

THE GODDESS'
LEGACY

Malcolm Jameson
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THE GODDESS' LEGACY

By Malcolm Jameson

There was one thing in Greece the Gestapo could not conquer—one legacy of ancient days that took them, one by one—

When man bites dog, they say, that's news. It's news, too, when a waiter tips his customer. I saw that done not long ago—quite surreptitiously to be sure—in the dining room of the Hotel Angleterre in Athens. To say that I was amazed would be to put it mildly, for I knew both men and the thing was impossible. It was not that Herr Scheer took the gold—for gold it was, strangely enough—but that Mike Pappadopoulos should have offered it. I would have thought that Mike would let himself be torn apart by wild horses before trafficking with the enemy. But there it was; I couldn't blink it. The fierce old patriot must have broken under the strain of sustained tyranny. No other explanation of the bribe was

tenable. For bribe I took it to be, and wondered what extremity had driven the old Greek to the necessity of giving it.

The part played by Herr Scheer in the furtive transaction was no mystery at all. He was simply a murderous, blood-sucking leech of the type all too frequent in Europe these days. I had known him for some time as the traveling representative of an optical house in Berlin and as such had often had business dealings with him. But with the coming of the troops of the occupation forces he promptly dropped the mask and showed himself in his true colors. Anton Scheer had been the advance man of the dreaded Gestapo. It was from his long-prepared secret lists that hundreds of victims for arrest and spoliation were selected, and from those same lists that the few Hellenic Quislings were appointed to puppet administrative posts. Now that he was the resident chief of Hitler's secret operatives, his cruelty and rapacity knew no bounds. It was also common knowledge that his zeal for his beloved Fuehrer and Fatherland was not untinged by keen self-interest. In other words, Herr Scheer could be "had." Enough money, discreetly conveyed, would unlock the tightest prison gates.

No, the sight of Scheer's curt nod and the clutching hand below the table top was no surprise to me. It was in character. My astonishment arose from the fact that old Mike had paid.

The first time I ever saw Mike was on the Acropolis one bright moonlight night about four years ago—shortly after my company had made me their Near Eastern manager with headquarters at Athens. As any American would have done, I visited the ancient rock at the first opportunity and promptly fell under the spell of the magnificent ruins atop it. Thereafter I became a frequent visitor, and soon learned that the best condition under which to view the old temples was when the moon was up. On such nights the shattered colonnades of the Parthenon stand forth in all their noble grandeur, the chips and scars mercifully softened by the silvery light. And it was on such a night that Mike first spoke to me.

I was prowling about in the ruined temple of Athena when I came upon him. He was standing rigid, as if in a trance, gazing fixedly upward into nothingness. It was in the naos, or inner sanctum, and where he stood was before the spot where tradition had it Phidias' superb ivory and gold figure of the goddess once sat enthroned. By the mild light of the moon I could see that there were several baskets on the pavement at his feet and they seemed to be filled with olives. There was a tray, too, in which were folded cloths of what I took to be embroideries. I paused and looked at him a moment, but in his rapt state he did not notice me. I was but a few feet from him, but not wishing to disturb him, I passed on.

After a brief stroll through the remainder of the interior, I went outside and climbed onto a segment of a fallen column. There I sat for a while, drinking in the splendor of the night and marveling at the perfection of the lines of everything

about me. I must have fallen into a deep reverie which lasted longer than I was aware, for when I was aroused again the entire aspect of the ruins had changed, owing to the shifting shadows, of the moonlight. I started, then observed that the man I had seen inside the temple was standing beside me and his baskets sitting on the ground nearby.

"You are not one of us," he was saying, and I suddenly knew that it was his voice that had awakened me from my vivid waking dream, "yet you seem, to see—the power, the sublimity and the glory of it all—"

"Who could fail?" I asked, looking back at the noble facade, broken though it was.

