

# GODDESS

SON OF MEDUSA

A NOVELLA

Todd Crawshaw



CrowsnestPublishing.com

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication  
may be reproduced  
or transmitted in any form whatsoever  
without written permission  
except in the case of brief quotations  
with reference to source.

Visit: [www.toddcrowshaw.com](http://www.toddcrowshaw.com)

ISBN: 979-8-9882757-0-1

Copyright © 2023 Todd Crowshaw  
First Edition

Book illustration & design by author

[CrowsnestPublishing.com](http://CrowsnestPublishing.com)

Printed in the United States of America

## P R O L O G U E

My mother was a monster. Her beauty turned men into stone, if you believe the myth. In truth, she was born into slavery, owned by a cruel woman who considered herself a goddess. As a joke, she bestowed the title of priestess onto my mother whose duties were to clean the house, a sizable mansion, and attend to her mistress' needs. My mother's incredible beauty turned the heads of men who desired her to themselves. She was sought after by many men. Her mistress, jealous of this attention, deprived my mother of pleasure. She was to remain chaste and celibate for life. As a domestic prisoner, fearing the wrath of her owner, she shunned the advances of men. That is, until she was raped by a sea captain – her mistress' uncle.

Blamed for the rape, for seducing him, my mother was set free as her punishment. Her hair was shorn, her scalp shaved. She was cursed by her mistress and banished from the mansion, forced to enter the outside world completely naked. Adding insult to injury, she discovered later she was pregnant with me. I don't blame her for becoming a monster. With one look she would turn men into stone. Not a metaphor. She did. Because of this power, she was beheaded. Upon her decapitation, did twin sons – a winged horse and boar – fly out of her body? Was her head then placed on a shield to destroy enemies with her deadly gaze during battles? The latter two *are* metaphors. Untruths. I was her only true son.

Let me begin again. Mother did have stunning hair. This is true. It grew back in sweeping coils that resembled writhing snakes. Men became petrified by her beauty. I witnessed this myself when I grew old enough to know better. When she became angry at me for some misdeed, I avoided direct eye contact. Men who dated her, especially those who were racist or approached her with bravado or arrogance,

learned this devastating lesson, not to look, too late.

Did I love my mother? I did. She was pretty, also frightening, not always a monster. She had tended bar for a living. It is fallacy that simply looking at my mother turned the living into stone.

She would warn first, “Be careful how you look at me.”

It would always be men who didn’t heed her warning. Growing up, I witnessed these stoned men who could not believe their fate. Whenever it happened at home, my task was to guide these catatonic zombies out the front door. When she was working the bar pouring drinks, everyone presumed the paralysis was alcohol-related. Often I would be seated at a table, sipping on a soft drink, and she would look my way to give me a sly wink.

Her demise was caused by men who spread rumors she was evil and a misandrist. Not true. She had male friends who were good. Who trusted her. And women who were attracted to her strength and ability to ward off the toxic masculinity. Survivors of sexual assaults even wore tattoos resembling my mother with wild snakes for hair. Her beheading escalated her fame, turning her into a legend.

The cause of my mother’s death, I will explain. But first allow me to indulge in the telling of my story.

I am a freak of nature. I had no idea what that meant until my mother was beheaded. She had always protected me from the truth. I was – what is the current term? – homeschooled. Mother taught me all I know. She did not prepare me for the cruelty of this world. How people would judge me as being abnormal – born an hermaphrodite. That I was both male and female seemed an important discovery, once I understood the difference. As an only child, isolated from kids my age, I never questioned my sexuality, a term that went beyond my years of understanding. Mother dressed me as a boy and had always called me her son.

Her murder happened around the time of my puberty. Imagine my shock when told my mother was dead. I was then abducted into

social services as an orphan and placed into the foster care system. The monthly bleeding meant I was dying too. The examinations only made my pain worse, to realize I was a medical curiosity. I became suicidal when my body rebelled against me and grew breasts. I was mortified by these changes. I was teased and tormented by this uncertainty about whether I was a boy or a girl. I am a mix of several diversities. As one who is both black and white, I have been called many names, but no word or label could define me.

