

Woes of Godhood

Chapter 1

Have you ever wondered what having absolute power is like?

The ability to impose your will on the world, to bend reality to your whim. The power to twist and defy the laws of physics, the fundamental rules of the universe. Omnipotence, pure and simple.

Have you ever imagined what possessing such limitless potential must feel like?

It's all I've ever know.

The spawn of two gods, all my existence has ever been is unfathomable power. The kind of power a mortal mind is simply not able to comprehend.

For a time, we ruled over the world. Over humanity.

We toyed with continents, founded pantheons and religions, demanded devotion and obedience. We had temples built in our honour, made our loyal subjects do our bidding – dedicate themselves to us. And, in time, we grew bored.

That's what power is, you see. Boredom.

When there's nothing you can't do, what's the point in doing *anything*?

I could obliterate continents with a thought, destroy nations with the wave of my hand. But to what end? I've done those things already, watched as the insects scurried about in confusion and horror, sat back while they rebuilt. Why do so again?

For a few hundred years, my father impregnated every attractive human female he encountered. Created demigod bastards for my mother to toy with and slay.

But, after a time, he grew bored – withdrew back to our place in the cosmos. And, without any demigod bastards to torment, Mother grew bored and returned there herself. The others followed in their own time; my siblings and aunts and uncles and cousins and all the extended family I possessed. All us divines, we returned back to the place we belonged and waited for reality to slowly come to its natural end.

Because, when you have all the power in the world, what else is there to strive for?

I went with them, at first. My family. I returned home with them, abandoned humans and their world. But, unlike the rest of my ilk, I was never content with waiting.

Call it the impatience of youth.

I refused to lounge around and wait as centuries and millennia ticked slowly by.

So, unbeknownst to the rest of my divine kind, I returned.

A goddess back from beyond.

I returned to the morals, the humans. The only divinity left in an otherwise mundane world.

It took me years of drifting around endlessly before I had the idea.

Sure, I could play with people – twist their minds and bodies, warp them to their core and remake them as I saw fit. And I did. But, ultimately, that would only satisfy me for so long. With all the power in the world at my fingertips, everything was just too *easy*.

Earthquakes, tsunamis, you name it. I could summon any at will.

Where was the challenge? Where was the *fun*?

Would I ever *truly* be satisfied with this limitless power?

It was that very thought which led me to do what I did.

In order to enjoy my immortality, in order for my eternity to be anything other than a bland existence, I needed *risk*. I needed *excitement*.

I needed to not have power.

To be mortal... It was something other divines had done before, of course. Mostly after lost bets or as practical jokes. Or, in the case of some of the sillier, big-headed divines, so that they could 'relate to and understand their peons'. Every time, though, they had a way out. A safety net of some kind.

Return to divinity after so many days have passed. Or return to divinity upon speaking a certain word. Or, even in the most extreme of cases, return to divinity upon the death of their mortal body.

All of that... Too easy.

There was no risk, no challenge. Nothing *fun* about that.

If I was going to do this – make myself a powerless human – it had to be worth the trouble. It had to be *thrilling*.

So, no safety net.

No easy way out.

That would be rule number one.

And rule number two? I must put myself in a situation in which I'd fear *never* returning to my divine state.

There had to be risk. And that risk had to be real.

And so, using these two rules, I did the unthinkable.

I stripped myself of my divine power, made myself human. I gathered up all my godliness, all that which allowed me to claim supremacy, and I stored it away inside a mundane, human object. A simple can of 'soda'.

Whosoever drank from that can of soda would gain all my divine powers; save the one I left for myself – immortality. And I sent that soda can – imbued as it was with the power of a goddess – out into the world to a random, unknown place.

My game would be thus: Find that can of soda and drink from it, return myself to divinity – however long that might take.

I'd have no powers to aid me, save for my eternal life.

I would be human. Vulnerable to all the circumstances and events that any regular human would be, immune only to the fatal end that all true humans were destined for.

Finally, after millennia of boredom, I'd have a goal!

I'd have *excitement*!

"Hey there beautiful," a human male said to me, eyes roving my human body. "You come here often?"

"No," I smiled. "It's my first time."

Human for only a few hours, and I already had my first devotee, it seemed. A taller man who looked to be in his thirties. Bald. Muscular. Attractive enough, by human standards.

When crafting a body for myself, I'd made sure it was well equipped.

A large bust, a face beautiful enough to draw the eyes of anyone who happened to look upon it, a body sculpted in the way only a divine was capable of. Perfection of flesh, unrivalled by any natural-born female.

"In that case," the man grinned, "I should show you around."

"A guide?" I fluttered my eyelashes. "That would be... Divine."

The man held out his arm, obviously wanting me to take it. And, seeing no reason not to, I did so – walking arm-in-arm beside him as he led me down the street.

