Alan needed the creature's blood for his cure. I would have gladly given it to him."

"I know, Medusa," Sally says as she closes the bedroom door.

CHAPTER 22

The night passes to morning. Medusa wakes up, gets dressed and walks down to the living room."

Alan walks down to join the rest of the family.

Medusa tugs on Alan for his attention. He looks over and walks away from the family for a private conversation.

"Is your father alright with me being here?" Medusa asks.

"Of course, why do you ask?"

"He seems very upset. He keeps looking at the big rectangle with pictures and raises his voice."

"Oh, you mean the TV," Alan says.

"A tv? I see a group of men on this magical device with strange hats running on grass with lines."

"Yeah. He's watching a football game. His team is losing again."

"So, this is a game. What happens if his team loses? Are they punished?"

"No, that's all it is, just a game. Dad thinks it's a monumental catastrophe if his team doesn't win."

"I do not understand this world. Will your father be all right?" she says.

"Don't worry. He'll be fine. He's used to it."

Julius comes to the house later in the day. The entire family is instructed to meet in the living room. Julius sits next to Alan who is sitting next to Medusa. He looks across the small coffee table and directly at Perry and Sally.

Sally says to Alan, "Sweetie, there's one more thing we have to tell you. Please understand, you were never to know any of this. It was the wish of the gods."

Alan sits back, trying to brace himself. Medusa grabs his hand and holds tight as she sits on his other side. The rest of the group sits in silence and waits for Sally.

"Alan, there's no easy way to say this, so here it is. You are my son, but I'm not your biological mother."

Alan now has another shocked look on his face. His heart starts to beat faster.

"What do you mean you're not my biological mother. Then who is? What about dad?"

Sally continues, "Alan, he is your father, but your mother is Athena."

A deafening silence encompasses the room.

Alan says to his parents, "More secrets. Anything else I should know."

"Don't blame them, Alan. They are following the wishes of the gods," Medusa says.

Alan looks at Medusa, "I'm sorry, I didn't know I was the son of that monster who cursed and transformed you."

"It's alright," as Medusa's voice begins to show anger.

Alan looks to his father, "Is this true?"

"Yes, Alan, I'm afraid it is. Before Andromeda, your mother, I fell in love with Athena. She got pregnant and insisted that the gods had to maintain balance and she gave you up. I went on my journey to try to forget. That's when I met your mother. I was supposed to kill Medusa to save her. Instead, Medusa agreed to help me in exchange for her life. It was agreed that your mom and I would raise you, but you were not ever supposed to know of this."

"This is unbelievable! Secret after secret. I can't take any more of this!" Alan exclaims.

Medusa squeezes Alan's hand tighter.

"Alan, the gods are very powerful. Your parents had to agree to this in order for you and your family to live peacefully."

Alan says, "But then I got sick."

Sally says, "You did and that changed everything."

"So why didn't you just go to Athena and have her fix me? She's supposedly my biological mother," Alan says.

"We tried," Julius says. "A long time ago, Athena told me of this ancient prophecy. To get well, she said you had to prove yourself worthy. She was the one who told me of Medusa's blood."

"Athena will do anything to see me dead. If you ask me, she's the real monster," Medusa says.

"Alan, we're sorry, but we had to honor the agreement with the gods to keep you. If we told you all of this, son, we could have lost you," Perry says.

"So, what do we do now?" Autumn asks.

Sally says, "There's only one thing to do. We go to Athena. We ask her to cure our son."

"Just like that. You think Athena will just snap her fingers and make him better," Perry says.

"We have to try," Sally says.

"Yeah, let's go talk to Athena. I have a few things to say to her," Alan says.

"Alan, Medusa said that Athena is a powerful god. She could strike us all down and even change her back. You have to be very careful when you're dealing with her. When asking favors from the gods, there's always a price," Sally says.

"She's right Alan. I'm coming with you. I have to face her," Medusa says.

"We'll all go," Perry says.

"No, Perry," Julius says. "It has to be Alan and Medusa. They are the ones who need to confront her. You two leave tomorrow at dawn. No one else will be at her temple at that time of day."

All agree with the plan for the next day. Brian and Julius leave and go to their homes. Sally takes Medusa to the guest room.

"I can't remember the last time I slept on something like this bed. Thank you."

"Sleep well," Sally says.

CHAPTER 23

Sally comes out of the guest room. Autumn and Alan adjourn to their rooms. Sally and Perry eventually get into bed.

Perry whispers to Sally, "I came up with all kinds of scenarios on how this would play out, but this wasn't one of them."

"I know, and our son still isn't cured. Alan is also getting weaker. Do you think Athena will help?" Sally asks.

"I don't know. All of this seems to center around Medusa."

"We have to trust her, Perry."

"I saw the monster she was. I'm not so sure."

Sally says, "I don't think I can go to sleep."

"Just try. You're going to need your strength tomorrow," Perry says.

Their room goes quiet and Alan carefully walks down the hall toward Medusa's room. He slowly opens the guest room door and goes in.

"Are you asleep yet?" he asks as he walks over to her bed.

"No. Not yet," she replies in a somber tone.

"It's going to be ok. I promise," Alan says as he sits on her bedside.

"I know, but this is so overwhelming. Most of what I know is the island I lived on. I was constantly looking over my shoulder. I never thought I would ever end up with someone like you or in a place like this," Medusa says.

"It's different for me too. Try to get some sleep. We have a big day tomorrow," Alan says as he gets up and heads toward the bedroom door.

"I know. Alan, I love you and I can't imagine a life without you in it," Medusa says.

Alan stands at the door, "I love you too. See you tomorrow."

CHAPTER 24

The entire family has retired for the night. Sally still has trouble sleeping, but manages to doze off. A few hours later, still in the middle of the night, the floors of the household start to crack. It sounds as if someone is walking through the house. The crackling noise is now upstairs, passing all bedrooms, except the last one, where Medusa is sleeping. Her bedroom door slowly opens. Medusa starts to wake up as water is dripping onto the floor from an intruder who has entered the home.

A large burly and strong hand quickly moves toward Medusa's face and covers her nose and mouth. Medusa fully awakens and can't breathe. She looks directly at the face of a bearded and very muscular man with an evil look in his red eyes.

He quietly speaks to her as he cuts off her air, "I told you a long time ago that you would never control me or the rest of the gods. Now you will pay for rejecting the great Poseidon and not staying on the island!"

Medusa is struggling, but the strength of Poseidon is too much. Her eyes start to close from the lack of oxygen. The door to Medusa's room swings open. Sally is standing at the opening and screams, "Get away from her!"

Poseidon is startled and removes his hand from Medusa's face. She is gasping, but able to breathe.

"How dare you interfere with me! You too will pay the ultimate price," Poseidon says.

Sally reaches around and pulls up a glowing object and holds it in front of her toward Poseidon.

"Do you know what this is, great one?" Sally says.

"This is the amulet that all of you have been looking for. You back away from her and I won't use it."

"You're bluffing! I can kill all of you right now!" Poseidon says very angrily.

A calm Sally says, "Do you really want to take that chance? I'll bring you down right now!" Then, Sally takes a few steps toward him. Perry and Alan have now raced to the room and see the confrontation between Poseidon and Sally.

Poseidon growls and then decides to abandon his attack and disappears in a fog that forms on the other side of the bedroom. Alan rushes to Medusa, "Are you alright?"

"I'm ok," she says. "Thank you Sally. But where did you find the amulet?"

"This is one of our holiday ornaments, so I gave it a shot. I read that Poseidon is easily fooled, but not for very long," she says.

Perry says, "Yeah. He'll be back, which means we need to find the amulet as soon as possible. Sally, I need you to stay close to Alan and Medusa. This is not over."

"Well, at least we now know the thing exists," Alan says.

Autumn now joins the rest of the family. "What happened?"

"Poseidon came and tried to hurt Medusa," Alan says.

"What? Who's Poseidon?" Autumn asks.

"We'll explain it all tomorrow. We'll be fine for a while," Sally says.

The family has returned to their rooms after comforting Medusa. Sally decides to stay with her for the rest of the night.

CHAPTER 25

By early morning, all are awake and still shaken from the events of the previous night.

Julius arrives and notices the tense atmosphere.

"Did something happen that I don't know about?" he asks.

"Poseidon came last night and tried to kill Medusa," Perry says.

"That god is very powerful, how did you get him to leave?"

"A little holiday magic," Sally says as she grabs and holds up the ornament.

"Clever, Sally, but Poseidon will be back," Julius says.

Perry looks at Julius, "Alan will explain the rest of it, but we need to get Alan and Medusa to Athena's Temple."

"Agreed. You two need to get going," Julius says.

"We're all going," Autumn says.

"No, Just them. Athena may not respond with a crowd of people in her temple. I'll drive you two to the temple and wait in my truck," Julius says.

Alan asks, "So we don't need some kind of magical transportation to get to her temple?"

Julius says, "No, it's right up on the top of the hill, overlooking the city. It's just the way she wanted it."

On the way to the Temple, Alan explains to Julius the events of the previous night.