The simplicity and purity of its lines should have moved the crudest savage. And yet I was startled to realize that I had not been thinking in terms of aesthetic values at all, but dreaming of quite other things. I had been dreaming of a long past time when the rocky summit was dazzlingly crowned with snowy white new marble structures and thronged with gayly dressed people and armored warriors. It is true that in the picture I saw the delicately carved and unbroken cornices and the rich friezes and pediments studded with perfect statuary set off by backgrounds of magnificent reds, deep blues and gold. But it was on the people that I was intent. I saw wealthy aristocrats march by with slaves bearing heaped-up platters in their train. Those fruits of the field I knew were being brought as offerings to their divine patroness and protector. Eager young men in bright armor were there, too, swarming into the temple for blessings and inspiration to victory in the campaign they were about to

begin. Then, so real was my illusion, I was about to follow them into the sacred edifice to see what ritual the priests of Athena followed, when the words of the enigmatic Greek broke the train of my reverie.

"She, Pallas," he said, with his strange dark eyes fastened upon me as if he read my every thought, "is the kindest and wisest of them all. Under her strong aegis none can hurt us. It was against that shield that Xerxes and his Persian hordes beat in vain. She is, and always will be, the guardian of this city and all the cities of Hellas."

"Is?" I said, cynically. The thought that just flitted through my mind that, whatever Athena's power may have been once, it had long since gone. Since the repulse of the Persians, Greece had been overrun many times—first by the Romans, then the plundering Goths, and finally the Turks. It was centuries before the last of them was dislodged.

"Yes, *is*," he said fiercely. "She sleeps, it is true, but her power is not gone. You yourself shall see it. I promise you."

"You are a pagan?" I asked. An hour earlier I would have thought that too fantastic a question to put to anyone in these modern times, but it did not ruffle him.

"I am," he said simply.

I looked away from him and at the ruined temple standing in the mellow light of the moon. A queer duck, I thought, perhaps a little cracked. Then I turned to ask him another question. Were the baskets he had with him filled with his

own offerings? His delusion might be that complete. But when I looked at where he had been he was not there. Nor were his baskets. He was gone. And the hour being late. I slid from the stone and made my way to the grand stairway that led to the sleeping city below.

The next day a cable sent me to Smyrna and thence to Stamboul. I was gone for weeks and when I came back to Athens a full moon again rode in the sky. That night I revisited the Parthenon and again saw the mysterious man with his baskets of olives and fruits, but he ignored my presence. Again he took them into the naos and, as before, brought them out again. That, I argued, was an unusual procedure if the contents of the baskets were meant as offerings.

A day or so later I had a partial answer to that. While strolling through a crowded market street, I came upon a booth presided over by the man of the Parthenon. On its counters various products of the country were offered for sale. The embroidery and lace displayed were exceptionally fine and I bought several pieces of it. He took the money without a word or flicker of recognition.

For a few minutes I stood hesitant, then walked away with a peculiar crawly feeling of the skin. There was something distinctly uncanny about the market stall and the queer man who tended it. Though the choicest fruits and the finest needlework of the street were for sale there, few persons stopped to look and fewer still to buy. I watched them pass

with expressionless faces and unseeing eyes, as if they did not see the place. Two priests came striding down the street, and, when they approached the stall, they plucked up the edges of their habits and walked softly by with averted faces as if fearful of contamination.

The peddler himself—the man of the Parthenon—had something about him that was singularly disturbing to the peace of mind. I cannot say what that was unless it was the impression he gave of utter and infinite age. Or, perhaps, agelessness. Absurd as the statement may seem, I would not venture to guess his age within a century or so—or a millennium or so for that matter. That was odd, too, for in most of the details of his appearance he might have been a well-knit, hale man of about forty. It was the profound wisdom that one saw in his weary eyes that bespoke great age. He had the look of one who had lived for eons and had long ago tired of it.

Bewildered, I left, carrying my parcel hugged to me tightly. Down the street a little way I encountered a local man I knew and asked him about the proprietor of the market stall, but he shook his head. He did not know whom I meant. Nor did any others of the several I asked. It was not until I got to the hotel and asked the ancient concierge about him that I found one who knew the man I meant. Even he looked uneasily about before he spoke, as if it was a matter to be whispered, not to be blurted out.

"You are favored," he said, cryptically. "Not many know Mike of the Parthenon. I do not, except that he is not what he seems to be. My grandfather knew him well, but then my

grandfather was a silent man. I do not know what Mike's real name is or what his story."

