



AEGIS

by Quinn Xavier Hernandez

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Aegis

by

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AEGIS

A shaft of light.

A chorus of women. A sacred, wordless hymn.

We see MEDUSA. She wears a veil over her face and hair. She carries a candle, a book of matches, and some sort of offering.

She arranges the candle and offering.

She moves the veil so that her face is uncovered. She is beautiful. Her gaze is ice.

MEDUSA

Pallas Athena. Goddess of Wisdom. Hear this prayer!

(We hear a sound. Some sort of hissing. Is it snakes? Steam? It's indistinguishable.)

MEDUSA (Continued)

I seek your teachings. You know, as I know you must, of the gentlemen who have come knocking at my door day in and day out with declarations of love- You have seen how they invade my home, pillage my time, and leave me with grief! I seek freedom from the tyranny of men. They have no power to tug at my heartstrings. I do not appreciate the way their eyes rake across my figure. I am not a picture for them to behold, a doll to be played with at their leisure, nor an object for them to possess when and as they please. Their exclamations of my beauty over everything in this world do nothing for me.

(Beat)

For the past ten years, I have watched them come and rejected them in kind. For the past ten years, I have called out for a change in this grand design. The other Gods have met my pleas with silence. I choose to bow my head and turn to you.

(The shaft of light opens and we see an altar with an imposing spear-wielding woman depicted in stone.)

MEDUSA (Continued)

Oh Goddess, I seek refuge in your home! Open your arms to me as you have done for countless young women. Deck me in your armor and ready your spear to help me carve my own way. Grant me the title of Sister Medusa and with this offering I give myself over entirely. This is my vow to you. Of blood. Of body.

(She readjusts her veil so that it covers her face in addition to her hair. The hissing sound disperses.)

MEDUSA (Continued)

I am resolute in this practice. With my next breath, I devote my life to you and your discipline. May your wisdom guide me and may the perceptions of the outside world not define my worth.

(She lights the candle and bows in prayer. Time passes. The candle goes out. Medusa rises. The cycle repeats and blurs together. As time continues to march forward, it eventually slows to a nighttime. Medusa finishes the cycle one last time.)

MEDUSA (Continued)

(A sigh of relief)

There.

(A VAGABOND in a well-worn cloak enters without a sound. He looks Medusa up and down. Hungry like a wolf. It drips into the crevices of his voice.)

VAGABOND

Hello?

MEDUSA

Gods above!

(She stands and recomposes herself.)

I didn't hear you come in.

(The VAGABOND chuckles. His gaze is still hungry, but his voice and body have shifted.)

VAGABOND
Pardon me. I didn't mean to disturb you.

MEDUSA
I was just finishing up. Nothing to disturb.

VAGABOND
Uhh...

MEDUSA
Yes?

VAGABOND
Good. I'm glad.

MEDUSA
...

VAGABOND
Yep...

MEDUSA
...

VAGABOND
Is there a sister here?

MEDUSA
Yes.

VAGABOND
Might I speak to her?

MEDUSA
I suppose.

(Medusa turns to the vagabond.)

MEDUSA (Continued)
Is there something I can help you with?

VAGABOND
You?

MEDUSA
Me.

Surely not you. VAGABOND

Aye. Me. MEDUSA

You're a sister? VAGABOND

Indeed. MEDUSA

But you're so... VAGABOND

So... MEDUSA

I- Well... You're so young. Sisters are- VAGABOND

Not all sisters are ancient. We all start somewhere. MEDUSA

So it is. VAGABOND

(Beat)

I suppose I was thrown off. You're not- Sisters are usually dressed for the part.

Rightly so. MEDUSA

Oh? VAGABOND

I am new to the order. My garments are being tailored. MEDUSA

Oh. VAGABOND

... MEDUSA

... VAGABOND

...

MEDUSA

So?

VAGABOND

...

MEDUSA

...

VAGABOND

...

MEDUSA

...

VAGABOND

Is there another sister here?

MEDUSA

I don't believe so.

VAGABOND

You don't believe so... What does-

MEDUSA

It's late. Most of the sisters have returned to their homes for the evening. Those who have not have stayed.

VAGABOND

And those who haven't? Surely they wouldn't leave a trainee alone to-

MEDUSA

I'm not a trainee.

VAGABOND

Someone should be watching over you.
(re: the candle)

After the fire that burned the temple of Hera-

MEDUSA

My candle is lit for Athena and her brethren and it shall be extinguished before I leave.

VAGABOND

I'm sure Sister Lerato meant to extinguish her pyre as well, but one cannot be too careful.

MEDUSA

...

VAGABOND

If I recall correctly, Sister Lerato was also rather new to the order of Hera.

MEDUSA

What happened to Sister Lerato is a tragedy. It is something to be learned from, but not something to fixate on.

VAGABOND

A young woman's death is definitely something to fixate on!

MEDUSA

Plenty of young women die many deaths before they go to Hades.

VAGABOND

(calling)

Is there another sister to be found? Perhaps one who is not so cynical or green?

MEDUSA

Save your breath. The other sisters have returned home. I alone watch the temple tonight.

(Beat)

This is not a time we usually receive visitors.

VAGABOND

Surely someone with more authority-

MEDUSA

I'm perfectly capable of carrying out my duties in this instance-

VAGABOND

In this instance.

MEDUSA

In *any* instance. And if I misspeak, may Athena strike me with a fate worse than death.

(Pause. Nothing happens.)

MEDUSA (Continued)

You have your answer.

VAGABOND

(tenderly)

There should be someone else with you.

MEDUSA

Well, there isn't. Might I help you?

VAGABOND

I-

MEDUSA

Or might you leave me to contemplate my life's calling
in solitude?

VAGABOND

Your life's calling.

MEDUSA

My purpose.

VAGABOND

That's big.

MEDUSA

It's been enlightening. And I didn't ask your opinion.

VAGABOND

My apologies.

MEDUSA

I didn't ask for your apologies either. Now are you
through insulting my Goddess and her servants or-

VAGABOND

I seek refuge.

MEDUSA

...

VAGABOND

Poseidon favors me not.

MEDUSA

Sure.