"That was good thinking by you mother, Alan," Julius says.

"Yeah," Alan replies.

"Alan, she is your mother. Maybe not your biological one, but she has cared and loved you since the day you came into this world."

"You're very lucky, Alan," Medusa says.

"I know, but all the secrets. It's just so difficult to wrap my head around all of it."

"Of course it is. We're dealing with the gods, who are very mysterious, but we're going to get through this," Julius says.

Julius drives Alan and Medusa up to Athena's Temple. He parks the truck and says, "There it is. Good luck to you both."

Medusa and Alan get out of the truck and slowly walk to the temple. Alan stumbles as his condition continues to worsen more quickly.

"I don't know if I can do this Alan. After what she did to me, I don't know how I'll react," Medusa says.

"You'll be fine. I'm here with you. Remember, she did this to me too."

Medusa briefly pauses her walk, shakes her head and fights back the tears.

"Alan, I can't."

"Yes, you can. Do you want to spend the rest of your life looking over your shoulder? If we don't stop this, then what happened last night is only the beginning."

"Ok, you're right," Medusa says as they both walk up to the steps of the temple. Medusa is holding on to Alan, so he doesn't fall.

CHAPTER 26

Both enter the temple that has open pillars and the inside is a grand, palatial space, the size of a large living room. Athena's statue, covering from the floor to almost as high as the ceiling, can be seen in the back of the Temple.

"Athena, show yourself," Alan yells.

There is no one that answers Alan's request.

Medusa tries, "Athena, remember me? It appears your spell was flawed. I'm not that monster anymore."

A woman with long, reddish hair walks around from behind the statue. She has the human appearance of someone close to middle-age. She's wearing a long, white dress.

Medusa sees her walking towards them and bows to the woman.

"The great Athena. Thank you for coming to us," Medusa says on her knees.

"What? Are you serious?" Alan says.

"You will bow before Athena young man!" Athena says in a powerful tone.

"Oh, you'll have to forgive me for standing.... mom," Alan says sarcastically.

"Well, well. It seems that you know the truth. And you obviously went to Medusa's island and broke my spell. The only way to do that is to kiss the monster. So, my son and Medusa are a couple, how sweet!" Athena says sarcastically.

Medusa stands up. "Great and powerful Athena, we need your help."

"Help you? I should send you back to your island."

"I don't think so," Alan says. "I broke your spell. She's been through enough."

"Your son is dying, Athena," Medusa says.

"Yes, and so he is. The ancient texts were correct after all," Athena says.

"What about the ancient texts?" Alan asks.

"They state that a descendant from the gods would perform a powerful act involving some kind of monster. However, they said nothing about a cure for this warrior."

"Please, Athena, help your son," Medusa pleads.

"Save your breath, Medusa. She's not interested. The great Athena won't even cure her dying son."

"I never said I wouldn't help you, but there will be a price. You know about the amulet that can control the gods. Find it and bring it to me," Athena says.

"What about Alan," Medusa asks.

"Once I have the amulet, I'll help you, Artemis," Athena says.

"Artemis?" he asks.

"Yes, that is your real name. I don't particularly care for the one you have now."

Alan takes a step toward Athena, "So that's it mom? Give you ultimate power. No way." He looks to Medusa, "It's not worth it. I can't unleash her will on the world."

Athena says to them sarcastically, "How noble. Did I forget to mention that if you die, the spell for Medusa is broken and she'll return to the hideous creature that she once was? I suggest you get started. Find and bring me the amulet and maybe you can live happily ever after. Artemis doesn't have much time, so as you humans say, 'tick-tock.'"

Alan pauses, "Alright you win. Just keep your friends, like Poseidon, away from us."

"I didn't have anything to do with Poseidon. It's not easy to control him. So you better watch your back."

Athena disappears behind the statue. Alan and Medusa walk down the steps toward a waiting Julius.

"How did it go?" he asks.

"Not good. She wants the amulet," Medusa says.

"So, it does exist after all. You know what will happen if she possesses the amulet," Julius says.

"We're not entirely certain, but we have an idea. There's no choice as we have to find the amulet. It is the only way Athena says she'll help me," Alan says.

"You sure about this, son?" Julius says.

"If I don't survive, Medusa changes back. I can't let that happen."

"No, you can't," Autumn says as she gets out of the back of Julius' truck.

"How on earth did you get in there without us seeing you?" Julius demands.

"It wasn't hard," Autumn says.

Julius looks at Autumn, "You know how dangerous this all is. You need to stay out of this. I warned you earlier that there could be consequences."

"He's my brother and I'm already involved, Julius. And by the way, Athena seems like a real....." Autumn says.

Alan interrupts, "Hey, let's finish this later. We've got an amulet to find."

Julius nods in agreement. "Very well. Call your friend Brian and tell him to meet us at the jewelry store. We need to get started."

CHAPTER 27

All get into the car and drive toward the store. Upon arriving, Brian is waiting for them.

"Guys, what's happening?" Brian asks.

"It's a long story. But we saw Athena, my biological mother, and she'll help me, but we have to find this amulet and don't have any idea on where to begin to look," Alan says to his friend.

"Wow. Athena's your mom? And she's not going to help her son? That's not cool," Brian says.

Sally and Perry join the rest of the group at the store.

Julius looks to Medusa, "I think this has something to do with what you saw that night of the blood moon. You mentioned that Poseidon said again that the gods will not be controlled. You obviously saw something. Do you remember anything about that night, Medusa?"

"I just looked out and saw a red moon. That was it. I went back to bed and the next day I was attacked by Poseidon."

Brian excitedly says, "Guys, maybe she saw more than the eclipse?"

"What?" Medusa asks.

Brian answers, "It's when the moon passes between the earth and sun and the sun casts a shadow of the earth on the moon. Uh, never-mind. I'll use another program and show all the blood moons within the last one-hundred years."

Perry says, "It's worth a try. It won't take long. I got my computer here and I'll go back and hook it up to your printer in the back Julius."

Julius says, "Fine, but don't break anything and don't mess with my settings. I barely get the thing to work as it is."

"Computer, printers, cars, so much of this world I'm unfamiliar with," Medusa says.

"Don't worry, Medusa, I've lived in this world my entire life and I still can't figure this stuff out," Julius says.

Julius looks over to Alan, who appears to be swaying. He rushes over and grabs him before he falls. Perry and Sally see Julius grab Alan and move toward their son to help.

"I'm okay," Alan says.

"No, you're not, Alan," Sally says.

Medusa and Autumn are showing very concerned looks on their faces.

"We're going to find that amulet, Alan. Athena will live up to her agreement and make you better," Medusa says.

"She had better," Autumn says.

A short time later, Brian comes rushing out of the back with some papers in his hand. He hits the side of the counter and drops the sheets on the floor.

"Good job, geek," Autumn says.

"Autumn, stop," Perry says.

Brian picks up the sheets and takes them to the counter and spreads them out. All are printed pictures of nighttime eclipses.

"Medusa, take a look. These are all the blood moons over the last hundred years. Do any of them look familiar?"

Medusa looks through the many pages of red moons.

"They all look the same. How am I supposed to see what I can barely remember?"

Alan grabs Medusa's hand, "It's okay. Take your time. Look again and try to remember that night."

Medusa looks down in frustration. "I just don't see any difference. I just can't remember."

Then, Medusa stops and gazes at one of the pictures.

"Wait. This one. The one with the four bright stars surrounding the blood moon. That's what I saw!"

Julius walks over and looks at the picture. "Hold on," as he briskly walks to the back of the store.

"Julius has that look, I think he's onto something," Sally says.

"Hey Autumn, what do you think of me now?" Brian asks.

"I'll let you know...geek!"

Julius comes back with what appears to be an old book. He sets it down and carefully opens it up. He scrolls through the pages and everyone anxiously looks on.

"What's he looking for?" Autumn asks.

"Be quiet Autumn, let Julius do what he does," Perry says.

Julius then puts his finger in the book.

"I think this is it," Julius says.

Everyone crowds over to Julius and around the counter to see what he's pointing to.

"I saw this when I was a boy. Look at this drawing. It shows the amulet! Four white stones, probably diamonds or even crystals, surrounding a large ruby stone."

Perry says, "Since we now know what the amulet looks like, the gods probably know what it looks like too."

"Is that all the book says about it?" Alan asks.

Julius responds, "Not quite. This amulet has great power. The one who possesses it can be overcome with evil intentions. The one that has it must be good and must be strong. Power over the gods. That may be too much for anyone."

Medusa says, "We have to try to find it and save Alan."

"And we have to save you as well," Alan says.

"Agreed," Julius says. "Once you locate it, the amulet requires great care. It's quite fragile."

"It's possible to break it?" Sally asks.

"According to this book, yes."

"But where do we find it? I haven't seen anything like that around here," Autumn says.

"The clues are probably within the picture," Julius says.

"I have an idea," Brian says. "I'm going back to my house and use my new program."

"The one that is supposed to find anything? Really?" Autumn says as she walks toward Brian.

"It had better work, geek."