That was all I could draw from him. Needless to say, that little whetted my curiosity to the utmost and there were few moonlit nights after that that I failed to spend part of the night on the Acropolis. The enigmatic Mike was always to be found there, and gradually he became used to my presence and occasionally spoke. I was careful not to say or think anything that might offend him, and little by little his discourse grew less guarded and more fluent. In the end there were times when words would burst forth from him in a fervid torrent.

The talk was never about himself, but of Pallas Athena and her lovely temple, or of her subjects and their vicissitudes. Night after night I listened eagerly, inexplicably aware that I was hearing things only partially guessed by archaeologists, and that often wrongly. He told me of the earlier temple on whose site the present Parthenon had been constructed; of the labors of the multitudes of slaves in quarries and in transportation to make the later building possible. From him I learned which of the groups had been designed by Phidias and which by others, and of the perfect craftsmanship of the sculptors Agoracritus and Alcomenes. He described also the long missing sculptures pilfered or destroyed by vandals.

Whenever he touched on that theme his tone took on a vindictive bitterness of the most intense sort. The man he hated most heartily was the Venetian, Morosini, who had bombarded the Parthenon with artillery in the year 1687. That act alone would have incurred Mike's undying hatred,

but Morosini compounded it with what he viewed as sacrilege. In an attempt to rob the building of one of its pediment statuary groups, he had his soldiers rig for the job of lowering the marbles. But in their clumsiness they dropped the goddess' own chariot and shattered it to bits on the pavement below. Mike hinted darkly that for that impiety Morosini had died horribly some time after.

He also spoke rancorously of the many misuses made of the building by temporary conquerors of Greece. One of the emperors, Constantine, had converted the pagan shrine into a church dedicated to St. Sophia. Later the Turks transformed it into a mosque. As a self-appointed apostle of Athena, Mike detested Christian and Moslem alike, but it was the Turkish embellishment to the Parthenon that angered him most. They had defiled its classic lines by erecting a tawdry minaret—an offense even more grave than their later use of the building as a powder magazine. He assured me that its architect, even as Morosini was to do later, had faced frightful retribution for the deed. I was left to infer that Athena, or her agent, had performed the executions.

All that and more he told me. I took it for the most part in silence. I marveled at the extent of his historical knowledge, but wondered that he should be so wholesouedly devoted to a goddess long enough dead to have degenerated to the status of a mere myth, useful only to poets and their ilk. At times I came near to twitting him on Athena's many failures to protect her people—her vaunted protection seemed to me to have failed lamentably during the last twenty centuries. But I forbore. I had come to like the man and did not want to wound him. It was not until the blackening war clouds over

the Balkans actually broke and the neo-Roman legions began hammering at the north-west border that I ventured to murmur something about the time having come for Athena to rouse herself and show her power.

"Bah!" he snorted. "For those yelping jackals? They attack only because they think the prey is sick. They do not matter. It is those who will come later that are terrible. It is with those she will deal."

The situation worsened fast and soon my business troubles prevented me from spending much time outside my office. Roumania was betrayed, and Bulgaria. The Nazis were overrunning Serbia. Then came the day when the panzer armies rolled into Greece. They were not stopped on the slopes of Mike's revered Olympus, nor yet at the historic pass of Thermopylae. I thought of the queer pagan and wondered whether even the thunderbolts of mighty Zeus himself could prevail, even if faith could reanimate him. No, Zeus, Athena—all the old gods—they might still live in a few solitary hearts, but they had lost their potency.

Athens fell. The Nazi juggernaut crushed it, then rolled on to other conquests. They left behind them regiments of black-shirted scavengers to pick the bones. They left, too, their own minions—such as Herr Scheer and his storm troopers—to do their own peculiarly discreditable work. All of that was bad, but the crowning insult came when the invaders flaunted their arrogant banner of the hooked cross above Mike's beloved Parthenon. The Acropolis was closed

to all civilians; moreover, the hungry harpies denuded the market of all its edibles and any other thing of value. Mike's shop was looted and wrecked. His temple was defiled. Mike's occupation was gone.

