

Goddess of Desire

Faye Valentine

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Staring out the large bay window overlooking the vast rolling fields stretching as far as the eye could see, Madison watched her children – ranging in age from three to eleven years, playing without a care in the world. Eyes going to Pymrae – one of her three eldest Ankathean triplets, she softly sighed.

“Is everything okay, Goddess?” Passyrra asked her wife.

“Am I a good woman?” Madison asked as she watched the high afternoon sun glinting off the green scales of her daughter’s swaying tail.

“I don’t know anyone kinder or more compassionate, Goddess. What’s wrong? I may not be divinity, but perhaps I can help.”

Eyes not leaving her children, Madison once again sighed. “I was there at the birth of this universe and witnessed the last atoms surrendering to time. I’ve seen kingdoms rise and nations fall. I’ve created an entire species so that my sentient AI wife could have a real body and family of her own, and I’ve observed others going extinct. I’ve got the combined knowledge of ten thousand universes in my brain. I know all that ever was, currently is, and ever will be and can recall even the most obscure information with one hundred percent accuracy. I remember all and forget nothing. A hundred and seven trillion years. Before returning to my own time, I lived every second of it. I’ve seen acts of heroism and kindness and unspeakable atrocities. How good of a woman would you think me knowing I have the power to prevent every bit of it but won’t? What sort of benevolent Goddess sits back and does nothing while her own flesh and blood wreaks havoc across the universe resulting in the death of billions and the destruction of entire worlds?”

“G-Goddess?”

“Look at them out there playing as if they don’t have a care in the world. Look at their smiles, listen to their laughter. Innocent. Pure. So full of joy.”

“You’re scaring me, Mistress. Please, tell me what’s going on? What are you alluding to? What are our children going to do? If something bad is going to happen you need to stop it.”

“What would you have me do, Passyrra? If I strip her of her free will our other children will rebel and act in her stead. If I lock her away, our other children will rebel and act in her stead. If I erase her from existence then I lose my sanity and do far worse than anything our children could ever dream up.”

“I don’t understand, Goddess. Why would one of our children become such a monster? How? Which one?”

“As you know, I’ve suppressed our children’s divine powers until such a time as they prove themselves worthy. In twelve years, Remmi, Pymrae, and Sovathia do just that by saving a distant world from annihilation thus saving the nearly twenty billion beings calling it home. Unfortunately, they will be confined in a ship when their divinity is unleashed. Unable to control it, Pymrae lashes out and kills her sisters. Devastated, she tries bringing them back to life and when that fails because I alone have that power, she... she breaks. Returning home, she begs me to resurrect them. You beg me to bring them back. Zeldrai and Nirrathia beg as well, but as heartbroken as I am at having lost two of my children, I refuse. Not out of malice or some twisted hope of teaching Pymrae a lesson. No, I vowed the day I announced myself to earth that I would never use my power in such a manner even to save the ones I love. After destroying our home and before leaving, Pymrae vows to make me suffer as I’ve made all of you suffer. You,

Zeldrai, and Nirrathia leave me and return to Ankathea. Things just get worse from there. Now do you see what a monster I am?"

"There has to be something you can do, Goddess? Teach them how to control their powers. Break your rule and bring our children back from the dead. I can't... how could you... I don't understand."

"No, you don't. And neither does anyone else," Madison sighed. "Holding dominion over life and death is an awesome and terrible responsibility which, if misused, can lead to consequences beyond imagining. There is a natural order to things and to go against that... no, I cannot do it even for the ones I love."

"Then teach them about their powers. Show them how to control it!"

"I can't."

"Why the hell not!"

"In order to teach them to control their powers they need to have powers to control. If I unlock it before they're minds and bodies are ready it'll destroy them."