"Won't be easy, I just need a little time," Brian says.

Perry looks to Brian, "Time is something we don't have much of. We need to find this amulet, like yesterday."

"I'm on it," Brian says as he rushes out the door and heads to his home with his laptop in hand.

CHAPTER 28

The rest of the family decides to go back to their home and wait for Brian's solution. Julius stays at the store to do more research on the amulet.

Back at their home, Alan is moving slower. He decides to lay down in his bed to replenish some of his lost energy.

"Autumn, can you help your brother up the stairs?" Sally asks.

"Sure mom. Let's go big brother. Your little sister is here to take care of you, but don't count on this when you're old," Autumn replies.

Perry says to Medusa and Sally, "I'm going to drive out to the barn and check on Pegasus. Call me the second you hear something."

"I will honey," Sally replies.

Medusa and Sally sit down on the living room couch. Medusa looks to Sally, "How ironic, here I am sitting with the woman I helped to save so long ago. Now, you're trying to save me and your son."

"It's funny how life works, especially when the gods are involved."

Sally gets up and walks to the bookshelf on the dining room wall. She pulls out a photo album and comes back to sit next to Medusa. Sally opens the book to show Medusa the photos of her family.

She points to one picture, "That's when Perseus, Perry, and I got married."

"Wow, that's the Perseus I remember."

"He's a wonderful husband and father. He takes great care of us, including Pegasus, which can be a hand full."

"So why do you live here, close to the city, instead of out at the farm."

"We wanted to be close to the jewelry store for Julius and Alan's sake. That really helped Alan to overcome his blindness and give him confidence. He's a great friend to our family."

"I admire both of you, Sally."

Sally looks at Medusa, "Why would you admire me? You and Perry did all the work to save me from that creature many years ago."

"Because you kept your family together. You loved Alan knowing that Athena was his real mother."

Sally looks directly at Medusa, "I thought we couldn't have children. Alan was born with this condition and Athena wanted his father to raise him. We made an agreement with Athena to take care of Alan providing we never go to your island. Athena may be his biological mother, but I'm his mom."

"If you don't mind me asking, do you know why Athena let Alan go?"

"I don't know. Perhaps this whole thing has something to do with prophecies of the ancient text, or keeping up appearances. What's happening now seems to revolve around you and Alan. I think your relationship with the Gods may be the key."

"What about Autumn? Is she Athena's child too?"

"No, Autumn is ours. After Alan, we found out that we could have children after all."

Sally pauses, "She's growing up too."

"Your daughter is wonderful. I wouldn't have escaped the island if it wasn't for her."

"Yes, she's her father's daughter. Autumn makes us crazy with her phone, but she stepped up. I'm very proud of her."

"What is a phone and what does it do?" Medusa asks.

Sally says, "It's another one of the computer things. I keep hoping that someone will explain it to me."

Autumn is now coming down the stairs.

"Are you guys talking about me? I heard my name."

"Yes, honey," Sally says. "I was just telling Medusa what a great daughter you are."

"Ugh, no sappy stuff, mom."

"Ok. How's Alan doing?" Sally asks.

"He's sleeping now. He's getting weaker. We can't let this happen to him," Autumn says as she begins to fight the tears.

Medusa stands up and approaches Autumn.

"Listen, Autumn, I promise that Alan will be ok. No matter what it takes."

"Autumn, why don't you go upstairs and get cleaned up. We'll have dinner in about an hour. Go call your friend, you need a distraction. You've earned it," Sally says.

"Ok mom, thanks."

Sally looks to Medusa, "I think I'll start dinner. I need a distraction too. Go ahead and look through the photo album. There are some goofy shots of Alan. Just don't tell him I showed them to you."

Medusa chuckles and starts looking through the album and is still amazed on the process of photography.

CHAPTER 29

An hour passes and Alan wakes from his nap. He ventures downstairs to see the rest of his family.

"Autumn, I'm surprised to see you. I heard there was a big sale at the mall," Alan says with a half-smile to his sister.

"I'm waiting for dinner, then I may just go to the mall. And no, you can't come with me. You have to stay here with your sweetie."

"Autumn, be nice to your brother," Sally says.

Medusa smiles as she enjoys the banter between brother and sister.

The family sits down for a late lunch. All seem to enjoy the meal that Sally prepared.

"Have you heard from Brian?" Perry asks.

"Not yet," Alan says.

"Call him up and tell him to work faster," Autumn says to Alan.

"He'll be here," Alan replies.

A few minutes pass and there's a knock at the front door. Perry walks to the door and sees Julius.

"Hey Julius, did you find out anything more about the amulet?"

"All I have is the drawing, which you saw."

Before Perry shuts the door, Brian comes rushing toward them. He enters the house, breathing heavily from the run from his home.

"I think I got it!" he says.

"What? Are you sure?" Sally says.

Medusa's eyes light up from the excitement of the news.

"Brian, did you find the amulet?" Alan asks.

"No, but I'm pretty sure I know where it is."

From a folder, Brian pulls out the picture of the blood moon Medusa identified. Everyone huddles around Brian to hear about his findings.

"Look at this. The picture has four stars. I took into account the angles of the stars relative to the position of the Earth. I used my new program, which I'm sure finds anything, anytime, anywhere..."

"Back to the story, geek," Autumn says.

"Ok. Right. I scanned the picture and the program computed the angles of light from the location of the 4 bright stars. The center of the blood moon on that exact date was right over Athena's Temple. The angles of light, which we can't see, helped me calculate the exact trajectory of each angle."

"English, geek!" Autumn says as she is growing impatient.

Brian says, "What I'm saying is that each angle of the light from the stars intersected right here."

Brian points to the location on the map. Julius looks to Perry and says, "That's right on your farm."

"That's not possible. I've never seen anything on my land that resembles the amulet. The property has been in my family for generations," Perry says.

"Then it's not above the ground, it's probably buried somewhere on your farm," Julius says.

Perry turns to Brian, "Are you certain about this? We don't have much time."

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure."

"Just pretty sure?" Autumn says to Brian.

"Gentlemen, if your friend says the amulet is at Perry's farm, then I believe him," Medusa says.

Brian gives an encouraging look to Medusa, "Thanks."

"Ok. Let's assume the amulet is at the farm. Where do we look? We can't start digging up every inch of the property," Perry says.

"Brian, how close to the location can you get with your program," Julius asks.

"About a square mile. That's the best I could get."

"That's too big," Perry says.

"But it's a start," Sally says. "Without Brian, we wouldn't have any idea on where to look."

"She's right," Alan says.

"I'm going to try something. I'm going back to the store and I'll meet you all at the farm. We still have about 3 hours before the sun goes down. Brian, why don't you come with me. I'll probably need your help," Julius says and then looks at Autumn.

"I'm not riding in that clunker," Autumn says.

"No, you'll ride with us. Wouldn't want you to get those designer jeans dirty," Alan says.

"You two never stop, do you?" Medusa asks.

Perry responds, "No they don't. Let's take the car, there's more room."

Brian and Julius get into Julius's old truck. Brian first brushes off the dust on the passenger's seat. Brian coughs from the dust and looks at Julius.

"It still runs good, plus it's paid for," Julius says.

Julius starts the truck and drives toward the store. The rest of the group gets into Perry's car, a nice sedan that was only a few years old.

Perry and his passengers soon arrive at the farm. All get out of the car and look around, all thinking about where the amulet could possibly be.

About twenty minutes later, Julius and Brian drive up. Both get out of the old truck. Julius turns to the back end and pulls out two devices.

"What do you have there, Julius," Perry asks.

"Well, this thing is a metal detector. I think the amulet has gold, so this might pick it up."

"What about that other thing?" Autumn asks.

As Julius starts to lift the other contraption out of his truck, "This, my dear Autumn, is a ground penetrating radar machine. If the machine works right, we should be able to see what's underneath the fields."

"It looks like a lawn mower," Autumn says.

"This is good, Julius," Sally says.

"Ground, radar, detectors, I'm afraid I don't completely understand all of this," Medusa says.

"Don't worry, I'll explain it all to you," Alan says.

Medusa grabs Alan by the arm and pulls him tight toward her. Alan smiles as he enjoys the attention.

Autumn sees the display and says, "I think I'm going to be sick."

Julius looks up at the sky and says, "We need to get started, the sun is starting to go down, so we don't have much time. Brian, you take the metal detector and start sweeping across the right portion of this field. I'll take the radar and start on the left."

Julius turns to Sally, Perry, Alan and Medusa, "You guys stay here and watch over Alan. Brian and I will work as fast as we can."

Perry says, "Ok Julius. I'll check on Pegasus. It's his feeding time anyway."

"I'll watch over Alan," Medusa says as she looks at him.

"I'm sure you will," Autumn says.

"Don't pay any attention to her Medusa. Autumn is upset because her boyfriend came to his senses and broke up with her last month," Alan says.

"Shut up Alan!"

Sally interrupts, "Stop it you two. Autumn go help your father with Pegasus."

Autumn walks away in a huff.

Alan looks at Medusa, "She's like this all the time."