It must have been a month after that before I saw him again. That was when he appeared as a waiter in the dining room at the hotel, and I learned that he went by the name of Pappadopoulos. He chose to ignore me, but I watched him with interest, since I knew the implacable hatred in his heart toward all the fat and greedy exploiters he served. Yet he went about his work with all the unctuous suavity of his adopted calling, and the serene composure of his bearing was almost incredible. I could not help but admire the man. There are few who can bear themselves well when their most precious bubble bursts—when their dearest vision proves to be but a barren mirage. That, I knew, had happened to Mike. Greece groaned miserably under the heel of a new oppressor, yet the long-ago gods lay inert in their graves. It was pathetic.

And then that monstrous thing happened. One night he leaned over Herr Scheer's shoulder and whispered something. Then the rest, as I have related—Scheer's cold acknowledgment, the passage of the bribe. It was astounding.

I pretended not to see. I turned away and busied myself with the food on my plate. But before I did I saw that at least one other than me had also seen. That one was a Major Ciccotto, an officer of the local garrison whose power far exceeded the nominal rank he held. It was Ciccotto who had earned eternal infamy by his ruthless seizures of food. His

raiding of the people's granaries had turned Greece into a land of gaunt, fear-ridden, starving people. At that moment it is hard to say which I loathed most—the cruel Scheer, or the rapacious Italian. But he had seen. The greedy glitter in his piggish eyes was the confirmation of that. I arose and left the room, overwhelmed with disgust.

A few hours after that I encountered Mike in an upper corridor of the hotel. He was carrying a tray of empty dishes and I stopped him.

"You had better be more careful," I warned. "I saw gold pass tonight. Others may have seen, too. With all these harpies about, you know—"

"I hope so," he said, with a queer, grim smile. If he had been a man less intense, I am sure it would have been a grin. And with that astonishing reply he pushed past me and went on down the hall.

I fairly gasped, for to openly display real money in the Angleterre's dining room was comparable to exposing a crippled lamb to the sight of a pack of hungry wolves. Except for me, every man present was a predatory agent of one or the other of the Axis powers. I shuddered for Mike's personal safety.

My misgivings were amply justified the very next day. Mike was absent from his usual station in the dining room. So was Scheer. But the next day Mike showed up, looking considerably the worse for wear. His lips were badly swollen and cut, one eye blackened, and there were other signs of

having been severely manhandled. But he waited on his customers with his usual outward serenity. It was beyond my understanding. I took a furtive look at the nearby table where Ciccotto sat. He was watching Mike eagerly, and presently I saw him beckon him to his table.

Mike went as meekly, I thought, as a lamb to the slaughter. In obedience to the major's imperative gesture, Mike stooped to listen. There was a moment of urgent whispering, then Mike nodded and went away. He came back in a few minutes, made a pretense of brushing crumbs from the table, and I saw his hand slip into his pocket and out again. Again a few gleaming gold coins changed hands! It was utterly baffling. I tried not to think of it any more.

Business took me away from Athens for several days and when I came back I had to go consult with my firm's banker. Jimmy Duquesne was his name; he was an old friend and one who could be counted on for an unlimited amount of off-the-record gossip. When we had finished our commercial transactions he led me to a back room where we sat down over cups of coffee.

"These totalitarians," he sighed, wagging his head, "what a nose for loot they have! It's incredible. You know how scarce gold is—has been for years—in Europe. Well, I'm swamped with it."

I lifted my eyebrows. What he had just said was strangely interesting. But I made no comment.

"Three days ago," he went on, "that unspeakable butcher Scheer came in. He had two bagfuls of it, all he could carry. He cleaned me out of paper marks and drachmae. Naturally, I had to give him literally bales of the worthless stuff in exchange. Then yesterday in walks that skunk Ciccotto with another lot of it. I could not possibly pay him off with what I had in the vaults, but, luckily, he was content with a draft on our Milan branch for the required number of lira. Now where do you suppose they found the stuff?"

"I wouldn't know," I answered, quite truthfully, though I could guess where a little of it came from. "Was it in bullion or coin?"

"Coin," he exclaimed, "and what coin! Much of it must be museum pieces worth I don't know how much. There was everything from a Roman aureus to modern, Turkish pounds—medieval ducats, crowns, guilder—I don't know the name of half of them. I bought solely on the basis of weight."

He broke off and flicked the ash from his cigar with a worried look.

