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An anthology by Lily Bennett

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The Underworld

The bent old man sits by himself at the table; an untouched burger lies at the other end of the two-seater. Stories of heartache and loss and love are etched in the deep wrinkles of his face; his shaky hands tell tales of the past. His lover should be here, sitting with him. When will they next meet?

Oh, to grasp her sweet hands. Oh, to caress her face tenderly. To sit and smile lovingly at her.

His heart yearns for her - he has been denied one of the few he truly cares about.

Persephone would soon return. Stuck in this mortal body, it felt as though he must wait a lifetime.

He rises from his seat, walking slowly through the shopping centre. His service dog trots loyally by his side, ready to help and to serve. A quick glance around, a slow extension of his hand; he reaches down to pat the soft fur gathered at the back of the animal's neck.

Cerberus was his most loyal companion. The body was getting old, wilting. Soon Cerberus would need to take a new shell.

The man softly drifts across the ground, feet barely touching the marble tiles. He looks around, sees a child playing hopscotch on the coloured tiles. Hades can feel his body breaking with every step. To be free of this dying prison would be a blessing; surely a death spent in Tartarus would only be twice as agonizing as this.

If one could read his thoughts, all they would hear would be of Persephone, for this was the only thing on Hades' mind. If only he had his beloved here to serve this torturous sentence with him. But alas,

he catches himself at that thought. For who is he to wish such pain and suffering upon his love?

And so the King of the Underworld will continue to wait, and continue to wilt, until the last breath of air leaves this host. This God will suffer, and Cerberus will stay by his side until the very end. And this lover will keep placing a second meal at the opposite end of the table, waiting for the day when he is reunited with his love.

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Hades:

God of the Underworld, Brother to Zeus, god of the sky, and Poseidon, god of the sea. His three sisters are Demeter, goddess of harvest and agriculture, Hestia, virgin goddess of the hearth, and Hera goddess of women and marriage.

Cerberus is the 'hound of Hades', a three-headed dog said to guard the gates of the Underworld.

Persephone is Daughter of Zeus and Demeter, and Queen of the Underworld.

Love & Beauty

A young girl sits, waiting (im)patiently. Her Converse clad feet tap against the floor, the friction creating an incessant squeak. A quick glance at her phone screen, a dissatisfied sigh. Waiting for someone, perhaps. The girl picks up her phone, her fingers start flying across the screen; a message, possibly even a game. Every now and then you can see her glance up and scan the crowd of people, dark eyes desperately trying to search out a certain figure.

Every time, failure.

The girl continues to do this for fifteen minutes or so until, at last, one of her scans proves fruitful. Her young face lights up and a grin shyly spreads across her face as she bounds over to the person she has been waiting to see so anxiously. Across the centre, another girl has walked through the door, a similar smile gracing her face. The two walk to each other tentatively, before finally throwing their arms around each other. A quick glance around; a kiss. Holding hands. The pair slowly walk back over to their seats, cheeks flushed and eyes bright. Anyone watching the two can see the love that drenches the air.

Aphrodite sits on the other side of the room, watching the pair with keen eyes. She can feel the eyes of the passing mortals that are on her, but the goddess pays them no attention. Her focus is on the happy couple that is making her heart swell. Thoughts of Sappho and poems fill her beautiful head, but she pushes aside those golden memories of the past.

The goddess of love bathes in the glow of authentic intimacy. The queen of sexuality is drawn to those that embrace theirs; to those

willing or able to love. This ethereal entity spends her days rejoicing in the affection of others.

She knows all too well how this story will play out, but the thrill of watching it play out is much more exquisite. Again, more eyes flit over her body, begging her to notice them, but her mind is too full of a love that is not her own. The two girls have captured the eye of a goddess, and here she will stay for now.

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Aphrodite:

Greek Goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. Daughter of Zeus and Dione.