Sally looks out over the fields and watches Julius use the machine that rolls over the open field while Brian is swinging the metal detector from one side to the other.

CHAPTER 30

About an hour passes. Julius and Brian are unable to find any sign of the mysterious amulet.

Medusa walks over to Autumn, "So what do you think they're doing out there?"

"It looks like Julius is mowing dad's field and Brian is swinging at bugs."

Medusa smiles and says, "Autumn, I'm sorry about your boyfriend and being so affectionate to your brother in front of you. Please understand, I never thought I would ever have feelings like this."

"You really care about him, don't you?"

"Yes, yes I do. I think I would sacrifice everything for him."

There was a small pause, then Autumn says, "Are you talking about your life? I thought you had to be that creature to cure him."

"You don't worry about that Autumn, it's all going to work out, I promise you."

Alan, with a glass of water in his hand, slowly walks up to Autumn and Medusa.

"What are you doing walking around, Alan. You need your strength," Medusa says.

"I can't just sit," he says.

"Better listen to your girlfriend," Autumn says sarcastically.

Alan, Medusa and Autumn slowly walk closer to the barn as Perry and Sally come out.

"What's up with Pegasus? I can hear him neighing." Alan says.

Sally says, "He's been acting this way since we got here. I don't know what's wrong with him. Maybe you and Medusa can calm him down."

Medusa grabs Alan's arm, "Let's go in there and see if we can help."

Alan and Medusa walk into the barn and Pegasus continues to neigh and jump up and down on his hind legs. The magical horse also spreads its wings.

Medusa slowly walks up to Pegasus and puts her hand out. "What's the matter?" as she says in a soft voice.

"Be careful Medusa," Alan says.

Pegasus starts to calm down as Medusa puts her hand on the face of the horse. Alan feels that horse is calm enough for him to join Medusa.

Alan cautiously walks along side of Medusa, "What do you think is wrong?"

"I'm not sure," Medusa says.

Alan sets his glass of water down on a ledge near the winged horse. Medusa looks down and notices an old wrapped piece of paper on the barn floor, slightly exposed from the hay. She reaches down and carefully unwraps it and sees a drawing of what looks like the amulet they are seeking.

"Alan, look! I think this is the amulet we're looking for."

Pegasus then jumps up on his hind legs, knocking Alan's glass of water off the ledge. The water spills on the floor of the barn. He also noticed the shadow of Medusa on the ground and scrambles over to her.

"Are you ok?"

"Yes, Alan, I just don't understand what has gotten into....."

"Wait, wait," Alan says.

"Listen, can you hear the water?"

"I don't hear anything Alan?" Medusa says.

"The water, I can hear it dripping below the floor."

Medusa puts her ear to the ground.

"Oh my. I can hear it now. I think this is what Pegasus was trying to tell us."

"Medusa, get Julius and my dad. Maybe this is it."

Medusa runs to the front of the barn and yells, "Everyone come quick. We found something!"

Julius and Brian come rushing from the field. Perry and Sally come into the barn.

"It's Pegasus. He was jumping on an opening of some kind. It's right here. You can hear water dripping down," Medusa says.

Without hesitation, Perry grabs an axe and begins tearing up the wood on the barn's floor. After a few minutes, Perry pulls away the wood making up the floor. Everyone now notices a trap door that was partially damaged.

"Notice the opening. That's where the water went," Perry said.

Julius walks over and says, "This is starting to make sense. The amulet was hidden in a place that no one would look."

Julius helps Perry pull open the trap door. Perry looks over to Brian, "Hand me the flashlight."

Brian grabs the flashlight and hands it to Perry, who directs the beam of light down an old staircase.

Perry looks up at Julius, "Look how small it is? We're not going to be able to fit."

"I can," Autumn says.

"I can too," Medusa says.

"I think I can fit," Brian says.

"No, you guys can't go down there," Alan says.

"Yes, Alan. We have to," Medusa says to him.

"We don't have much choice and time is running short," Julius says to Perry and Sally.

Julius looks to Medusa and Autumn and hands the flashlight to Brian, "Here's the flashlight. It's going to be a tight fit, but you should be able to make it. Take it slow. We really don't know what's down there."

"That's not very helpful, Julius," Autumn says.

Sally says to Medusa and Autumn, "You get in there, find the amulet and get out fast."

"Don't worry mom," Autumn says.

"All of you. Be careful," Perry says.

Medusa walks to Alan and kisses him on the cheek. "I'll be back soon."

"Please be careful," Alan says.

CHAPTER 31

Brian, Medusa and Autumn are slowly heading down the stairs. The rest of the group from above watches intently as the three figures slowly disappear into the darkness.

The three adventurers are walking down what seems an endless flight of stairs.

"How much longer, is there a bottom?" Autumn asks.

"We keep going, we'll get there," Brian says.

After a few minutes, the trio reaches the bottom. Brian and the rest stop down into a larger area which helps them to move around with ease.

"I think we're in a cavern, and there's a tunnel off to the right," Brian says.

"At least we have more room now. I don't have to bend over anymore. And it's cold, so let's make it quick," Autumn says.

"We need to get down that tunnel," Medusa says.

Brian leads as they all head toward the dark tunnel. Brian hastily stops right in front of the opening and puts his arms out.

"What's wrong? Do you see something?" Medusa asks.

"I was just thinking about Indiana Jones. I wonder how many booby traps there are," Brian says.

"Would you stop, geek." Autumn says.

"Wait. He could be right. If this amulet is special, then there may be some...booby traps...as you call them, and who's Indiana Jones?" Medusa says.

"In that movie, there was a huge ball of rock that came at him. Do you think there's something like that here?" Brian asks.

"Don't worry, geek. If there's a ball coming, we'll use you to stop it."

"Alright, that's enough," Medusa says.

The trio slowly moves forward with Brian in front. After a few steps, Brian frantically waves his arms and begins to yell.

"Brian, what's wrong?" Medusa excitedly asks.

"Spider webs. I can't stand spiders. I saw a huge one in the corner. They give me the willies!"

Autumn walks quickly up to Brian and snatches the flashlight from his hand.

"Just get behind me and I'll protect you from those vicious insects," Autumn says.

Brian gets behind Medusa and keeps looking to the ceiling and watching for the tiny creatures.

Autumn is walking out in front, shining the light ahead. She notices a wall directly in front of her and stops.

"Why are you stopping?" Brian asks.

"There a solid wall," Medusa says.

Autumn looks back toward Brian and Medusa. "This can't be the end of it. This was the only tunnel."

Brian jumps ahead, "I bet this is like Indiana Jones. There has to be a secret compartment to open this thing up."

Brian starts feeling around the solid wall. He pushes and then moves his hand. After a few minutes Autumn says, "There's nothing there, geek."

"Wait a second," Brian says.

He finds a small section that is loose.

"Got it. Watch what happens when I push right here."

Brian manages to push the loose rock inward, but nothing happens.

"I told you there wasn't anything there," Autumn says.

"I don't understand, it feels like a lever. The gods must have put something here to access the amulet. Why doesn't it work for me?"

"Maybe because you're not related to the gods," Medusa says.

Medusa looks to Autumn, "See if you have better luck, Autumn."

Autumn steps in front and over to the part of the wall that Brian was working on. She puts her hand out and pushes on the loose rock. Suddenly, the wall moves as the trio quickly steps back. They notice that the rock moves far enough back to allow them to pass.

CHAPTER 32

Medusa, Autumn and Brian cautiously work their way around the large rock and now venture into another room that is a round underground cavern. Autumn uses the flashlight to see a podium made of rock standing about four feet high in the middle of the room. She shines the light directly at the small structure. On the very top, she notices a glistening object, a red stone in the center surrounded by four-pointed crystal prisms.

"I think that's it," Medusa says.

"I know that's it, we found it!" Brian says.

Autumn starts to walk toward the podium to claim the amulet.

"Stop!" Brian says as he walks up to Autumn.

Brian then extends his arm out and wiggles his fingers.

"What are you doing now!" Autumn exclaims.

"I'm looking for traps. This is too easy. There has to be something here somewhere. Autumn, point the light over there."

Autumn points the flashlight to the ground to the right of where the three are standing. Brian notices a long wooden stick, grabs it and starts jabbing the ground in front of them and around the podium.

"Are you finished, geek?" Autumn says to Brian.

"I just need to run a few more tests," he says.

"Never-mind," Autumn says as she walks toward the podium.

Just in front of the podium, she is startled to see a large figure, dripping with water, coming out of the shadows from the other side of the chamber.

"Oh, my goodness, it's Poseidon!" Medusa says.

"Did you think you could fool me!!" says the deep voice from the back.

"Now you will pay with my wrath!"

The angry Poseidon, with his trident in hand, slams it on the ground. The underground cave begins to shake violently, and rocks are falling from the ceiling.

"We have to get out of here!" Brian says as all three head toward the opening.

Autumn stops and looks back and sees Poseidon reaching for the amulet. Autumn quickly turns around and lunges for the precious object before Poseidon is able to grab it.

"Hand it to me!" Poseidon says in his growling tone.

