

# Something there?

CAPSA: Creative Labs Student Anthology  
2021



# **Something There?**

**CAPSA: Creative Labs Student Anthology 2021**

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# The Mirror in the Tunnel

*Royce Haddock*

It had been a long day at the office for Frank. Nothing he wasn't used to. Another one of his stories had been a hit, even more exceptional considering it was his first time on air. His boss once said he had a knack for seeing through others' smoke and mirrors. Today, everyone and their grandfather came to know the type of guy Terrison Hall really was.

"A bad move," Frank smirked to himself.

The clouds shook from above him.

Frank's thoughts continued to linger about the day's happenings. He imagined a vast number of families across the country, their eyes and ears fixed to his story broadcasted on all of their televisions. He could only imagine the reach getting wider with each new story, each new person that would slip up. Over the years, his mind had grown to believe two things; one, that the world had no shortage of people who screw up, and two, that no single person on this earth is careful enough, that they will always leave something behind. Except him, of course. These leaks had already been out, and every other newscast would cover it eventually. What difference did it make to Terrison Hall if he was just one more, just a tad bit ahead of the curve?

It would also be a long journey home for Frank. Mary would be asleep right now, and later wake up, maybe around 30 minutes before his arrival. But every time, swiftly and soundly, she would drift asleep in the living room chair. It was a ritual she had begun to practice as his nights in the office had gotten later. Tonight, however, she would be awake. And she **will** wait a lot longer.

The car's headlights had finally awoken behind him.

"Huh?" Frank muttered. *How long had the car been there?* Never on his late night drives had he seen another car, particularly at this hour, on this road? The main road was nowhere in sight, and a long ways away. That had never bothered him, the less traffic the better. But it was tonight that his mind decided to make it apparent to him.

As the car approached, whoever was driving turned the headlights brighter. Frank tried his best to focus on the road, but his eyes had met their height of curiosity, and he quickly began glancing between the road and his rear-view mirror. He tried his best to make out anything about this car, the type, the person, but the headlights had a perfectly disguising nature to them. On the other hand, they could see as clearly as they wanted into his car. Then they shut off, as if the driver had seen everything they needed to. A flood of panic began to crawl up his throat like a spider with a leisure-like nature. But he swallowed, and it was mostly gone. The other car began to speed up. Frank switched lanes quickly to let them through, but the other car followed his action very soon after. The spider had begun to make its trip once again. *Maybe they're just confused*, he thought. Once again, he switched lanes, then waited. But with a slight pause, it followed suit once more. *They wanted to close the distance*. Suddenly, all the air around him felt thick, weighted. He also began to feel what he could only describe as a sort of pressure in the atmosphere; it made him feel like he was a hollow shell at the bottom of a deep ocean. The closer the car, the more intense the feeling.

He once again tried to make out something, anything, about this car, but the darkness didn't provide any assistance. He had tried

squinting, rubbing his eyes, everything, to see if he could grasp even the smallest detail. Only when the car had gotten close could he make out some figure, sitting in the driver's seat, also alone. *Maybe I'm just overreacting*, he attempted to calm himself, but every ounce of his body roared in opposition. *Just don't let it catch up* repeatedly echoed through his head—but why? What could happen? He couldn't find out. Everything he had known told him he couldn't.

He also became very aware of how long this road home really was. It seemed to go on for an endless amount of miles. He glanced back in his rear view mirror. The silhouette continued to drive forward, observing him, unmoving. They were undoubtedly determined to do something. That he had known. But that wasn't what terrified him the most. What did however, was how with almost no information on who this person may be, the mere obscure figure had a strange familiarity to it. He had known this person. *Who could they be?* He questioned himself. He had written a lot of stories about a lot of people. Almost all aided in drastically altering the public perspective of them. But not a single one was as personal as Terrison Hall's. *No, this couldn't be him. I just released the story today*, quickly dismissing the idea. But it continued to live on in the corner of his mind.

He had been lost in his own thoughts. He was suddenly in a tunnel. He had looked in his mirror and the car was almost driving right beside him. His curiosity was overwhelming. He turned his head to his left, made direct eye contact with his pursuer. It was looking back. It had been the whole time.

A shiny hollow shell at the bottom of the sea.

So deep and dark and deep and dark.

Unnerving, unending, and unrelenting.

He had become glass. It saw everything. It knew **everything**.