"Is there anywhere you'd like to go in particular?" The man asked. "Beautiful girl like you, with an ass like that, you *must* spend time at a gym, right? There's one-"

"Soda," I said, ignoring this bumbling human's rambling. "I'm looking for a can of soda."

"Sure thing, sexy. There's a shop just down here. What kind do you want? You don't strike me as the soda-drinking type."

The odds of my divine soda can being in the very first place I searched were exceedingly low. It'd be somewhere in this city, I was certain – I didn't want to make my game *too* impossible to win. But there was no harm in searching; if for no other purpose than to aid in winning this dullard's affections and loyalty.

I'd need followers if I was going to track down my powers.

"It's a... *foreign* brand. I forget its name, but I'll know it when I see it. Lead the way, ah...?"

"Anders," the buffoon smiled. "And you are?"

How should I answer that, I wondered.

I couldn't give my *true* name; human tongues were incapable of speaking it and human minds were incapable of comprehending it. Nor could I really give him one of the names I'd gone by historically – while it wouldn't be too strange for a girl to be 'named after' a mythological figure, it might draw parallels that I would rather avoid. No, I needed a new name. A new identity for this little game of mine.

"Mandy," I said, voice a sultry purr. "My name is Mandy."

"Get back here ya little shit!"

Billy grinned, clutched his prize as he sprinted down out of the store, down the street.

"Grab him!" The fat, balding store owner bellowed behind him. "Catch him! Thieving bastard!"

A few people raised their eyebrows, shock or confusion flitting through their eyes. One or two, Billy knew, would want to play the hero – try to catch him. But before they could make up their mind, he was gone. Too fast to catch!

As the store owner's voice receded into the distance, Billy shut his eyes for a moment – losing himself in the rush, the thrill of the moment. Wind in his hair, sweat on his brow, heart thudding in his chest. A single moment of unrelenting joy. His eyes snapped open just in time to dodge around an old woman.

She cursed him as he sprinted away.

Billy laughed, waved his empty left hand over his head.

It was several minutes later when, panting heavily, he came to a stop. In an old, abandoned park. He hunched over, set the soda can down on the ground and flexed his numb right hand.

"Idiot," he said to himself, grinning. "Fucking idiot."

He wouldn't be able to go back there again. Not that store. Which would mean he'd have to go further out tomorrow, find a new place to lift from. So many places had seen him, his face. If he kept getting caught like this...

Sitting himself down on a rusted slide, he grinned wildly.

...Well, they couldn't run him out of *every* shop in the city. Eventually, he'd get the hang of the whole shoplifting thing, would stop getting himself caught in the act.

Until then, at least he'd get plenty of daily exercise in.

He reached into one of his jacket pockets, pulled out a still-cool packaged sandwich. Then his hand slid into another, deftly retrieved out some spicy ham and a packet of ketchup.

Why was it, he wondered as he added ketchup and ham to the sandwich, that the people who made pre-packaged sandwiches were always so stingy with their ingredients? He should lodge a complaint, send them an angry letter or phone-call.

Or he could boycott the company that made it. That'd be a good idea! Yes, that's what he'd do. He'd never buy, uh... Quickly, Billy looked at the sandwich packaging. Right. He'd never pay for Satirelli Snacks sandwiches ever again!

Still, at least it tasted nice enough.

He gobbled the customised sandwich down in record time, his stomach rumbling and churning. He groaned as he finished his meal off, leaned back on the rusted slide with a smile on his face.

Nothing like a well-earned meal after some healthy exercise.

Now, if only he had something to wash it down...

His eyes fell on the soda can. The traitorous hunk of cold aluminium that'd given him away as he'd tried to slip it in his jacket pocket.

"I should complain to the manufacturer," Billy said, sitting up. "Or the company. Or maybe..."

He paused – hand outstretched for the can. His eyebrows narrowed as he lifted it, turned it left and right, tried to read the soda can's branding.

"Zuza... Zezi... Zuk..."

He shook his head, sighed audibly.

"Well, that's just bad design. If I can't read the name, how am I supposed to lodge a complaint with the appropriate company?"

Reaching out to open the can, Billy hesitated.

With how much running he'd done, how much shaking that can had gone through, it'd probably *explode* when he opened it.

Yet *another* thing he wouldn't be able to complain about.

He shut his eyes, tilted his head to one side as he pulled open the can's tab.

Tsss

The usual sound of a can being opened and the gas inside escaping. But, other than that, nothing. No explosion of soda, no shower of sticky drink.

Billy opened his eyes, stared in surprise at the soda can that wasn't even overflowing.

"Alright," he said with a grin, "I'll give that to you. Maybe not such bad design after all. You win this round Zigz- Zoks- Zani- whatever your name is."

With his left hand, he wiped the sweat from his brow and pushed aside his messy hair. With his right, he raised the odd soda can to his lips.

When the sweet nectar inside touched his tongue, his eyes shot wide open.