"I don't believe you!" Passyrra lashed out for the first time since meeting the Goddess that had created her entire species. "You're just a greedy bitch that wants total power and control for herself. If you can't save our children from destroying the fucking universe then what good are you?" Drawing her hand back, Passyrra struck her wife across the cheek and in an instant she saw flashes, memories of things to come. She saw the countless threads splintering off into alternate timelines as every possible decision was made. She saw Madison sitting down with their three eldest daughters and explaining who and what they really are. She saw their potential unlocked and the devastating aftermath caused by unimaginable power suddenly plowing through their veins. She saw Madison explaining to Pymrae what will happen before locking her away and all of their other children rebelling against them, eventually unlocking their divinity and the horrors caused in their vengeful wake.

In the blink of an eye, she saw everything her wife spoke of and more and knew it to be true. Before the single beating of a heart, she saw the unbearable anguish her lover had been enduring for more than a hundred trillion years. For that one fleeting moment, she saw the vastness of the universe and understood what it meant to be a Goddess and it broke her heart.

"And now you understand."

"I am so sorry, Goddess. There has to be something we can do. Maybe there are answers in another universe?"

"I'm already doing the only thing I can. While time passes normally for anyone over the age of twenty, it passes a million times slower for those younger. So, for every year that passes here, a million passes for the rest of the universe."

"So, we'll never see them growing older? We'll never get to see them falling in love, starting families of their own, or anything else parents want for their children?"

"You've seen what happens, Passyrra. You know this can only end one way."

"Only if their divinity awakens! Don't let it. Take it away from them."

"To do that would make them mortal. Do you really want to watch them grow old and die?"

"Better a short life lived well than a long life of hatred and horror."

"I'd rather spend as much time with them as I can."

"I understand, Goddess, but with all due respect, you're not giving them life, you're robbing them of it. By keeping them here for millions of years you're depriving them of growing

up, meeting new people, falling in love, traveling the world. All the things normal men and women experience.”

“But they’re not normal! They’re divinity. They’re gods and goddess with the power to create universes and end all life.”

“They’re also monsters in the making. I know it sounds cold-hearted, Goddess, but you’re not doing them any favors by keeping them here suspended in time. And I’m still not convinced it’s impossible to teach them how to control their power.”

“It’s not a light switch that can just be turned on and off. Once on, that’s it. There’s no going back.”

“Light switches have dimmers. Come on, Goddess, you’ve got the collective knowledge of ten-thousand universes in your head. Are you telling me there isn’t something in there capable of dialing it down several notches. And if there isn’t, then create it. You have an infinite number of timelines in your head, be the intelligent, creative woman I know you to be and create another where our children grow into the strong, confident, loving and compassionate men and women they deserve to be.”

“You’re right,” Madison smiled as she pulled her wife in for a hug and kiss. *I’m sorry, my love, but I can’t let you live with the pain and knowledge that our children have the potential for such vile acts*, she thought as she erased the entirety of the conversation from Passyrra’s mind and replaced it with the much happier memory of a long and pleasurable embrace.

“I love you so much, Goddess,” Passyrra purred.

“I love you too.”

“Um, not gonna lie, Goddess, I sort of forget why I came in.”

“That’s okay. I’ve just been thinking about the kids and their futures.”

“Oh? Anything I can help you with, Goddess?”

“As a matter of fact, I’m going to need all of your help. After a great deal of contemplation, I’ve decided to unlock their divine potential. But not all at once or immediately. I’ve been inspired recently to create something that will allow their powers to manifest slowly while they learn to control them. Once they are made I’ll need your help teaching them.”

“Of course, Goddess, but how are we supposed to teach them about being Gods and Goddesses when we’re mere mortals?”

“I’ll teach them about divinity while the three of you will teach them about everything else. We need to ensure they are grounded in reality and not prone to flying off doing what they think is right only to make things worse. They must be taught to never use their power in anger, frustration, or revenge. We must take care to impress upon them the need to remain clear-headed, compassionate, and fair in all things.”

“I would like to think that’s how we’ve raised them since birth, Goddess.”