He began breathing again. Without hesitation, he stomped the gas with everything in his body. His eyes were glued once again on the rear-view mirror, as he sped through the tunnel. The distance between them expanded a fair amount. The tunnel felt even longer than the road, but at some point, he emerged. While inside the tunnel, the murky blue clouds had reached their threshold, and finally burst with a heavy downpour of rain. Frank hadn't in the slightest idea noticed, his car still in an almost perpetual state of motion. It was when he was at the turn that he snapped back to reality, and released the gas. A tree stood tall, right off the road, but in his way. The car had finally stopped.

"Uhh..." Frank groaned. His eyes focused in. The car had held pretty well, but was definitely nowhere near any drivable condition. The rear view mirror was also gone. The first thing he had noticed about himself was his leg. The pain radiated from his ankle all the way to his knee. Then his arm. After taking a few breaths, he opened the car door with his other arm. He manually lifted his legs to hop out, but fell out of the car. He then sat up, and decided to just sit. He listened closely...and in the distance, he heard cars. Without realizing it, he had at some point gone on another path that happened to be closer to the main road.

"Thank...thank gosh," he sighed in relief. But then he remembered. He looked back at the tunnel waiting. Soon after, there it was. It stood on two feet, the car no longer in sight.

"No...no." Frank muttered.

It began to walk at a slow, methodical pace toward him. The closer it got, he began to see short flashes of light, things that he had wanted to keep in the darkest corner of his mind. Every emotion from before soon came back to him. Each time Frank recoiled, the

figure stopped, waiting for him to adjust. It then continued its path. He had no choice but to sit there. Finally, it arrived, crouched in front of him, and reached out its hand to his face.

And then in the space of a single blink, he noticed that he was looking at himself, and there he sat, surrounded by puddles of water, like a shell on the beach.

And he began to laugh.

# This House

*Hazel Stover-White*

This house was summer  
It was Slip-n-Slides and lime popsicles  
Trips to the park and walks to the liquor store  
Driveway birthdays and backyard parties  
It was my Mom's cackle and my Dad's raven call  
It was my extensive Barbie collection  
And my Mom's collection of ladybugs, owls, flowers, handmade clothes,  
Chinese currency, little jewelry boxes, and plants  
This house was "Hey, can Adanna sleepover?" "On second thought, I'll go  
over there"  
This house was throwing up on the kitchen floor and making up dance  
routines in the office  
It was talking to my turtle and reading books in time out  
It was playing dressup and school  
Spending hours giving every Barbie a new name, a whole family, a specific  
age and an occupation  
This house was next door to my neighbor's  
The neighbor who taught me how to swim and showed me the magic of  
fairies  
Soon, this house got new stairs  
And then a new gate  
A new driveway  
And then wanted new people  
It kicked us out with its own legs, slapped us across our faces, spat in our  
water, and flipped over our cars  
This house was mine but didn't want to be anymore

## **The Red Carpet**

Oh! The black gate!  
And the stairs? Harder to take on after a full day  
The little things too though  
Like the bump in the wood  
The rotting on the ceiling  
The hill where the T.V. stand stood  
The space for a dining area (but no dining area)  
The singular bedroom  
And what a bedroom it was!  
Bigger than my last though  
Cleaner than my last though  
With a huge mirror  
My own T.V.  
Matching furniture  
But what set it to flame?  
The red bottom  
The red shag  
The red carpet

# Jacaranda

*Renee Penunuri*

I don't even know who you are  
Let alone what kind of species you are  
You stand there with your contorted body  
Your seed was corrupt yet you still managed  
Baggage laying away from your kin  
You are the middle child  
Nervous like the Man of Tin  
Feeling like you aren't quite spicy nor plain, just mild  
People would never say you are an ugly thing  
Because you are far from it  
At all times of the day, you are divine  
But at a certain time  
Your extensions and malleable leaves  
Prone to dancing in the wind  
**You Glow!**  
Right when the sun kisses all living things to bed  
You seem to be the only exception  
The sun marvels at your feathered boa  
And just maybe  
At least sometimes  
The world grants you flowers for all your hard work  
Dotted all on your hair  
It seems like you practically don't even care  
I watch you from my lair  
Guess I can be called your secret admirer  
I was torn when they came  
You were flourishing

The nourishing of my soul halted when they sliced you

Why her?!

Your kin was considered a danger

Morrisey would think it would be a privilege to die by your side

Yet they hurt you nevertheless

Ashamed to even perceive the notion

I thought you had stopped all motion

On a day like any other

I thought to check up on you

**You!**

You had grown once again and not so much to my surprise

You were a prize

If only people could see you through my eyes

# A Disturbing Night, Chapter 1

*Jaime Fulgencio*

*Late at night inside a small, well-lit and peaceful building. Outside, rain pours down and thunder strikes from time to time.*

"It was nice working with you Mr. Willis. Luckily, I'm done with your surgery. You should be able to have a nice funeral now."