Mother told me I was a demigod, given my birth from the rape of a powerful man I never knew or cared to know. Powers would come to me. And they have. I can read minds. It is one of my unique gifts. Not like Tiresias, the blind prophet, gifted with clairvoyance, who had the ability to see into the future. He too had been turned into a woman after being attacked by mating snakes, transformed from male to female. That is not my fate. I am not blind. I have vision. Also, I inherited my mother's ravishing looks and raven hair cascading from my head like writhing snakes.

GODDESS

## 1

Aster was tending bar at The Goddess on a busy Friday night when a new customer sat on a bar stool in front of her while she was preparing a martini.

“The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

She heard the words and gave the man an askance look as she shook the canister of gin and ice.

“And by that, you mean what?”

“I know about your mother.”

“Doubtful. You’re a private investigator.”

The man tilted his head. “Lucky guess.”

“It wasn’t a guess. Your thoughts scream loud and clear to me. Tell me what you really want.”

“A scotch on the rocks. When you get a chance.”

“You want to solve my mother’s murder.”

“That too. My name is Mitch—”

“Murphy. You’re wasting your time. And mine.”

Aster walked away to deliver the martini at the end of the bar. Murphy admired her stride, dressed as she was in a sleeveless faux snakeskin top and a black leather skirt.

When she returned, she saw the business card in the detective’s hand extended toward her. She plucked the card from his fingers and deposited it in the tip jar. “Scotch on the rocks, you said?”

“A Naked Grouse, if you happen to have it.”

“We do.” Aster reached to find the bottle behind her on the wall and twisted off the cork as she turned back. She poured a generous helping into a glass over ice. She slid the cocktail toward him and assessed this man. She determined he was in his mid-thirties. He had straight longish hair that touched his shoulders. He was aware of his

good looks which explained his confident and playful grin that, no doubt, could charm women.

“I like your hair,” he told her. “It is pretty wild, and beautiful, same as your mother’s?”

Aster folded her arms. “I already know who killed her.”

Murphy lifted his drink, taking a sip of scotch before setting it down to reach into his coat. He pulled out a small notepad and pen, prepared to write. “Who?”

Aster’s steely-grey irises bore into Murphy. He averted his eyes from what felt like staring into the sun. Blinded for a lost moment, he blinked, disoriented as he regained his focus – alarmed to discover he was naked. He nearly fell off the barstool.

Aster had a thin smile. “You’re not worth the trouble. I won’t turn you into stone. You can relax.”

Customers were vying for her attention but she was unmoving, staring directly at him.

Murphy realized he was not naked. “How did you—”

“Carl Jung. Does that name sound familiar?”

Murphy rubbed his eyes, regathering his thoughts, and wrote down the name in his little book.

Aster gave a laugh. “You’re not as smart as you look. I can see that you are searching your memory. The psychiatrist? *Jung*.”

“Oh.” Murphy smiled, chagrined. “Right. The guy who wrote about the collective unconscious?”

“And the dark side of masculinity. The fear of snakes. Feminine mystique and power.” She turned to glance at a customer raising a hand and his voice to get her attention. “Collective *man* killed my mother. Does it really matter who it was, specifically?”

Murphy opened his mouth to reply but felt his thoughts calcify, left speechless.

Aster told him, “I need to get back to work.”



## 2

Eldor watched Aster with great interest. He held a Lager beer, seated in a booth with two of his shipmates. His spies had informed him, years ago, he had sired a boy. What other lies had he been told? As he drank, he mused. This supposed son he traveled to meet turned out to be a daughter. An intriguing young woman as gorgeous as her mother, who had presumedly been transformed into a monster.

“What do you plan to do with her now, Captain?”

“Shut up, Morris,” said Eldor, “I’m thinking.

“This son of yours is awfully pretty,” joked Arion.