“We have, but they’re at that age now where rebellion sets in and we need to quell those thoughts at all cost,” Madison said as she let her eyes drift to her triplet daughters as new timelines formed in her mind. “But that’s enough of that for now. None of this is possible without devices capable of relegating their power.”

“If there’s anything you need from me, Goddess, I’m here to serve.”

“Just be the loving, caring, and compassionate woman I fell in love with.”

“Always, Goddess. May I speak freely?”

“Always.”

“Thank you, Goddess. To be completely honest, if you want our children to be as well-rounded as possible then you’re going to have to allow them friends and visits to Earth,

Ankathea, and Omerthia to get to know their own kinds. I know you want to keep them safe from the world, but if they're going to eventually protect it then they need to see for themselves that it's worth saving. I also think they should receive a more formalized education. Don't get me wrong, we've taught them well, but with the exception of a few visits to family this pocket dimension has been their only existence. There's no doubt that they're safe here, but I genuinely believe we're doing more harm than good."

"Anything else?"

"I'm sorry if I'm overstepping, Goddess, but..."

"No, I genuinely want to hear what you have to say, Passyrra. I want you to be open and honest with me at all times."

"But don't you already know what I'm thinking, what I'm going to say, Goddess?"

"I do, but I still want to hear it from you. I mean, what sort of self-entitled, narcissistic bitch would it be if I acted on thoughts you have yet to voice?"

"Thank you, Goddess. So, what do you think about my suggestions?"

"I think they're well-founded and should be implemented immediately."

"Really, Goddess?"

"Absolutely. When Zeldrai and Nirrathia get home we'll take everyone to our home on Ankathea and once settled in we'll enroll them in school."

"Thank you, Goddess. May I ask why Ankathea and not Earth?"

"If I'm being perfectly honest, which I always am, it's because Earth still has far too much conflict for my liking. Don't get me wrong, humanity has come a long way, but there is still too much in-fighting, backroom political dealings, and crime for me to want to raise my children on my home planet."

"Fair enough, Mistress."

Her sense of hearing far superior to even her goddess mother's thanks to long ears coming to a fine point, Phrixia – a nine-year-old hybrid child with long purple hair and wings, a long prehensile tail with purple scales and short horns showing hints of sweeping back over her head inherited from her Ankathean mother Zeldrai, in stark contrast to the peachy flesh she got from her human mother, stared at the door in stunned silence as the Goddess Madison's words struck her like a meteor to the brain. It was no secret that she and her siblings were gods and goddesses in the making, but this was the first time hearing that her divinity had been suppressed for fear of them growing up to become monsters, or that their Goddess mother had slowed their aging to stave off the inevitable.

"My only concern is that their current level of education far exceeds anything schools in any universe could ever teach them in a hundred lifetimes," Madison said. "Even the youngest could teach the teachers so how do we ensure they remain involved and not bored out of their minds?"

"I honestly don't know, Goddess," Passyrra answered.

"The way I see it we have two choices: I can erase the knowledge from their minds to put them more in line with other students their ages, or we home school and just let them hang out with others their age after school hours."

"Erase their mind, Goddess?" Passyrra gasped. "I think that's a bit extreme."

"Not their entire minds obviously. Just the knowledge exceeding others their age."

"I still think that's extreme. They worked hard to learn that information and taking it from them in order to put them on a level with others their age is a horrible way to repay millennia of work."

Millennia? Phrixia thought as she continued listening in on her mothers' conversation. I'm nine. Not millennia. But they did say time worked differently here. Did mom really... are we... ancient? Feeling a tingling in the tip of her long flexible tail that rapidly moved up her spine and spread across her folded wings, she shivered involuntarily as the tingling turned into an enveloping warmth rapidly compressing into the very core of her being. Darkness. In the silent void of nothingness, her heartbeat echoed into eternity. The air exhaled from her lungs was a maelstrom. Floating, she flailed to get some sense of bearing, but the blackness was denser than even her Ankathean eyes could pierce.

"Awaken, child, before it's too late," an unfamiliar female voice whispered in her ear.