The Mortician hums and takes off her grimy gloves, throwing them towards the trash. She then thoroughly washes her pale hands under the cold running water and removes her glasses, setting them aside to be cleaned later.

It was quiet during her shift most of the time, other than the soft jazz playing in the background. She holds her hands together to form a pool of water, dips her face, then huffs before grabbing a paper towel. Finishing up, she picks up her glasses and turns around with a sigh.

She puts on a new pair of gloves to clean up. Without looking down she removes them from the box and stares up at the clock above. It's stuck: 1:30 A.M. She slowly grins, then excitedly returns to her desk.

She grabs a knife from underneath and begins to rummage through the drawer. She's impatient. She's hungry. Then, quickly walking down the empty halls, she giggles. And bumps into the late-night security guard who jumps in slight surprise.

"Oh! Uh, I didn't know anyone was here tonight," he states with a light chuckle.

The Mortician avoids his gaze and brushes her hair to the side giving him a small smile.

“My apologies. But I’m in a bit of a hurry.”

The security guard nods, holding onto his baton, tapping it against his fingers.

“Wha-what’s with the knife you got there?”

The Mortician abruptly raises the knife in front of her in surprise, making the guard swerve back.

The Mortician chuckles, “I was heading to eat a corpse!”

The security guard backs up slowly nodding. He looks uncomfortable.

She then slowly lowers her knife, along with her eyes gazing down at the floor.

“Uhm. It’s a joke. I was going to eat some cake,” she quietly replies.

He awkwardly grins.

“Well... have fun then.”

The Mortician quickly nods and walks away from him heading to her original direction from before, looking straight ahead in embarrassment.

She looks down at her knife. *I should’ve just said I was going to eat something normal. Well that’s what I get for talking to corpses every day and not living people.*

She heads to the break room, and then to the fridge. She was able to eat her chocolate cake, with strawberries on the side, eating in pleasant silence, in opposition to her thoughts.

She looks out the window towards the thunder. She smiles just a little, feeling better.

*Crying as always. Why so sad? But then again. It’s beautiful when you cry from time to time.* She amusingly trails her fingered glove against the cold window.

Suddenly the lights turn off.

She sighs. This thing rarely happens, but The Mortician was used to working in the dark. She puts her plastic container away, then cleans the cakey knife in her mouth. She prefers using metal utensils rather than plastic. She was already wasting gloves that she uses every day.

Exiting the room in silence, she begins to head home, walking down to her van parked below the building.

Through the halls, easily maneuvering through the darkness with the help from the little light from the windows and small reflections, she hears multiple footsteps and whispers from up the stairs.

The Mortician's heart starts racing.

No one was supposed to be here?

Was it her coworkers?

No, no. They shouldn't be. It wouldn't make sense; they had earlier conversed about going out of town. And none of them would come in this late to work.

Taking deep slow breaths and standing still in her place, The Mortician removed the wet knife from her mouth. She felt afraid to meet them face to face.

She thought of walking back but, what would that accomplish? These are trespassers. Should she let them go, and be pinned as a coward?

But there wasn't enough time—a group of four. They were wearing jackets, with hoodies, and flashlights.

Suddenly The Mortician's eyes widened as if like lightning perfectly striking the sky in a horror movie.

The intruders scream in fear and dash off.

The Mortician freezes momentarily, then pursues.

She recognizes one of their uniforms, from a nearby college where a teacher had recently died.

What were they doing here? Did they miss him or something?  
But why sneak in?

“Over here! And lock the door!” One of them yells.

The last one staggers and shuts the door closed right in front of The Mortician’s face. She then hears their muffled yelling over each other from inside.

The Mortician bangs against the door and tries twisting the knob.

She hears a louder scream.

The Mortician in a hurry, in a panic, produces her keys, but then hears a window breaking, somewhere from inside the room.

Shaking, she continues to search for the key. Failing a few times to put it in through the lock, she finally manages it, and, slowly opening the door, peeks inside to see one of the intruders, a girl, inside noticing her.

The girl yelps and jumps from the window.

The Mortician sighs, looking around. They had all left. She quickly looks out the window to see three of them run off.

*Three?*

The Mortician’s blood goes cold. She looks around the room once more. Gripping both her hands and trying to breathe.