Autumn steps back, seeing the rocks falling and then Poseidon coming toward her. Autumn trips over one of the fallen rocks and manages to protect the amulet. She yells to Brian and Medusa as they're standing at the entrance, "Medusa, catch!"

Autumn throws the amulet at Medusa before a rock from the ceiling lands on her. Autumn lets out a scream from the pain from weight of the large stone that landed directly on her. Autumn is now unconscious with an angry Poseidon standing directly above her.

The shaking has ceased. The podium has been destroyed. Above ground, Perry, Sally and Julius are nearly frantic as they have realized that something has gone terribly wrong.

"We have to get down there now, Julius," Perry says.

"We can't get through the opening, Perry, it's too small."

Sally starts yelling for her daughter while Alan is calling for Medusa and Brian. No answer is returned from their calls.

CHAPTER 33

Back down in the cave, Poseidon says to Brian and Medusa, "Now watch me end the life of your friend. This is what happens when mortals try to fool the great Poseidon!"

Medusa walks up to Poseidon with a look of anger on her face.

"Back away from the girl," she says with determination.

"And how are you going to stop me."

Medusa holds up the amulet and directs the glistening object at Poseidon. "I'm not going to say it again. Get away from her right now!"

Medusa then walks a step closer. Poseidon steps back and growling says, "As you wish!"

Poseidon takes two more steps backward as a fog develops in the room.

"We're not done Medusa! You WILL be my love."

Poseidon fades away as quickly as he appeared. Brian and Medusa climb over the fallen rocks and rush to Autumn.

Medusa grabs some ripped material from her clothes and carefully wraps the amulet. She hands it to Brian who puts it in the pocket of his jacket. Brian and Medusa now see the large rock on top of Autumn. They work together and struggle to lift the heavy object away from a badly injured Autumn.

"She's still breathing," Brian says.

"We've got to get her out of here before more rocks come crashing down," Medusa says.

Brian reaches down and carefully picks up Autumn. He breathes heavily as he now has Autumn in his arms.

"Are you strong enough for this Brian?" Medusa asks.

"I'm going to have to be. I can't let her down."

Brian, with Autumn in his arms, and Medusa are stepping over the many rocks on the floor toward the entrance. Brian gingerly walks through the entrance toward the tunnel, stepping over rocks as he goes. Medusa is right behind him with the flashlight, helping him see where to step.

Medusa and Brian continue to walk slowly toward the tall flight of stairs, still intact. They can now hear the calls from the group standing over the entrance.

"We're here!" Brian yells.

Medusa and Brian can hear the faint response, "Are you all right?"

"We have the amulet, but Autumn is hurt. We're coming up!" Brian yells back to the group.

At the bottom of the staircase, Brian looks up and carefully lays Autumn to the ground. Medusa shines the light on him and notices a beet red face as she can hear his heavy breathing.

"I can try to carry her up, Brian."

"No. I have to do this. I can make it."

Brian picks up a limp and unconscious Autumn. He steps sideways, bends over and starts to climb the steps in a sideways manner, the only possible way for him to carry Autumn to safety.

Brian is climbing, breathing harder with each step. Medusa is behind him, pushing Brian and trying to hold him steady.

"Keep going Brian, you're doing great."

Brian doesn't answer. He's looking at the steps, each one more difficult than the last. Sweat is pouring down his face. The muscles in his arms are weakening as the pain becomes more intense. Brian keeps climbing. He wonders if he will pass out and begins to wobble and stops.

"Brian, don't stop now! We're almost there."

Brian now hears the calls from above ground.

"Brian, we can hear you. Keep coming!" Alan says.

"Please bring Autumn to us, Brian," Sally says.

"Come on Brian!" Perry yells.

The young man holding Autumn begins to take more steps. Medusa keeps helping him up the seemingly endless staircase. She can't see the determined look he now has. The muscles in his arms, although still painful, are not inhibiting him from his mission.

Brian and Medusa finally come within steps of the surface. Brian's body is shaking profusely as he maneuvers through the cramped staircase. Brian gets close enough to see the hands of Perry and Julius reach out and grab Autumn from his arms. When Autumn is freed from his grasp, he collapses at the top of the staircase. Perry then reaches in and pulls him out. Medusa then follows into the barn.

Alan puts his hand on Autumn's head as she's now in Julius's arms. He hugs Medusa and then asks, "What happened down there?"

An out of breath Medusa says, "It was Poseidon."

"Poseidon?" Sally says tearfully. She then looks over to her daughter, "My poor baby."

Brian, who is on his knees, pulls out the cloth that was protecting the amulet and hands it to Medusa. "We got the amulet," he says, still breathing heavily.

"We need to get Autumn and Brian to the hospital right now," Perry says.

Julius carries Autumn to the car. Perry is holding Brian up with his arm around the young man helping him walk toward the car. Alan, Medusa and Sally follow close behind. Medusa is holding on to Alan as he has difficulty in keeping up with the rest of the group.

CHAPTER 34

Julius and Perry race to the hospital. They arrive at the emergency room and Perry picks up his daughter and carries her into the emergency room. Autumn is quickly admitted and then put on a stretcher. Perry and Sally now point to Brian, but he does not wish to be treated as he is feeling better after drinking water on the trip to the hospital.

Julius, Brian, Sally, Perry, Alan and Medusa all move to the waiting room to hear the doctor's prognosis on Autumn.

"This is where you take your sick and injured people," Medusa says.

Alan answers her, "Yes, I've been here a few times myself."

"Were you sick?" she asks.

"No, I fell out of a tree and broke my arm when I was a kid," Alan says.

Medusa looks over and sees the worried looks of Perry and Sally.

A few minutes later, a doctor comes down the hall of the emergency room toward the waiting area. He comes to Perry and Sally, "She's lost a lot of blood and there's internal bleeding. We're taking her into surgery now."

"Will my daughter be okay?" Sally asks frantically.

"We'll do everything we can for her. This surgery is going to take a while. Why don't you head home and get some rest? It looks like you need it. We'll call you the second she's out," the doctor replies.

"I'm going to stay," Perry says.

"So will I," Brian says.

Medusa gets up and heads toward the window in the waiting room. She looks out in despair. Alan comes over to her and says, "She's going to be ok."

"This is all my fault," Medusa says. "Everyone is going through all of this to help me. I should have stayed on that island."

"They're helping me too," Alan says.

Alan now looks at a tearful Medusa.

"I know that all I can see is your shadow, but I know that you're a good person, despite what Poseidon and Athena have done to you. We're going to put an end to all of this soon. Ok?" Alan says.

Medusa nods her head with her eyes closed.

"Medusa, do you have the amulet?" Alan asks.

She pulls it out of pocket. "Yes, Brian handed it to me in the car. Here it is."

Medusa puts the amulet in Alan's hand.

"I have to go for a few hours, but stay here and be with my mom and dad."

"Alan, you can't go to Athena's Temple."

"I'm not, but I have to take care of something. Please trust me."

"I do trust you, Alan."

Alan, almost staggering, approaches Julius.

"Julius, can you take me somewhere for a few hours? It's important. Let me know the second you hear about Autumn," Alan says as he looks at his parents.

Perry and Sally nod to Alan's request. Julius and Alan walk out of the emergency room toward Julius's truck.

"Where are we going, Alan?"

"I'll explain everything in the truck," he says as they get into the vehicle and leave the hospital parking lot.

A short time later in the emergency room, Sally is walking up and down the aisles, waiting for news of her daughter's condition. She walks up to Perry.

"Perry, I'm going to get Autumn's favorite stuffed animal. I want her to be comfortable when she's out of surgery and wakes up."

Perry sees the look on his wife's face and says, "Do you need me to drive you?"

"No, you stay here and wait for the doctor. I won't be long."

Sally now walks out of the emergency room. Perry, Brian and Medusa continue to wait.

After a few minutes, Medusa gets up from the couch and heads back toward the window once again. Brian notices her staring out at darkness and comes up to join her.

"You were very brave back there, Brian. You found the amulet and carried Autumn out at great risk. I'm sure your family will be very proud of you."

"I don't talk with my family that much," Brian says.

"Why not? You're absolutely brilliant with those devices and you obviously have a kind heart."

"My family looks and treats me like an outsider because I don't date girls."

"Well who do you date?" Medusa asks.

"Oh," she continues, "I understand now. Your family treats you differently because you're not like them. I think I know what it's like to be different."

"Yeah, that's why I spend so much time with Alan and his family. They accept me for who I am, and I would do anything for them, even Autumn."

"But she calls you geek and tries to make you feel uncomfortable."

"It's our thing," Brian says.

"I think you proved that you're one of them, Brian."

Medusa puts her hand on Brian's should. She walks away from the window and looks over to Perry.

"They are a special family, which is why I cannot allow Alan or anyone else to sacrifice their life for mine."

CHAPTER 35

Another hour passes, and Autumn is still in surgery. Sally arrives back at the hospital with her stuffed animal in hand.

"Any word yet," Sally asks.

"Not yet. Are you okay, honey. That seemed to take a while," Perry says.