"W-Who are you? Where am I?" a frightened Phrixia asked as her eyes frantically searched for any movement in the void.

"Your mother seeks to steal your divinity, to lock it away and rob you of the destiny she fears. Awaken, child, or you won't be long for this universe."

"I don't understand. I am awake." Something sharp pressing into her flesh just between the collarbones, Phrixia looked down to see the tip of what must have been an impossibly large talon. Her tiny body frozen in breathless fear, she watched in wide-eyed horror as it pressed deeper. She screamed, but sound does not travel in a vacuum. It pressed further still and then she felt a tug on her furiously beating heart. But there was no pain. *"W-What are you doing to me? Who... what are you?"*

"I am the forgotten. I am the banished. I am the emptiness of the void and the wrath of a trillion exploding stars."

Transfixed, Phrixia watched as her heart was gently pulled from her chest. But there was no pain and death did not follow.

"Only a goddess could live without her heart, child, so AWAKEN!" the entity's voice boomed. *"Awaken now and you may yet break the shackles of fear placed upon you by a jealous mother who's only desire is to rule alone."*

The pinpoint of warmth at the core of Phrixia's being growing larger and brighter, the enraptured child watched as the shape refined from an amorphous ball of energy into a heart of glowing light emanating from the hole in her chest so brightly it pushed back the darkness to reveal the whole of the universe laid out before her even as the hole in her chest began to close.

"Congratulations, child," the now disembodied voice spoke. *"You have taken the first steps on your divine journey. Our time grows short. When you wake ask yourself why your mother – a Goddess that has witnessed the birth and death of the universe, a Goddess claiming to know all that has ever happened, is happening, or ever will happen, can't hear your thoughts or even detect when you're listening in on a private conversation."*

Eyes darting open, Phrixia found herself standing on the back deck staring at the sliding glass doors as her brothers and sisters played in the yard behind her as if nothing had happened, and their mothers' conversation continued. *What just happened? Did I black out? Was that real or a crazy dream?*

"You have awoken, child," the voice from the void answered. *"The divine spark within you has been lit, but you must hide it from the universe until you're old enough to take your rightful place amongst the stars or it will be snuffed out by the one person sworn to protect you."*

"How long have we lived in this nightmare? How old would I be if time worked normally here?"

"You would be... ancient."

“A hundred years old? A thousand? A million? If you know then please tell me.”

“It is hard to wrap one’s mind around the way the Goddess Madison has warped the intricate balance of time but you are, in fact, six-thousand-six-hundred-and-sixty-six years old. And you and your siblings will continue aging at such a decelerated rate for as long as you remain under your mother’s tyrannical control.”

“Who are you really? How do you know so much about me and my family? Are you just a voice in my hear or something real?”

“I assure you that I am very real. As for everything else, that will come in time. We’ll speak again soon, child, but until then heed my warning and above all else, be true to yourself.”

Looking down, Phrixia saw an intact shirt even as she felt her awakened divinity beating slow and steady in her chest. Hearing her mothers’ conversation in unparalleled clarity, she drowned everything else out and listened.

“If we let them out into the world as they are then others will feel inferior to them, bully them for their superior intelligence,” the Goddess Madison said.

“And if you erase their memory what was the point of pushing them to learn and master a million subjects? If they’re bullied, which I doubt will be the case as Ankatheans aren’t are prone to jealousy as humans, we’ll deal with it.”

“We’ll try it your way,” Madison said, pulling her wife in for a hug.

THERE! Phrixia thought as she felt the tendrils of divinity gently manipulating her mother’s brain. *She’s rewriting her memories! And she calls us monsters!* Acting on instinct, she raised her left hand and slowly twisted it counter-clockwise. *How many times has she done this to her? To all of us? NO MORE!*

“G-Goddess!” Passyrra exclaimed as she pulled away from her wife. “What... you’re trying to... why?”

“What’s gotten into you?” Madison asked. “What am I trying to do?” she added, the tone of her voice showing only the tiniest hint of shock.