"Well?" I knew there was bound to be a sequel. No bank under the fiscal control of Nazidom could have a hundred-weight of metallic gold in its vaults without repercussions.

"All day today," he said dismally, "I have been overrun by secret agents—Gestapo and Oвра men. They want to know all about the gold. Where it came from, who brought it, what they said, what I paid—everything. The inner circles, it appears, are running wild."

"They would," I said grimly. "They want their share."

"Perhaps," he said, thoughtfully. "But there is more to it than that. You see, both Scheer and Ciccotto have disappeared. Without a trace!"

Things happened fast after that. Big planes dropped down daily, bearing fresh inquisitors from Belgrade, Bucharest, Vienna, even from Berlin. New contingents of Gestapo men, high-ranking army officers, and other mysterious persons swarmed out of them and descended upon the bank demanding information. Others of their stamp kept coming from Italy, also bent on the combined purpose of plunder and finding their missing predecessors. For each batch of operatives who had come before had disappeared shortly after their arrival. It was eerie. All Athens held its breath.

There were no clues, no bodies found, nothing. Men came simply to disappear. Others trailed them to find out why, only to disappear themselves. Savage reprisals were taken. Greeks were rounded up by the thousands and herded into prisons and camps, charged with being Communists, Jews or traitors. A tight curfew was imposed and severer food restrictions made on an already starved people. Yet the disappearances went on. Hundreds of Himmler's men vanished like so many extinguished candle flames. The Italian garrisons were denuded of their officers. Athens was an unhealthy place for invaders, apparently. The Germans wanted to know why, but no one broke. The conquerors were up against a blank wall.

"I wonder how long Adolf and Benito can stand the strain?" remarked Duquesne one day. "According to my

computations half a thousand of their smartest, and most unscrupulous gumshoe men have faded from the picture. It is a deep well that has no bottom."

Evidently the Powers That Be came to the same conclusion. An abrupt change of policy toward Greece took place. The curfew and food restrictions were lifted and the jails emptied. A benevolent old Italian general was sent to be governor and the severity of the occupation was relaxed in many ways. Gestapo men and Ovara agents were still to be seen, but the grapevine had it that those few had strict orders to forget about their missing predecessors, and also to forget all about gold, whether for personal account or for the coffers of "the party."

Oddly, the wave of disappearances promptly ceased.

Mike of the Parthenon coughed discreetly and I looked up. He was standing by my side in his usual obsequious way and with a napkin folded across his arm.

"They have hauled the swastika down and opened the Acropolis again," he said, and there was a gleam of exultation in his eyes, "did you know? You see, the shield of Athena still protects."

"So it appears," I said. Then I recalled that there was to be a moon that night. "Shall I meet you in the Parthenon later?"

"No," he said. "At another place. You almost came to believe. Then you scoffed. I want to show you with your own

eyes. Meet me at the end of the street in an hour."

I found him at the place appointed. He was half-hidden behind a low stone wall. Nearby was tethered a pair of donkeys. We mounted those and rode off. In a little while we were following a twisty hill trail skirting the shoulders of Mount Lycabettus. The country grew more rugged as we progressed, until at last we came to a low cliff that blocked our way. There we dismounted and he led me through the brush and along a path I would never have found by myself. We had not gone a great way when we turned abruptly into a clump of shrubbery hugging the cliffside. He drew back an armful of the tangled branches and uncovered a dark and gaping hole.

"Crawl in," he said.

I hesitated. It was a small hole, hardly thirty inches high by about as wide. Many persons had already disappeared—non-Greeks all—and here I was alone with a man who many would have thought demented. But my curiosity overcame my fears. I dropped to all fours and crawled into the black cave. I could hear him scuffling along behind me, and once or twice he warned me to watch out for my head where the ceiling was low or where we were about to make a turn.

After a dozen yards of such progress, the winding passage widened and I could no longer feel the brush of the rocky roof against my back hair.

"You can stand up now," he said, and flashed on a torch.

The place we were in appeared to be a sort of antechamber to the cave. Tortuous passages ran off from it in all directions, each floored with soft white sand. He beckoned me to follow and preceded me down one of them. It ended blind, but just before it ended I came upon a shallow hole dug out of the sand. A few gold coins of antique vintage lay scattered around it.