"I got held up out there," she says.

She walks over to Medusa, "how are you doing?"

Medusa answers, "Considering I'm worried sick about Alan and Autumn, I can't relax, I'm doing....ok."

Sally says to Medusa, "I think Autumn is going to pull through, I just have a feeling. Let's go outside and talk for a while, Medusa. The walk will do you good."

Sally turns to Perry, "I'm going to walk with Medusa to help her feel better. We won't be far."

Sally and Medusa take a walk outside on the hospital grounds while Brian and Perry are left sitting on the waiting room couch. Both look at each other with an awkward look.

Perry says to Brian, "Thank you for being Alan's friend and helping Autumn out of the cave. We wouldn't have come this far if it wasn't for you."

Brian smiles, "Not a problem, sir."

Another 30 minutes passes as Julius and Alan return to the hospital's waiting room to get the latest news from the doctor. Sally and Medusa also come back to the waiting room after a discussion outside the hospital. As Julius begins to ask for an update, the doctor comes down the hall and approaches Perry and Sally.

He shakes his head. Sally starts to gasp and then the doctor smiles and says, "She's going to be fine. It was touch and go for a while, but she pulled through in the end. I haven't quite seen someone come back so strong and I also expect a full recovery."

Relief overcomes the group.

"When can we see her," Perry says.

"She's in ICU, but perhaps later tonight or first thing tomorrow," the doctor says.

He continues, "Go home and get some rest. She's going to be fine."

The exhausted group walks out of the hospital. Julius drives Brian home and then heads to his home. Perry, Sally, Medusa and Alan make it back to the house. Upon arriving, Alan shows everyone the amulet and says, "keep it close, in case one of the gods decides to pay us another visit tonight."

Perry and Sally look at the amulet in amazement.

"I still can't believe such a precious piece of jewelry was right under my nose," Perry says.

"Someone clearly put it there for that reason," Sally says.

Alan and Medusa get ready for bed and all agree to get up early to go to the hospital to check on Autumn.

Alan and Medusa talk for a short time before adjourning to each other's rooms.

The rest of the night goes without incident, but most of the family, including Medusa, do not sleep well.

CHAPTER 36

The sun begins to rise, and the eastern room of the house is becoming lighter. After dressing and having a short breakfast, Perry, Sally, Alan and Medusa drive over to the hospital to visit Autumn.

While in the car, Alan receives a call from Brian.

"Hey Brian, we're heading over the hospital to visit, Autumn. Yes, today is the day. Ok, we'll see you over there."

"It's amazing your communication device. Brian is meeting us at the hospital?" Medusa asks.

"Yes, then we put an end to all of this," Alan says.

"Are you certain you're up for this Alan?" Sally asks.

Alan's condition continues to deteriorate, which has become obvious to everyone.

"We visit Autumn, then pay a visit to Athena," Alan says. The amulet is wrapped in a protective cloth in his hand.

Perry, driving the car, briefly looks over to Sally and says, "This has to work."

"I hope so," Sally says.

The family and Medusa arrive at the hospital. Brian drives up behind them and all enter the large building. Perry and Sally decide to go and see Autumn first while the others sit in the waiting room. The doctor sees the family and comes up to them.

"She's awake and doing well. Autumn's been asking about you."

The doctor now looks at Alan.

"Are you ok? Do we need someone here to check you out?"

"No, I'm just tired. I haven't had much sleep. I'll be fine. Thanks," Alan replies.

The doctor nods his head and Sally and Perry head toward Autumn's room down the hall.

Alan can feel Medusa's distraction and says, "It's going to be fine. Don't worry. Alan, I want you to know how much I care for you appreciate everything you have done for me."

Alan starts to blush, "I'd do anything for you Medusa."

"No, the world thought I was this hideous monster and you saw past that. I will always love you."

"I love you too, Medusa. We have the amulet. The gods have to honor our requests."

Medusa smiles and hugs Alan, who nearly goes limp from his weakened condition.

"We have to do this very soon. Let's go to your sister," Medusa says with a very concerned tone.

Medusa and Alan slowly walk to Autumn's room, where Perry and Sally are sitting by her side. Autumn sees her brother and Medusa enter the room.

"Alan! You're here. You look terrible."

"I bet I look better than you, Autumn."

Medusa says, "Autumn, what did your parents bring you?"

"Mom brought me Merlin, my favorite stuffed animal and dad brought me my phone. As soon as I'm out of here, I'm heading to the mall."

Autumn pauses, "Have you guys solved this thing yet?"

"No, but we will soon. You just concentrate on getting better," Medusa says.

Brian now comes into the room. "Hey, Autumn. Glad to see you among the living."

"Mom told me what you did. Thank you.....Brian."

"Hey, you know my name. Next time, try to lose some weight."

"Shut up, geek!"

Perry and Sally decide it's time to leave and let Autumn get some rest. They're not telling her that this is the day when Medusa and Alan confront Athena.

Medusa asks, "Can I have a few minutes with Autumn?"

"Sure, but don't be too long," Sally says.

"Thank you, Sally."

The family and Brian leave the room. Medusa walks to Autumn's bedside and takes her hand.

"Autumn, I wanted to tell you how brave I think you are. Your brother wouldn't have a chance at all if it wasn't for you."

"I just did what I had to do...."

"Wait, Autumn. I also wanted to thank you for saving me too. So many thought I was that horrible creature and for a long time, I believed it. Your brother made me realize I was someone else and brought out the good in me. I'm grateful to you and your family."

"Why are you telling me this now?" Autumn asks.

"Whatever happens, I wanted you to know how I felt about you, Alan and the rest of your family."

She smiles at Autumn, "Brian too."

"I want you to promise me that you'll always watch over your brother. He's going to need you."

Tears start to well up in Autumn's eyes. "I promise, but you tell him and my family yourself when this is over."

Medusa squeezes her hand and gives her a kiss on the cheek. She slowly turns around and walks out of Autumn's room.

Back in the hospital lobby, Perry says to Brian, "Can you stay with Autumn for a little while?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Thanks Brian," Alan says as they walk out the door.

Brian yells to get Alan's attention, "Hey, Alan, good luck man. Come back to us and bring Medusa too."

Alan nods and then goes through the hospital door toward the car.

CHAPTER 37

The group gets into the car as Perry drives them to Athena's Temple. Alan is holding Medusa's hand as tightly as he can. Sally is quiet, visibly shaken over the anticipation of the confrontation.

After a short time, the group pulls up in front of Athena's Temple. No other people are close, but Julius has now joined the family and Medusa. Julius steps out of his old truck and walks toward Perry.

"How's Autumn?"

"She's going to be fine. Brian's with her at the hospital now," Perry says.

Alan slowly walks up to Julius and Perry with Medusa holding him upright. Sally is following them close behind.

"You ready for this?" Julius asks Alan.

"Let's do this," Alan says.

The entire group climbs the stairs that leads into the Athena's Temple. Alan climbs slowly, but is able to make the journey. Once inside, they gaze upon Athena's statue toward the back of the temple.

"Athena, we're here. We have the amulet!" Alan says.

Medusa is standing with Alan closer to the statue of Athena while the others are further back toward the entrance to the Temple.

"Athena, we have what you want, why aren't you here?" Medusa says.

A figure comes from out behind the statue. It's the red-haired slender woman in the white dress they know as Athena.

"I guess congratulations are in order, assuming you really have the amulet," Athena says.

Alan continues to stand, but barely.

"Aren't you all going to bow in my presence?" Athena says.

The group decides to bow out of respect for the mighty goddess, including Alan.

"My apologies, Athena, but we have some business to discuss," Medusa says.

"Well then, let's see this amulet."

Alan slowly pulls a large cloth out of his pocket. He unwraps it to reveal the glistening amulet. He holds it up to Athena, "Is this what you want?"

Athena stares at the object, "Impressive, you have found what no other human could find. Now hand it to me."

"Not yet," Alan says. "First, I want to be cured, then you get the amulet."

"I'm afraid that's not possible, my son."

"My son? My mother, Athena, is standing right behind me," Alan says.

"She may be the one that raised you, but I'm your mother and you'll treat me with the respect of any god!"

"Impressive, Athena, but I'm the one holding the amulet. I do understand its power. Cure my ailment and I'll give you the amulet."

"As I told you earlier, son, it is not possible. The gods cannot cure disease, especially for a descendant of a god. The only cure was for you to get a drop of fresh blood from Medusa, the creature. But in your haste, you passed on the opportunity. Now, you must live with the consequences of your actions."

"But, I heard you say you would help Alan," Medusa says.

"Oh, but indeed I will, my dear. When his wretched body finally gives out, Alan's essence will be placed in the heavens and be one with the gods."

"You call that helpful!" Perry exclaims.

"Be careful, Perseus. You're in my temple and I will not tolerate any disrespect."

Sally grabs Perry's arm and signals him to be silent.

Alan takes a step closer to Athena.

"If you want this amulet, then you have to cure me, Athena," Alan says.

"You can't command me to do something I'm unable to do. But do not despair, being one with the gods is a great honor. I'm afraid that is all I can do for you."