Eldor glared at his quartermaster, whose smile froze, deflecting a confrontation by picking up his beer.

With his eyes aimed at Arion, Eldor said, “If looks could *kill*. Have you heard that expression?”

Arion nodded.

“Her mother had that ability. If you believe all the stories.”

“Are you saying your daughter might have that power?”

“Don’t be an idiot, Morris. It’s a fucking myth!”

“Deadly snakes for hair. Get real,” said Arion. “These fables. They’re all bullshit. What was she called again?”

“Medusa.” Eldor scanned the barroom to survey the strange assortment of people. A man was racking billiards wearing a kilt. The woman beside him wore leather pants. She playfully tapped him on the ass with her cue stick as he leaned over to break the balls.

“What the fuck is this place? Who are these people?”

“Your daughter does have amazing hair. Oh, shit,” said Morris. She’s looking straight at us. She’s coming over here.”

“She’s made us.” Arion lowered the brim of his cap.

“We’re not invisible,” said Eldor. “She knows nothing.”

Aster crossed her arms as she looked down at the three men, studying each for a moment. She said to Eldor. “You’re him. My father. Why are you here?”

Eldor gave a puzzled frown. “Have we met?”

“You *raped* my mother.”

Eldor smiled, lifted his beer. “Welcome to the world.”

Morris snorted a laugh then flinched as Aster turned her eyes on him and glared. “You *are* an idiot.”

“I didn’t *say* anything,” said Morris.

“You didn’t have to. And you, *Arion*. You only *wish*. Maybe I’ll *fuck* with you again.”

Eldor said, “What is she talking about?”

“Nothing.” Arion clenched his jaw.

Aster started to leave then turned back. “You disrespected one of my waiters. Manny said you were rude, calling him names.”

Morris smirked, “That’s rich. His name is *Manny*?”

“Emmanuel. Did you call him a queer?”

“But he *is*,” said Arion. “Isn’t he?”

“We’re all queer,” said Aster. “Gender neutral. And of the lot of us here tonight, you three are the queerist of them all.”

“Listen, sister—”

Eldor stopped Arion from speaking with a raised hand. He was nonchalant. “What the hell is this place?”

“Mine.”

“Do you have a name, daughter of mine?”

“Aster.” She scoffed at him, “You’re a captain of what?”

“A ship. She is called the Poseidon. I rule the sea.”

“I knew you’d be arrogant and full of *lies*. Enjoy your beers then get the hell out of here. And don’t ever come near me again.”

“Or?” Eldor grinned.

“You’ll regret it.”

## 3

Aster returned to her station behind the bar and saw Murphy still seated there, watching her as he nursed his scotch.

“What was that ruckus all about?”

“None of your business,” said Aster.

“It *is* my business.” Murphy grinned, glancing back at the three men in the booth. “An unsavory bunch by the looks of them.”

Aster was gone when he turned back. She had moved down the bar to remove empty glasses left by departing customers.

The other bartender, a muscular man wearing a black t-shirt and satin vest, approached him, pointing to his empty glass.

“Another round?”

“I’m thinking I might want something else,” said Murphy.

“What can I get you?”

Murphy pointed toward Aster. “Her.”

“She’s unavailable.”

“Not for sale?” Murphy joked and extended his hand across the bartop. “Name’s Mitch. What’s yours?”

“Nate.” He made a fist for Murphy to bump.

It was past midnight and the bar crowd had thinned to only a few patrons left seated at the bar.

“Have you been working here long?”

Nate was wiping the bartop with a towel. “Long enough. Did you want another drink or not? We close in an hour.”

“Sure. I’ll have another Naked Grouse, if you please.”

As Nate poured the scotch, he said to Murphy, “You’re not her type if you were thinking of making a play for her.”

“What *is* my type?” Murphy’s smile wasn’t returned.

“Aster doesn’t date. I know this for a fact because we share a

house. Our relationship is platonic. My girlfriend lives with us too.”

Murphy was processing this information as he watched Aster return and reach into the tip jar to retrieve his business card.