Two Thinks God

Two elderly men sit by the pillar outside. The memorial is a symbol of loss, love, and war. They chat amiably; one can hear talks of war and struggle. If a person were to only listen hard enough, they will hear them tell grand tales of the journeys they went on – battles fought, lost, won. The two veterans have come to mourn, but also to reminisce. They have come to remember the dead, and think back on the trials of the past.

The friends have been through hell together, protecting the people of the world from the horrors that lurk in the shadows. They lean back together, laughing at an unknown joke. It is clear that the two have known each other for eons.

Gilgamesh sits beside the ghost of his dearest friend Enkidu. The two laugh as they did in the olden days; the memorial has changed now, and the names carved into the pillar are those of long-dead people, names of men that walked the earth thousands of years before the entity they call Jesus walked it.

His friend is long dead, but rules do not apply well to demigods. A man and a god are dangerous enough by themselves, but together? Who can tell what a being of such power is capable of.

The wars these mortals fought were bloody and brutal, but the wars of Gilgamesh's past are full of horrors that men cannot begin to imagine.

The two deceased beings – for who are we to compare a demigod to a man? And Gilgamesh could be no god – lean back into the cold metal of the bench that they rest on, weary eyes resting on the memorial.

They have stopped talking now, and each are lost in thoughts of the past.

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Gilgamesh:

Gilgamesh, the main character in the Epic of Gilgamesh, an Akkadian poem. He is said to be a demigod of superhuman strength who built the city walls of Uruk to defend his people. Gilgamesh is thought to have been a Sumerian king that ruled sometime between 2800 and 2500 BC.

Enkidu was formed from clay and saliva by the goddess of creation, and he was made to rid Gilgamesh of his arrogance. He embodies the wild or natural world. Enkidu was Gilgamesh's closest companion, and his death inspired Gilgamesh's quest to escape death.

Voice & Song

The entrance to Northgate boasts a generous area of concrete, perfect for performing. Today, a lady sits there in her electric wheelchair. She appears to be by herself, although two other women have been seen to walk past her frequently. She holds an instrument in her hands, although, truly, her greatest instrument is her voice. It is sweeter than that of the birds, and many people have stopped to listen, even if it was just for a mere second.

The two women that have been walking past take a seat on one of the many benches, smiling serenely at the singing woman. The pair cease their talking, and are instead paying the closest attention to the lyrics of the song she is singing.

Her song is more like a story; she tells tales of gods, and of monsters. She weaves intricate tales of betrayal, love, and hate. If one only paid attention to her song for long enough, they would see the images conjured by her words. The battle scenes she sung of would play out right in front of your eyes, and the love her lyrics longed for would cause any listener's heart to ache.

Aoede often played for the mortals, and yet so few of them listened to the magic she was creating.

Her sisters, Melete and Mneme, were sitting on the seat near her. They rarely missed an opportunity to listen to the Muse of Song. Would anyone freely give up a chance to hear such a being play, or sing? Surely if these mortals knew just who sung for them from outside, they would pay her all the attention in the world. One or two threw coins at her as she walked past, but what are coins to one of the three muses? She plays not for their play money, but instead for

the few walking past that will listen and not forget. Those who will go on and tell tales of the songs, and battles, and loves.

And so Aoede keeps singing.

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Aoede:

Aoede was one of the three original muses; her sisters were Melete and Mneme. She was the muse of voice and song.

Wannion

A woman in workout gear strides through the shopping centre. Of course, she blends in with all the other people who have just come from the gym, or some other sporting activity. She does not stand out; dark hair, dark eyes, lean and strong body. She walks over to the supermarket and enters, presumably to purchase food or water.

Scathach has just finished training for the day. The Shadow is good at blending in with her surroundings; after all it is what she has spent her whole life doing. The outfit she wears hardly gives an insight into the fighting she has done. The Warrior Maid may now train mortals, but she once trained the legendary Cú Chulainn, preparing him to defend their world, their isles.