"There may be another way," Medusa says.

"Turn me back into the creature, so I can save your son, Athena," Medusa says.

"NO!" shouts Alan.

"Your sacrifice is touching my dear, but I will not turn you back into that creature. I agreed to help Alan and I will. My decision is final."

Medusa steps closer to Athena with an angry look on her face.

"For such a long time, you had me believe I was the monster you created. For so long, I dreamed of any kind of life other than the one you forced upon me. All of that because I refused the love of that arrogant and pitiful excuse of a god, Poseidon, in your temple. You never even gave me the chance to explain. You tried and convicted me for desecration of this temple. It seems obvious to me who the real monster is."

"Silence! Give me the amulet and go," Athena yells.

"You really want to see desecration Athena, then watch this," Medusa says.

Medusa then turns to a kneeling Alan and gives him a passionate kiss, much to the surprise of the others. Athena now becomes very angry. Her eyes change to red in color from her inner rage.

"You want to become that hideous creature again, then so be it! But, this time, there's no going back!"

Athena raises her finger at Medusa.

"Back to the creature you once were," Athena says in a loud stern tone.

"No!" Alan says.

Medusa goes to her knees, calling out in pain as her body, once again, goes through the metamorphosis of changing from a young, beautiful woman to the creature of the island.

A shaking occurs at the Temple as clouds form from above and lightning can be seen surrounding the structure.

Alan looks over and sees the shadow of the snakes forming on Medusa's head. He can sense her once soft skin changing into the scaly texture.

"Everyone, turn around. Don't look at her!" Perry says.

The entire group turns around. A look of despair accompanies the face of Sally, Julius and Perry.

CHAPTER 38

After a few moments, Athena says, "You have now returned to the monster you once were, Medusa. You will be sent back to the island to live alone, a suitable punishment for desecrating my temple again!"

"I can't let this happen," Alan says.

He now comes toward Medusa, still kneeling on the ground. Without hesitation, he kisses her again. Alan waits for the change, but nothing happens.

"Not this time, my son. Your Medusa has condemned herself as this creature for the rest of her days," Athena tells him.

"You can't do this, Athena. I'm your son and I'm begging you to change her back."

"I'm afraid not. She desecrated my Temple one too many times and now must suffer for her actions."

The creature Medusa reaches to her waist and pulls out the special blade that was supposed to be used on the island. She cuts deep into her hand to draw her blood. Medusa screams out in pain from the cut and then notices the blood starting to pour from her hand. She immediately puts her hand onto the face of Alan, with the cut portion upon his lips. Alan now tastes the fresh blood of Medusa and backs away.

"What have you done?" Alan asks with pain in his voice.

"What should have been done on the island, my love," Medusa replies in the creature's tone.

Medusa takes her hand to push Alan's face away from her.

Alan starts to feel a change in his body. A tingling sensation now grips him from head to toe. He puts his hands to his face and crouches toward the ground.

Perry starts to head toward Alan, but Sally holds him back.

Alan screams in pain and closes his eyes tight as he puts his hands over his eyes. His pain quickly ends, and Alan can feel his strength return. He pulls his hands away from his face and slowly opens his eyes. Alan no longer sees shadows and can now see with perfect clarity.

"I can see," he says.

"Alan, don't look at Medusa. Turn away or you'll turn to stone," Perry says.

Alan looks down and sees a pool of blood getting larger by the second. He realizes that Medusa is dying as she lays on the ground of the temple.

Alan now looks right at Athena, trying to focus as the god becomes more visible to him.

"You see Alan, I lived up to my original word. You have been cured. Unfortunately, Medusa has to pay the ultimate price so you can live. Now, give me the amulet as you now must keep your word to me."

Alan takes several steps toward Athena.

"You say that you're my mother. Then, show your love for me. Please change Medusa back."

"Medusa chose this destiny, my son. There's nothing more I can do for her. Despite desecrating my temple, as a favor to you, her death will not be painful."

Tears are welling up in Alan's eyes.

"Mother, I'm begging you as your son, bring Medusa back to me."

Athena replies in a stern voice, "You are a descendant of the gods, my son, so do not weep in my presence."

Alan tears now stop. Anger sweeps over the young man as he pulls out the amulet. He holds it up in his hand and points it at Athena.

With an angry, low voice, Alan says, "I'm not going to ask again, Athena. With this amulet, I demand you turn her back into human form, or I will make it my mission to bring you and the rest of the gods to their knees!"

Athena has become angry once again.

"You will not threaten Athena in my temple young man!!"

Lightning increases outside the temple. The sound is so loud that Perry, Sally and Julius are covering their ears.

"You want to be with your precious Athena in the underworld, then so be it!"

Athena raises her hand, but then hears, "Athena!"

Athena stops and looks over. She sees an old man with a short white beard, white hair and dressed in white.

Perry looks to Sally, "Father, that's my father Zeus!"

The older figure walks up to Athena.

"This has gone far enough. Do not hurt my grandson. Change Medusa back Athena. They have proved themselves worthy."

"I will do no such thing Zeus."

"Athena, do the right thing."

Athena has calmed down and pauses for a few seconds and sighs, "Very well Zeus."

Athena raises her finger and points to Medusa.

Medusa's body starts shining with the bright light. Her scaly skin is turning back to the soft white skin. The snakes on her head are disappearing. Medusa let's out a quick scream, which startles the group, but they still don't look at her.

After a minute, Medusa has returned to human form. She's still lying on the floor of the temple. Medusa coughs and realizes that she has been restored back to the beautiful young woman.

"Oh my....I'm back!" she says.

Alan quickly turns around. He stops to look at her, staring at the beautiful woman that he could not see earlier. Perry, Julius and Sally all turn to look at the couple who are gazing at one another.

Sally puts her hands to her face in emotional disbelief.

"You can see me," Medusa says to Alan.

"Yes, I can. Thank you, my love," he says.

Athena says sarcastically, "What a touching reunion this is. You now have received more than you asked for. Give me the amulet and leave my Temple."

Alan separates from Medusa's side. With the amulet in his hand, he begins to hand it to Athena."

"Alan, don't do it!" Perry says.

"Silence, Perseus, or I'll have you begging for your life."

Athena looks back directly at Alan, "Give me the amulet as agreed."

Alan realizes he doesn't have a choice and begins to hand Athena the priceless object.

CHAPTER 39

While Alan starts to place the amulet in Athena's hand, both discover that it is knocked out of Alan's hand by a long object. From the shadows of the temple, the god Poseidon emerges. The God of the Sea has knocked the amulet to the ground with his trident.

"Poseidon," Julius exclaims.

The big and angry god has pushed Medusa away from Alan. He then grabs the young man and wraps his strong arm around his neck.

"Let him go, Poseidon!" Medusa shouts.

Perry and Julius start to head toward Poseidon in hopes of freeing Alan from his grasp. Poseidon looks back and waves his trident at two men, who are stopped in their tracks.

Medusa sees the amulet on the ground and lunges at the object. Poseidon sees her attempt and redirects the trident at the amulet. A ray of light emulates from his trident and shatters the amulet into a dozen pieces.

Medusa has a shocked look on her face and looks up to Poseidon, who begins to cut off air to Alan. Poseidon then turns his trident to the side of Alan's head.

Medusa turns to Athena, "You have to stop this!"

"I cannot control the behavior of the gods, Medusa."

Zeus says to Poseidon, "Poseidon, he is my grandson, you need to let him go."

Poseidon's face grows more intense with anger. He looks to Medusa, "You want your boyfriend to live, then you will come and be with me! You will be my love as it was meant to be."

"I will never love you Poseidon," Medusa says.

"Then you will watch him die."

"Poseidon, you harm my son and I'll...." Perry exclaims.

"Or what? You have no power over me. No one does! Not even you, Zeus."

Poseidon now adds more pressure of his trident against Alan's head, which begins to cause pain.

"You'll never have her, Poseidon," Alan says, barely able to breathe.

"Such a stupid young man. I think I'll send you to the underworld after all. That's the price for all of you for fooling me."

"You forgot one thing, Poseidon," Alan says.

"Brave last words. What is this thing you speak of?"

"Didn't you realize that I work with jewelry. What makes you think you destroyed the real amulet?"

Poseidon changes his look of anger to confusion. He looks over and sees Medusa pull another amulet out of protective cloth. She walks over and holds up the real amulet, glistening and glowing toward Poseidon.

"Look Poseidon, fooled again. Now let him go!" Medusa demands.

The large god feels the power of the amulet and has no choice but to free Alan. The young man briefly kneels down, coughing to get air to his lungs. After catching his breath, he slowly stands and walks to Medusa's side.

There are small smiles from Perry, Sally and Julius, who are turning and looking at one another.

"Very clever for humans," Athena says.

"Poseidon, you can't fight the amulet, go back to the sea," Zeus tells him.

"Wait," Medusa says.

Poseidon is now staring directly at Medusa. He notices the stern look on her face.