“I changed my mind,” she said. “Are you any good?”

“Good at what?”

“Your profession, Sherlock.”

“Specifically, what did you have in mind?”

“Investigate those three men. Find out what you can.”

Murphy sipped his scotch. “Give me a clue. How do you know them? Have they harassed or threatened you in any—”

The one with the large beard, not the smaller one, the big guy, he is my birth father. We finally met for the first time.”

“Wait. Was he your mother’s lover?”

“No! He *raped* her. She didn’t know the man. She was enslaved, then banished after becoming impregnated with me – from *that* man. You should know this since you’re keen on investigating her murder. How much is this going to cost me?”

“Depends on how deep the rabbit hole turns out to be. I charge ninety dollars an hour. The search to find your mother’s murderer is pro-bono. No charge.”

“I know what pro-bono means. Do you want an advance?”

“That’s not necessary. I trust you.”

“Don’t be a fool,” said Aster. “Trust no one. Nate, take out five hundred dollars from the cash register.”

Nate handed her the money. She placed it on the bartop.

“Write me a receipt for the advance in that little notebook and we will have ourselves a legal arrangement. Your drinks tonight are on the house. Pro-bono. Do we have agreement?”

Aster reached across the bar. Murphy shook her hand.

“I expect results.”

## 4

A week later a woman dressed in a business suit with a stylish cut to her short blond hair came into The Goddess and stood at the bar, waiting for Aster to notice her.

When she did, Aster approached the woman with a cautious bit of concern, reading her mind. “You’re Murphy’s attorney.”

“How could you possibly know that?” She held out a business card. “My name is Adriana. You must be Aster.”

Aster took the card. “Why is Murphy in a hospital?”

Adriana’s strictly-business composure dissolved. “What’s going on here? How did you—”

“I read your thoughts. It’s my little trick. Reading minds.”

Later, Aster and Adriana were standing at the foot of Mitch Murphy’s hospital bed. His eyes were shut and the skin around both sockets was swollen and bruised. Adriana’s thoughts were a jumble of concerns that were unreadable.

“How bad is he?”

“He’s not in a coma,” said Adriana. “He’s just sedated. There’s the visible contusions to his face, broken ribs, and a mild concussion. He’ll survive.”

“How did this happen?”

“He won’t tell me. He said he wanted to speak with you first. He told me where to find you.”

Aster sighed, “This is all my fault. I hired him to—”

“Mitch knows the risks in his line of work.”

Murphy opened his eyes and smiled, wincing from pain. “You did come. I wasn’t sure you would.”

“Of course I came,” said Aster. “I’m not a monster.”

“No, of course not.”

Aster said, "I can't read your thoughts. What happened?"

Murphy tried to shift his body upright in the bed, but winced from pain and remained lying flat on his back. "Do you want to hear the good news or the bad news first?"

"There's good news?"

"You were lucky to be born a girl."

"Why?"

"Your father intended to abduct you onto his ship."

"You mean, shanghai me? Why?"

"Your father is a drug trafficker. Let's call him a pirate. He was under the impression he had a son. He was going to take possession. But bringing a female to work on his vessel would be considered bad luck and weaken his authority with the men."

Adriana said, "Did her father do this to you, Mitch?"

"He had help. He doesn't care for snoops."

"God damn him! We need to have them all arrested."

Murphy rolled his head on the pillow. "Adriana, I don't see that ending well." He smiled at Aster. "You escaped being abducted into a pharmaceutical drug cartel. That's the good news."

"And the bad news?"

"I discovered who killed your mother. He wasn't hard to find since he brags about his exploits. He's a mercenary fortune-hunter with a hero complex. He receives help from powerful patrons."

Aster repeated, "And the bad news?"

"He knows you exist. Because you are your mother's offspring, someone believes you're a monster who should be terminated. This assassin, who calls himself Perseus, has been hired to kill you."

"I'm not a monster! Who wants me dead?"

"That I haven't discovered yet."