She looks over to the one place where the other could be. Across at the end of the room. Away from all the chemicals, and glasses.

The closet.

It was used for lab coats, so there was enough room to fit a couple of corpses in there. But in a worse situation such as this...a living person.

She walks nervously, watching every step. Quietly as she could to not disturb the room. Past the clean glass vases, cups, and bowls.

And stepping over broken glass. She slowly puts her left hand to the closet holding the handle. And quickly swings it open, jumping back in an instance of fright, raising her knife up.

She sees dark brown curly hair, with hair pins. A young Scholar with that dark blue sweater of a uniform, was sitting down hugging his knees, looking up at The Mortician.

The Mortician slowly walks back not knowing what else to do, almost slipping onto broken glass before catching herself on the desk.

The Scholar slowly stands up, almost staggering forward.

“Are you okay?” He asks.

The Mortician’s voice gets caught in her throat.

“I- I- you- sorry. Uhm. Wha-”

The Scholar warmly smiles at her. Though she notices a bit of awkwardness behind his expression.

“No. I’m sorry. This situation is really bad and I can explain! Let me take the blame but leave the others out of this!”

The Mortician furrows her brows, staying silent except her legs which are visibly shaking. She squeezes her arm tightly. Tight enough to produce a twinge of pain to distract her from her fright.

The Scholar notices her shaking, and puts his hands up in surprise.

“Please. Please don’t have a panic attack! Just report me and get this over with.”

The Mortician nods and points the knife his way while panting hard breaths.

“I’m- I’m... not having a panic attack. Just... breathing.”

He suddenly starts taking slow deep breaths while looking at her and moving his hands down the sides of her arms. The Mortician is confused but notices this is a technique to calm her down. She breathes, following his breath for a minute, setting her knife down, finally calming down.

“Better?” He asks.

Suddenly the Mortician turns red, points her knife back at him. He jumps, reaching his hands back up in shock. She then looks away, putting her knife down. She looks towards his feet.

“Your leg is bleeding!”

He looks down as if he hadn’t noticed.

“Oh! If I die, it’s a good thing I’m here then!”

The Mortician couldn’t believe what she had just heard.

# Mangoes VS Pineapples

*Diego Perez*

In the year 1982 the Mangoes and the Pineapples lived at peace. They were all doing fine until one day the gardener ran out of space for both fruits. Then the all out war began.

50 years into the future the war raged on, with no one surrendering. But something had to be done. During those fifty years the Mangoes and the Pineapples made allies to help them in the fight against each other. Pineapples were allied with the Dragon Fruits and Passion Fruits, the Mangoes with every other fruit—they possessed more weapons, seed shooters and pit launchers. Meanwhile, the Apples staged a resistance...

BOOM!BOOM!

Blimps dropped the new weapons and armor made of pistachios. The Mangoes had an idea of using the blimps to shoot the pits from the pit launcher down from the sky. The Pineapples acquired a train and put their seed shooters in one of the cars to shoot the Mangoes. The Mangoes and Pineapples made better weapons and better pistachio armor. The apple tree died and so did The Resistance. Except then, more chaos; The Resistance dropped bombs out of planes. Everything was on fire. But finally the Fruit Gods came. “Fifty years of constant death just to see who gets the garden? Look around you.” The war hadn’t helped anyone.



Diego Perez, *Mangoes VS Pineapples*, Summer 2021

# Something There?

*Marcella Quintanar*

It's 3:58 AM. I gotta sleep.  
I'll never fix my sleeping schedule  
Am I nocturnal?  
Nah. Maybe?  
I mean my dark circles say otherwise  
Okay deep breath in, bed time

I just stand here in the middle of her room  
Staring, but I'm not a creep...  
I just want to know she's okay  
She should really go to bed earlier  
Maybe that's why she looks like a racoon

My eyes stay open staring up  
Another deep breath...  
Oh. I can't breathe through my  
left nostril. Ugh allergies are so annoying  
Wait, I can't breathe  
through one nostril.

What if it's...  
not enough  
oxygen??  
I could pass out  
and **DIE**  
before  
the sun  
even  
comes  
up

Hahaha, okay I feel bad for calling her a racoon  
Oh! She's... is she frozen?  
I go up to her. She's breathing fast  
Is she alright? What should I do?!  
I can't possibly touch her

I immediately sit up in bed

I can feel?

Something is there

But I see nothing

Darkness not only consumes  
my head and its thoughts  
but also my room

The racoon is looking at me  
Wait, she can SEE me?  
No, no. No. That can't be  
She's staring into my soul  
I mean that's all I am  
after all,  
just a soul,  
a presence.