"That is where Scheer got his first gold. He made me show him where it was."

Then he wheeled and led me past several other wing passages. He flashed a light down one.

"Same story here—Ciccotto's gold find. He threatened to have me shot unless I told him."

He hurried on. In another divergent tunnel he showed me four leather bags neatly packed with gold coins. They were sitting on the sand and a short spade beside them. Footprints led away toward deeper recesses.

"They came back looking for more," he explained. "I think they went farther into the cave to scout out other deposits." He said it with a ghastly chuckle that chilled the soul.

"And got lost?" I asked. Some caves are like that. I pictured rotting corpses and whitening bones deeper within the labyrinth.

"Lost!" he cackled. "Yes. They are lost. Lost forever."

"I am a poor guesser," I said, sitting down on the sand and looking straight at him. "If your purpose in bringing me here was to explain something, explain it."

"I brought you to convince you," he said, with immense dignity, "that the shield of Athena still protects. These baubles"—and he indicated the packed bags of gold with a contemptuous gesture of the hand—"are only bait. The gods have always been wise enough to know that the only kind of men whom they need fear are the greedy ones. And it is by their own greed that the gods slay them. Shortly I will show you what happened to the German Scheer and the Italian and all the others who followed them.

"It was an easy matter to lure them here. I had only to pretend to be in distress—I told them I had an aged aunt in prison charged with harboring a wounded British soldier. I offered money for a favorable consideration of her case. Scheer said it would take much money. I gave him gold. He wanted more. They took me to the police station and submitted me to much abuse. At length I agreed to show him where I got my money. It was from an old temple treasure, I told him, buried in a cave. I showed him the way in and the way back. He left that first night because he had all he could carry. I knew he would go back for more. I knew, too, that he would not be content with merely what I had shown him. He would search the whole cave. The Italian Ciccotto behaved exactly in the same way. It was very simple."

"But of so many," I asked, "why did not some come back?"

"The legacy of Athena, of which I am the earthly executor, has extraordinary properties. There are vast fortunes buried in these caves—things so valuable that once men look upon them they cannot leave. Come!"

Mike led me into a transverse passage for a long way. As we proceeded it was unnecessary for him to use his electric light, for the cavern was bathed in a soft and mysterious luminosity of a faintly rose hue. He turned into a doorway on the right.

"This room is no longer used," he said.

I looked in. It was a huge semicircular room much along the lines of a Grecian theater. Directly opposite the door was an empty raised stage or dais. Between it and the doorway the amphitheater sloped upward. But the room was not empty. It was crammed with statuary.

"Examine them," Mike directed.

You have seen habitat groups in museums? It was something like that, except that the figures here were of mixed nationalities—all ancient. There were hooded Egyptians, and many Romans—some togaed, others incased in armor. The figures were of stone, cleverly and perfectly carved, but were dressed in the habiliments of living men of the era. The figures must have stood where they were for many centuries, for many were nude with only the moldy fragments of their former clothing lying at their feet. Much

of the armor was encrusted with rust and scale, though here and there a golden casque bespoke an aristocrat. The faces all had one thing in common: the features were frightfully distorted as if in an ecstasy of horror.

"Come," he said. "I will show you another room—more modern."

It was a duplication of the first, except the type of statue had changed. Here stood big-muscled, athletic figures of men, all beautifully executed in white marble. Over their shoulders heavy animal skins were flung, and there were other skins wrapped about their middles. There were many Turks there, too, and soldiers of a type I took to be Janizaries. As before, the stony faces registered utter terror. Many of the figures had their arms thrown halfway up, as if the sculptor had caught them in the act of warding off some fiendish thing that threatened them.

Mike led me through the throng of statuary much as one would tread a sidewalk mob when the persons in it are intent on studying a bulletin pasted on a wall. For it was noteworthy that all the figures had their faces turned the same way and their stony eyes fixed on a spot in midair some yards above the empty dais. He stopped at one and tapped it on the shoulder.

"This one was Morosini," he said, with cold venom, "the chief ravager of her shrine. But we must go. There is one other room to see."

I was brimming with questions, for nothing shown me yet had shed much light on the mystery of the recent disappearances. Where had the gold come from—especially the modern coins? Who had executed the vast assemblage of life-sized figures, and why were they entombed in this hidden and unknown spot? Were any of the more recently missing Gestapo men still alive?