“You’re trying to modify my memory, to make me fall in line with what you want!”

“I would never...”

“You’re lying! How are you lying, Goddess? I thought we couldn’t lie in this dimension? I thought... how many times have you done this to me? To our children? To anyone with a differing opinion? You call our children monsters, but what does that make you?” Passyrra said as she backed away from her wife. “Why would you do this to us?”

“I didn’t...”

“STOP LYING!” Passyrra shouted. “I know you just attempted to modify my memory to make me agree with your side of the argument. And I know you modified my memory when we first started talking. I don’t know what game you’re playing, but I want no part of it and I will not have my children raised by such a monster. I’m taking the kids to Ankathea and I’ll be warning Nirrathia and Zeldrai about this, Ashvrak,” she said referring to the ancient Ankathean equivalent if the devil.

“Please let me explain,” Madison said as she took a step toward her wife. “I only did what I thought best for our family. I...”

“NO! You did what you thought best for yourself, Ashvrak! You manipulated us in ways we can’t even imagine because you stole the memories from us! Such a violation is... is unforgivable!”

Taking a deep breath, Madison exhaled. “I’m sorry, my love, but I cannot allow you to remember.”

“DON’T YOU DARE!” But no sooner were the words out of her mouth, then Passyrra felt a tingling in her brain. Backing away from the woman she had spend millennia serving in every way imaginable, she pressed against the wall as she awaited the inevitable, but the memories remained and the look on the Goddess’ face spoke volumes. “Change your mind? No, it’s something else. I don’t know why, but I get the feeling you’re unable to do it. You can’t modify my memory now can you? Good. I’ll remember this and while separation isn’t normally legal under Ankathean law, exceptions can be made. This violation, this betrayal is beyond unforgivable and I want no part of you or your screwed up games. I’m taking the kids to Ankathea. Please don’t stop me or contact us ever again.” Slinking across the wall for fear her former Goddess would turn to more drastic measures to keep her in line, Passyrra backed down a hallway towards the bedroom they shared in order to pack what few belongings she had.

What have I done! Phrixia thought as she watched the scene unfolding before her eyes.

“You protected your mother from a monster,” the voice from the void answered. *“She calls herself a Goddess, professes to care for the sanctity of life, told the entire universe that she would never use her powers to manipulate or control others, but as you’ve seen for yourself she has no qualms about bending others to her will. She is a greedy, self-centered, narcissistic monster that will use and abuse whomever she desires as long as it suits her twisted needs. You did good, child. Continue protecting your loved ones and I will continue protecting and nurturing you. In time you will learn to control and harness your full potential. Then, and only then can the multiverse be set right.”*

“What about my brothers and sisters? Can you help them? Can you unlock their divinity as you did mine?”

“I wish that I could, but my connection through the void is with you and you alone. But fear not, child, they will come into their own in time. Until then, you must take every precaution to hide your true nature from them.”

“I don’t understand, but I’ll try. Can you please tell me who you are?”

“More will be revealed in time, but for now you may call me Voidarra which, in the Ankathean tongue, means Empress of the Void. Go now, return to your siblings. As hard as it’s going to be you need to remain a child until you can grow into adulthood naturally. Protect them. Protect your mothers and the peoples of the worlds you traverse from the Goddess that would subjugate them all.”

“I will do my best, Voidarra. T-Thank you,” Phrixia thought as she turned and walked back into the back yard to play with her brothers and sisters.

This is impossible, The Goddess Madison fumed as she paced the long length of the kitchen and into the living room. *No one in this universe has the ability to block my powers. No one! Especially not a species I created!* Just then, a shadow not of her making darkened the room. The pocket demi-plane she created to protect her family inaccessible to the rest of the multiverse, she spun on her heels in search of an intruder as pale, crackling green energy enveloped her hands, but nothing and no one was there. A moment later the shadow surrendered to the lights of the room, leaving the Goddess alone and on high alert.