I squint my eyes

It's hard to look around

my room without glasses

and the only light being the

thin, dim line shining from the bathroom

I'm nothing

It's nothing

## The Yosemite Atmosphere

In the great Yosemite Valley lies  
The most beauteous nature  
The bright orange tufted poppy  
flowers smiled in the sun  
Ever so gently the breeze waved  
Them in the majestic meadow  
Giant cinnamon-brown Sequoia  
Trees soared into the great skies  
These huge trees seemed  
Transcendental in our normal world  
The teal, crystal clear river  
Meandered through the  
Calm forest  
Sunlight gave the water such  
Lambency, it was so very luminous  
Oh, this flourishing forest, what  
Beauteous nature you bring  
In the great Yosemite Valley lies  
The most beauteous creatures  
Petite and speedy white-headed  
Woodpeckers roam throughout  
In the mountainous forests  
They peck, peck, peck at the trees  
Strong and scrutinizing  
Black bears rubbing their

Backs on bark  
They may stand on their  
Hind legs to simply study  
The ambience  
Scurrying around are the  
Little burnt orange  
Sierra Salamanders  
Lounging and rejuvenating  
On the rocks by the rushing river  
Oh, this flourishing forest  
What beauteous creatures  
You bring



# Breathless Angel

*After The Young Martyr by Paul Delaroche*

Sleep is the cousin of death  
She looks dead but still alive  
An angel but without breath  
She could no longer thrive  
Her perfect skin and blonde head  
Such an awful shame she is  
Now dead

Even in the darkest of the night  
Her peaceful face seemed to glow  
She was a bright, gleaming light  
Her skin must've felt like soft dough  
Dressed up like a beautiful bride  
Her gentle hands were  
Crossed and tied

Death does not take the  
Old but the ripe  
A young woman who  
Understood all  
Knew mature knowledge,  
Every type.

She had a ripe figure, plump

And tall  
Beneath the cold, clear water  
Eternal sleep by man's laughter.



# **BEAUTY**

*Dayanara Zuleta-Lemus*

*March 1, 2026*

The memory of her eyes like paintings in the sun. Ding, the memory of my ring that fell like a leaf dancing in the wind. To my surprise when I saw her. The memory of green hues as her plants danced like fire in the wind. The memory of her graceful sight like an animal that I will never see again. The memory as her hair glowed like stars in the sky when the sun hit her. The memory of brown being as lovely as a rose.

This was the first time I had ever met her. I didn't know her name but she was the apple of my eye. Like a dolphin I will never forget her. As she walked in the room the scent of wisteria filled it to the brim. Ooh wisteria the flowers which I began to love. Every time I went to her greenhouse I was possessed with euphoria. I loved plants but her being took over me. Her voice like a bell. Surprising and quick. Her eyes attacked me like an animal. Is this love? Or is this an illusion?

Her smile so soft like a cloud, oh how I wish I could touch. They say people sin with their eyes. Am I doing a sin? Why is it that love is the hardest thing that I have ever come across? Why is it that only you make me feel this way? Your voice when you said your name to me, Mystery. Ooh how it still rings in my ears. Your eyes are like honey. Mystery, you are like a dragon.

How is it that you are not an illusion. My shoes danced on their own as I followed you like a raccoon waiting for food. You are my everything. I want you with our defects and all. I won't eat you like a

piranha. Why is it that I am not important to you? Why do you smile at them and not me? Am I not inspiring to you? I fill my bouquets with red roses, dahlia, and red tulips. Does this not scream "Love?" Enduring Passion, I am growing like a rose. Perfect Love is all I offer. How am I not committed?

I could fill a book with all the ways I can describe you. Your shoes are crimson like picotee. Your pants always a new shade of blue. Your hues like the sky. Your shirt that wears your personality. Your jewelry that shimmers like Christmas lights. Skin so pale and emotionless, yet you still glow like fireflies. Our class is the reason I live. You are my life.

*March 1, 2028*

Spring has started. It's been two years since I first came across you. Yet you grow more radiant everyday like the sun. Never thought brown could be as lovely as a swan. Oh spring, how beautiful. Green so vibrant like the sun. Your hair turns blond when the light catches it. Your eyes look like gems. Love.