"The modern gold," he said promptly, as if I had asked the questions out loud, "is the tribute of the faithful. I and those before me have long sold the offerings of the peasants who still have faith—you saw my market booth. Its profits are buried here. The other questions will answer themselves soon."

He lapsed into silence and took me back in the direction whence we had come. Presently we came to the passage by which we had entered and he turned deeper into the cave. I saw that loose gold was scattered along the path, a tempting lead to go farther. Suddenly Mike stopped before an open door.

"The other rooms were abandoned long ago," he said. "They became too full. It is in this one that Athena presides during the intervals when she is awake. Her sleeping compartment is in the rear, but that is forbidden to mortal man. Here, put on these."

He handed me a pair of peculiar-looking binoculars, and I noticed he had a similar pair for himself. They were a sort of cross between prismatic binoculars and spectacles, for the lenses were blanked off and there were hangers to hook over

the ears. I found when I put them on that I could see perfectly well, but the images came to me through artificially widened eye-spacing, giving me a keener perception of depth. They were quite as satisfactory as straight vision, but I could not help wondering why he insisted on my wearing them.

"Now," he directed, "take my hand and walk backward."

We backed into the remaining hall. We had gone only several strides until I stopped with a gasp. I had passed and was now facing a portrait statue of a German Gestapo man I knew! The marble figure stood rigidly with the contorted expression of stark horror on his chiseled features I had seen elsewhere. His clothing was modern to the minute. I had seen the man and in those very clothes not three weeks before. It was a figure of one of the missing men, dressed in that man's clothes!

We went on. I passed a replica of an Italian major, more Gestapo replicas. At length Mike jerked me to a halt.

"Here is Scheer," he said. It was. Except for the fact he was in marble and not in the flesh and that his horrified expression differed from the one of smug arrogance I had been accustomed to, there was no whit of difference.

"Now," said Mike, "turn around."

I turned. The dais before me was not empty as the others had been. Upon it was a colossal throne-chair—at least

twenty feet in height. Over the back of it a cloak of cloth-of-gold was thrown and atop it perched a huge, solemnly blinking owl and beside him a snow-white cock. A slender silver lance of some fifty feet in length leaned against the chair, a coiled serpent lay on the step before it. On the right side of the chair an immense golden shield stood. It was adorned with intricate carvings and I started to take off the glasses I wore in order to study its detail better.

"Don't, you fool!" said Mike, harshly, gripping my wrist with fingers of steel. "Do you want to be like the others? That is the aegis—the shield of Pallas. You cannot bear the naked sight of it—use your mirrors, man!"

I did not quite understand, and then, as I looked again, I did.

In the midst of the shield, where another shield would have a boss, there was a head. My blood chilled at the sight of it and I felt goose flesh pop out all over me. My hair lifted and I knew that my face was as twisted in the same horrified contortions as those of the cold figures all about. For the face of the head on the shield was indescribably hideous—horrid fangs protruded from a misshapen and lipless mouth—wild eyes filled with living hatred and immeasurable fury glared out from beneath frightening eyebrows—and all about the vile face the writhing hair of the head twisted and untwisted. It was not hair, but a mass of hissing snakes.

I wanted to scream, to faint, to die. The sight was intolerable—no man could bear it. A blessed blackness blotted out my vision. I realized I had gone blind, but I was

grateful for it. That did not matter, for I had clutched at myself and found reassurance—my flesh was still warm and yielding—I had not been turned to stone. For at that moment I knew what it was that I had gazed upon, and how I had been saved. It was by looking through the prismatic mirrors, even as Perseus had when he severed that frightful head from its former body. I had forgotten until then that he had gratefully presented the bloody, writhing trophy to his patroness and that she had set it in her shield.

"Medusa," I murmured, half hysterically, "the Gorgon, Medusa."

"Yes," said Mike of the Parthenon, grabbing me firmly by the arm and leading me way, "it still has power. Her aegis is impregnable—"

I heard no more. Even the memory of that hideous sight was unbearable.

THE END.

[The end of *The Goddess' Legacy* by Malcolm Jameson]