Athena steps up, "There he is Medusa. There's the god that condemned you to live as that hideous creature. He just tried to kill Alan, my son. He tried to kill your friends. Do you think he'll stop here? Poseidon will undoubtedly try to hurt you and your new family. This is your chance, my dear. Strike him down! Show Poseidon and the rest of the gods the power of the amulet. Remember the monster you were. Remember what he has done. Show him, Medusa. Make him feel the pain he's inflicted upon you!"

Medusa looks to Alan, who slowly shakes his head.

An angered Medusa walks up to Poseidon. She holds up the glowing amulet.

"I will never love you Poseidon. I love Alan. On your knees almighty Poseidon!"

Poseidon, feeling the pull of the amulet, goes to his knees.

"That's right, Medusa. Put an end to this. Show Poseidon and the rest of us the monster you are. Do it now!" Athena says.

"Look at me Poseidon," Medusa commands.

Poseidon looks up, preparing for her next move.

"I want you to apologize. Say you're sorry to me and my new family. And I command that you never hurt another innocent like what you did to me. Don't ever bother me, Alan, his family, friends or anyone else again."

Julius, Perry and Sally all stand in silence, staring at one another.

"You want me to do what?!" Poseidon says.

"You heard me!"

Medusa holds up the amulet a little higher.

"I'm waiting."

Poseidon says in a low voice of humility, "Very well...I apologize."

"Now go Poseidon and remember this agreement."

Poseidon gets up and heads toward the fog and disappears into the shadows. Alan looks at Medusa with a smile.

"I'm proud of you, Medusa. I wish I had the opportunity to say a few things," Alan says as he hugs her.

She looks at him, "Not exactly what we planned, but it was enough."

Alan and Medusa now stand in front of what appears to be a shocked Athena.

"Here's the amulet, Athena. We'll keep our word despite what you may think."

Zeus now speaks in his commanding voice, "No Medusa. You are the amulet's keeper. You must hold on to it at all costs. It requires great responsibility, but I'm certain, as well as many of the other gods, that you will take great care of it."

Alan looks at Athena, "Does this mean we keep it. You're not going to demand Medusa give you the amulet?"

Athena looks at Zeus, "No, she has proven herself to care for the amulet, for now. But we will be watching, so be careful."

Zeus walks over to Perry, "It's good to see you my son."

"Yes, I've missed you father," Perry says with a smile.

"You have a very brave son and I have a very brave grandson, and perhaps we will have a new granddaughter," Zeus says as he winks at Medusa.

Sally comes up and hugs Alan, and then Medusa.

"We did it," she says.

"Got to be honest, I wasn't sure it would work," Alan says

Perry and Sally turn around, but to discover that Athena and Zeus are gone.

All head out of the Temple and toward the car.

"I can't believe this just happened," Julius says with excitement.

Sally jumps into the conversation and says, "Alan, call Brian and tell him what happened. Let's go home, it's not even noon and it's already been a very long day."

The group heads to the hospital to check on Autumn. They all gather into her room and are joined by Brian.

"Alan, you can see!" Autumn says to her brother.

"Yes, my sister. Perfect vision for the first time. There's a lot I'm going to have to get used to."

Medusa squeezes his arm, "And of course, I'm going to help you."

Autumn and Brian listen intently as Alan and Medusa start to explain the events at Athena's Temple.

Sally interrupts, "I've already heard this one. I think I'll head back and let you guys talk."

She kisses her daughter and hugs everyone else.

"I'll come with you," Perry says.

"You should stay with your daughter, I think I need to get some rest."

CHAPTER 40

Later in the afternoon, back at Athena's Temple, Athena walks out from behind her statue.

"Well done! I assume that congratulations are in order. All of us are amazed on how you, as you humans say, pulled this off."

Athena was speaking to the figure walking up the stairs entering her temple.

Sally walks up within a few feet of Athena.

"All I did was push the right people into the right place," Sally says.

"But at great risk, my darling. You knew that I would be enraged with Medusa for desecrating my temple."

"Yes, Athena. I do apologize to you and the gods, but you told me to make it look real."

"Yes, I did. Everything has worked out. One of the prophecies has been fulfilled according to the ancient texts."

"I don't quite understand," Sally says.

"Why Medusa of course. The writings mentioned a savior rising from the ashes. One that could control the power of the amulet, show bravery, compassion and was willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. We knew the savior was coming, I just didn't realize it would be her."

"So, this was an elaborate charade. You knew the entire sequence. I bet you even knew where the amulet was hiding."

"Of course, Sally, I'm Athena."

Athena continues as she takes a few steps toward Sally, "Zeus obviously informed you of the amulet's true location when we made the agreement of

you and Perseus raising our son. However, I noticed that you 'bent the rules' as you humans say by placing the drawing of the amulet near Pegasus when you went to the barn to reveal the secrets of the winged horse to your family. I told you a long time ago that any kind of assistance not written in the ancient texts may have dire consequences."

"Time was short, and I took a chance. I meant no disrespect, but he is our son."

"And so he is, but that doesn't change anything."

"What about Poseidon, was he in on this as well?"

"No. We didn't count on Poseidon interfering. This god rules with his head, not with his heart. Your son, our son, and Medusa handled him with brilliance. I must confess that I enjoyed seeing him taken down. He was getting too arrogant, unleashing too many storms. They helped us solve a problem that we were going to have to address."

Sally asks Athena, "What about Zeus?"

"Don't worry about Zeus my dear Sally. He and I have....an understanding."

Sally asks Athena, "Since we knew where the amulet was, then why the journey? We could have lost our son."

"It's not quite that simple. The amulet had to be put in a safe place, near Perseus and other generations in his family before him to maintain balance. Any one god that possesses the object would have led to a civil war amongst us. The amulet is too powerful, so it was decided that a future and worthy savior would control the amulet. Medusa's sparing of Poseidon after everything he did convinced us that she is the savior. The journey was necessary for Medusa, to prove her worthiness to us."

"They did prove themselves, Medusa and Alan. But they think you're a monster, Athena. Why not tell them the truth?"

"Medusa and Alan, as you call him, must not know as there is too much at stake. We all have to make large sacrifices for the greater good."

"You're saying it's over now. Medusa and Alan can have a life together."

"Medusa and our son can have their life together, but their journey is far from over."

"I don't understand," Sally says.

"I have to admit that you and Perseus raised our son in a loving home as was the arrangement. But don't forget the second part. I saved your injured daughter as you asked, so soon it will be time to fulfill the debt plus answer for your interference."

"What do I have to do?"

"It's not what you have to do Sally, it's what I need from Medusa."

Sally looks at Athena with a puzzled expression.

"There's too much evil being released upon your world. This is why is it necessary that we have to act soon and why it became essential to find the savior. Hades, the lord of the underworld, has been slowly increasing his influence upon humankind which endangers our world. The balance of good and evil is starting to tilt in the wrong direction."

Athena takes a step toward Sally, "And the situation has also become critical. Once Hades discovers that the amulet has been found, he'll stop at nothing to possess it."

"I'll make sure that Medusa protects the amulet."

"Oh, that's not all my dear. Alan is not my first child with Perseus. My first born was taken from me by Hades and then raised in the underworld. You need Medusa to use the amulet to get my son back to his rightful place."

"Alan has a brother? Why haven't we heard about this?"

"Because Hades agreed to keep the world in balance if allowed to keep my son. That was my sacrifice, Sally. But Hades is losing control. It will soon be time for the savior, and perhaps some of the others, to bring my son back to me. But, go back home Sally. You will know when it's time."

Athena turns around and disappears behind the pillar in the temple.

Sally leaves the temple and returns home to join the rest.

CHAPTER 41

"Where did you go, Sally?" Perry asks.

"I just had a few things to take care of, like starting to plan for a wedding?" Sally says as she looks to a smiling Medusa and Alan.

Medusa says, "Alan's taking me to his store. Julius says he gets to pick out a ring! Your sister says she wants to help me pick it out Alan. Apparently, she thinks you would mess it up."

"It sounds like she's getting back to normal," Alan says.

Sally adjourns to the other room. Julius notices her standing near the sink. He walks over to her.

"My congratulations Sally. It looks like you and Athena were able to work things out."

Sally looks over to Julius, "How long have you known?"

"It took me a while to put it together. Does Perry know?"

"No, just you and me, and Athena wants to keep it that way, at least for now. I've already pushed the envelope too far."

"From the look on your face, this is not over, is it?" Julius asks.

"No. Athena told me that Hades has her first son."

"Wow, there is one before Alan. And I'm certain that Athena wants Medusa to bring him back as part of this arrangement. You realize that your son and Medusa will need to be told."

"Not now. They need to enjoy their time together."

Julius starts to walk away.

"Julius, thank you for everything you've done. But, we're going to need your power for this next mission," Sally says.

Julius nods and walks out of the room.

A week passes, and all are enjoying the festivities at Alan and Medusa's wedding.

Sally stands and watches with enjoyment the happiness of her healed son.

Medusa walks over to Sally and notices her concerned expression, "We've got a job to do, don't we?"

Sally looks to Medusa with a puzzled look, "yes, we do."

THE END

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