*March 1, 2029*

Today you announced that you are leaving. Why why why. I can't think of anything else. My head is like a hurricane. Why would you leave when you love it here? You have given no explanation. Can't you see, you are my desire. Red roses, dahlia, and red tulips. Goodbye the apple of my eye. My shoes will no longer dance at this green house. Goodbye my love, my heart is on fire. I thought of quitting but I decided not to. Lilies, chrysanthemum, and wisteria. This is my bouquet. My eyes want to cry an ocean. Yet I stand tall, fate is such a crazy thing. "Lilies, chrysanthemum, and wisteria..."

What a unique combination.” I look up to the voice that is soft like cream.

“Oh sorry I didn’t introduce myself, I am Rey. Nice to meet you.”

“Hi I’m Maiales,” I chuckle. “Nice to meet you too.”

“So what inspired this bouquet, Maiales?”

“Love” I replied to her, with no hesitation....

## The Silver Box

The silver box shimmered as if the sun were right on top of it. Silver like a new spoon. Shimmering endlessly. Once opened, small circles within it also begin to shine. Yellow, blue, red, and silver. Beautiful.

Pulling out one ring, it shimmered as the sun through the window began to hit it gently. As you keep holding onto it, its bright resilient blue turns green. Slipping through my hand with surprise, it falls. Ding ding ding.

## **Words**

Words, some are hard to say, while others are not. Words beautiful like stars. Unexplainable. Words so elegant like swans. Words, hated like weeds that never stop growing. How is it that a simple word, "No," can make me cry like a baby. Words, as unique as people. Words, as colorful and delicious as fruits. Words, I say scary. Words, anxiety, vulnerability. Words that you can never let go of. Words that can never be unsaid. Words that manipulate you and grab a hold of you like vines. Words that impact you forever. Innocence, delusion, fear. Words, I say mysteries. Words so many like the endless sea. Words, delicate, strong, meaningful. Words that make you see, hear, and smell. Imagination. Words that stay stuck like something thick in your throat. Words that I can't spit out like water. Words that walk and run on their own. Words that look into me like owl eyes. Words joyful yet emotionless. Words, well I say weebs.

# A Ballad in Pieces

Sofija Aviles-Lindsey

This had probably happened before, right? A girl, a feather quill, a half peeled orange... totally not the start of a bad joke she'd probably told in a bar somewhere...

*Oh how the tables have turned,* she thought to herself as she stared down at the two items on the stone table in front of her. Becoming a part of the joke she'd most likely once told was not how she wanted to start her first test of the semester. Bardin Moira Hellorah had woken up this morning ready for this test. She was going to ace Mr. Skrumple's Alchemic Algebra exam. She had slept well and studied hard. But it was precisely the "sleeping well" part that tipped her off to the fact she was late...

Within the hollow of this tree there were nothing but bones. She knew her own were broken—legs, pelvis, ribs, arms—but oddly she felt no pain, oddly she felt nothing at all. Still, she could not sit up. Moira knew she was dying but she could not stop what was coming. She prayed for salvation. Salvation never came but a silver knotted rope did, a silver rope that dropped from heaven and dangled within reaching distance. So she did what she could and reached for it. Grasping this thread with all of the strength left in her broken body, she miraculously heaved herself to her feet and began to climb and climb. But a few feet up the rope, something began to feel wrong, like she was forgetting something important and, looking back down at the hollow where she was so sure her life would end, she realized what she had forgotten. But by that time salvation had already come.

“I’ll tell you the tale of the dancer and the moon—better yet, I’ll sing it to you!”

She raised her lute made of rich maple wood, so brown it was almost black, and speckled with silverlike stars. The room erupted in applause and cheers as she hovered a few inches above the stage and began to play, moving her hips to the music and singing like her life depended on it. She always sang like this. Always did, always had. But was there a “had?” Of course there was. The tree of bones was her had-been. Moira was her had-been. Now she was Midnight Sun, Goddess of Stories and Song, spinning tales for all to listen to. And by God she was going to give these people a show, even if it meant telling tales that tore her heart in two.

Her new life as a Goddess hadn't quite been going as planned. She hadn't made the best impression on the other Gods and Goddesses of the Cosmic Ocean. There were so many Gods of music and stories here, it felt like she was struggling to swim in a vast ocean filled with so much of the same thing. It was stifling. No matter what she did, her stories fell unnoticed, and her lute song went unheard. Something had to change, but what? Would she drown in the weight of expectations—or lack thereof—or would she learn to float? She made the conscious decision to pursue the latter. She would not falter, she would not give in and fade into memory. She would earn her place in the world of the Gods. And a plan was already forming inside her mind, showing her how she would find her way. From that point forward she was going to do things her way.

