

Athena 2.0

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

It is also said that Millie, the kitchen girl, and a bit of a seer, turned pure white, every hair on her head and even her eyes. For the rest of her life, she never regained her full and natural color--- consigned to being a wraith, almost invisible in the sunlight. Several cows collapsed in the field, dead on the spot. The moon hid behind large clouds. A wolf howled. Frederick the butcher chopped off his hand with his own blade, and four boys on four black horses were never seen again.

As the hour crept towards midnight, the pain worsened, and my father, the Lord and the King, began to beat his head against the stone walls of his room. As blood trickled from his ears, his nose and finally his eyes, he knew the end was near:

Go on and take me, he taunted the gods. Release me. I implore you!

He screamed so loud the world went black, and he could smell the lily and the gentian on the banks of the River Styx--- but instead of death, a tiny crack eased open in the bones of his skull. It got bigger and bigger, and up from the guts of his medulla, came a tiny, baby girl. Me. From death came life. From pain came beauty. I slipped out, covered in mucus and bone fragments, almost lost in a sea of sweat and blood--- like a fish flopping on shore, wriggling and slippery. And hungry, so hungry.

I might've succumbed to exposure except his butler, Sir Reginald, more terrified for his Master than his own life, rushed in, and almost fainted dead away. There lay his King near death, and I, the swimming fish, the fruit of his soul, the life of his life, lay laughing and hungry and alive on the marble floor. The story goes that he bathed me, fed me, wrapped me in swaddling, and both he and my father lived to bitterly rue the day.