Scathach's body has never felt so old and tired. After centuries of fighting and training, she wishes merely to blend in fully. Oh, if only her bones could be put to rest.

But alas, this warrior will continue on, every day. For one day there will come a time when a hero is again needed, and who better to train them? No, she will trudge through her false mortal life, waiting patiently for the next set of horrors that strike the earth.

The lady returns, exiting the store with her hands full of bags. She stands more upright this time, and seems to possess less qualities of a shadow. She exits the centre looking weary but determined; a fire of some sort has been re-lit in her soul.

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Scathach:

Scathach is a figure in Irish Mythology. She is said to be a legendary Scottish warrior woman and martial arts trainer. She is said to have trained the legendary hero Cú Chulainn. She is often referred to as the Shadow or Warrior Maid.

Moon and Ant

A pair is seen wandering through the centre; their gaze passing over each of the shops. The wins seem to be chatting amiably, although neither seem incredibly intrigued by their surroundings. They pass by many stores, until one in particular catches the sight of the male. He drags his sister over to the display.

Artemis has always been drawn to the moon; her brother to music, words, and beauty.

A gorgeous rotating sphere sits in the front window. As it spins, stars fly out, creating constellations that cover the room. A moon is nestled in the centre, casting a soft silvery glow on its surrounds.

Her heart aches for the great unknown; oh, if only she could return to the universe.

The male turns to his sister, a grin lighting up his face. Did he do this for her? His smile seems to be for her, searching for her approval and appreciation of this thing of beauty.

Apollo knows how she yearns for her beloved moon and stars, and so he has brought her here: as close to home as she may get for eons.

She turns to him, a large smile beginning to light up her face. A tear rolls down her cheek and she hugs him, grateful. His smile continues to grow at this show of love. He wipes her tears, before taking her hand and the sphere over to the counter. He pulls out his wallet, clumsy hands fumbling with the money he is trying to procure.

Gods and Goddesses aren't used to feeble mortal money, made of plastics and paper.

They exit the store together, looking joyful. He has given her a beautiful gift, that can be assured.

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Apollo and Artemis

Apollo and Artemis were two twins, the children of Zeus and Leto. Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, forests and hills, the moon, and archery. Apollo was the god of music, poetry, art, oracles, medicine, sun, light, and knowledge.

Future

An elderly lady is seated at a table in the food court, muttering to herself. The school kids that come of an afternoon skirt around her; most have names for the old woman, names that should not be repeated.

She frequents this area often, and many times she tries to reach out to people, telling them stories of the future. Her tales are often alarming; she speaks in riddles that few of the shoppers can understand.

Rarely, someone will sit with her, ready to listen to her talk. They believe her; a pair of twins, an old man with a dog, two old war veterans. Some of them copy down her prophecies, some just listen to her words. All pay careful attention, and don't seem shocked when they hear what she predicts.

The Oracle of Delphi is old, wise, and trusted. Many mortals pass her off as old or crazy, but the gods know her true powers. They are wise enough to know that they should listen to her tales, and take heed of her stories. There have been too many times-when they have not listened, and reaped the consequences.

Hades knows firsthand that the oracle should be listened to. He once brushed off her words, and is now stuck in a mortal body. Oh, if only he had listened, this could have been avoided. His dearest Persephone would be at his side again, and no longer would he be troubled by a decaying shell.

The High Priestess is not one to be ignored. Pythia has lived for eons; her wisdom knows no bounds. Her place in the Temple of Apollo was earned, not given.

Too often people brush off those who are wise or trying to help, and so many will regret it. Those tales of divorce and war will only come true, and had they merely listened, so many outcomes could have been different.

She sits there in the food court. Still, she continues to offer guidance and predictions. And still, people ignore and mock her. But she knows what their futures hold.

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Oracle of Delphi

The Oracle of Delphi, also known as Pythia, was the High Priestess of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. She gave many prophecies to the people of Delphi.