



# Little God

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** Melis, the fledgling God of Desire in All Its Forms, is of course aware of the famously beautiful and famously unwed King Antero. Though the human king has been approached by many suitors, all have been intimidated by the strength of his remarkable heart. The lonely Antero has been praying for a companion, a friend who will stay by his side if he is not meant to find the other half of his soul. For years, he has been making those prayers to Melis.

Known by many names including Melis the Prankster and Melis the Cruel, Melis is blamed by humans and gods alike if he answers their wishes—and if he doesn't—and almost never thanked for the stories that turn out well. He has listened to Antero's yearning without responding, secretly pleased to have the noble king's devotion for himself, but mostly convinced there is no one on earth who could ever be Antero's equal.

But when some of the elder gods insist Melis would serve the world better if he knew anything of desires for himself, the little God of Desire decides to visit the private chambers of the king and finally respond to his most faithful servant—only to find himself wanting to answer the king's wish in a more personal way than he'd anticipated. Melis might be divine, but one clever human king is more than a match for him, especially once Antero decides it's time for Desire to learn something of Love.

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# Page 1

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Desires streamed around the columns and corridors of the temple complex with the force of a river in spring, spilling from windows and doors to rise high on the breezes from the sea below before the north wind caught them and carried them to Melis.

He kept his wings at his back, his hands at his sides, his feet above the well-trodden paths around the temple complex.

The scent of food from the vendors outside the temple sent a wave of new, more mundane desires through those leaving the temples or doing business in the area.

Stomachs rumbled with sudden hunger. The cold evening air made others long for the warmer clothes they'd left at home, fooled by the sunny afternoon into forgetting that Autumn approached.

...that scarf looks so pretty with my hair, he'd be sure to notice me then...

"My home and the fire call to me, Skoris.

I can't stay, though I wish I would."

...haven't the coin for a hand pie, but damn those smell good...

"Not so many steps around this blasted temple for those of us without good shoes.

That's what the gods ought to grant us.

I'll fuckin' ask them myself, I'm serious."

...visited every shrine in there.

I even prayed to The Fair-Shaped twice.

Ankirra will definitely like me now.

She has to—unless The Prankster has his way. Did I leave anything for him? Fuck, I forgot...

Melis glanced toward that one, a figure weaving through the crowd heading away from the temples instead of back into them to leave the offering he'd forgotten.

Melis forgot him in turn, continuing on as he had been, following the long, low wall that surrounded the complex and glancing more than once to the images painted onto the stone.

The Bringer of Storms and Lightning.

The Fair-Shaped.

The heroes turned to stars or lesser gods.

The Father of War and the One Beneath the Waves. Ever-Pregnant yet Ever-Birthing Harvest standing with the eternally young Green. Green with her talons dripping blood. The Silent One. The Ever-Present. Vengeance and her children. The noble wolf's head atop the shoulders of The Hunter. Owls and hawks, wolves and deer, bears feasting on berries or dressed as Indulgence.

Most of the elders appeared several times, in human-like forms or represented in some other way: swords, shields, a basket of grapes, fish, rabbits and eggs.

Once or twice, the bright yellow and black of a bee hovered above the others, the paint fresh and new.

Or, instead of the stinging wasp, a laughing boy would lurk in corners, or a gorgeous youth with breasts and a cock would beckon temptingly.

More often, an older handsome man or a lush beauty with curves to rival The Fair-Shaped grinned cruelly down at the other gods, bees resting in the palms of their hands, readying to fly out at a moment's notice as though even other gods were not safe.

Maybe that was why the other gods seemed to glare back though their paint was faded with age.

Melis paused, pulling at the hem of his short tunic until he caught himself doing it and stopped.

Humans carried on around him, a few stumbling before righting themselves and glancing back to the empty spot in the path that had somehow tripped them.

Melis tried to share a grin with the figures on the wall, but The Ever-Present glowered back, and the tired god of Home, Family, and the Warmth of the Marriage Bed crossed their arms, unamused.

The wind whispered more dreams.

Higher on the cliff, the walls of the palace loomed, white and bright.

Wishes came from inside shops closing for the night, scraps of dreams of more money or softer, personal yearnings for food or bed that all humans had.

Sometimes, they dreamed of what might be done in that bed that was not sleep.

Sometimes they dreamed of it with someone they were not married to, if they were married.

Sometimes they dreamed of marriage. Sometimes, they did not wait for their eyes to shut before they imagined their ideal lovers.

Melis had found humans to be fairly obsessed with the activities of the bedroom.

He'd also found many of the elder gods to be afflicted with the same fever—another touchy subject, particularly with the eldest and most powerful of gods who often behaved exactly like the humans they looked down upon.

And lusted after.

And admired.

And cared for as they might care for their own children.

And sometimes became so deeply devoted to that the humans were granted immortality so a god wouldn't pout for all eternity.

No one could pout like the elder gods, not even the human children Melis had observed.

The elder gods were a strange lot.

But so were humans, who seemed to exist in a constant state of wanting.

Well, perhaps not constant.

But it felt that way, yearning calling to Melis no matter where he stood in the human world.

Proximity to a temple hardly mattered; there was longing behind every door in every house and in every breeze.

It spoke to Melis now, trying to disguise itself as resignation.

Melis bit back what he might have said in answer, scoffing lightly instead and ignoring the human who turned to look for the source of the sound before shrugging and walking away.

The human wanted to be home to fall into the arms of their new husband.

Melis smiled to himself at the simple, pleasing wish before catching sight of the smirk on the painted face of The Fair-Shaped as Mother.

All-Mother looked entirely too smug, as if she held knowledge she should not.

Melis didn't feel hunger, but like those humans behind him around the food stalls, there was a tremor in his stomach, a rumble.

"A craving,"

Storm-bringer and War had both said, sneering in the face of Melis' confusion.

"If you haven't known hunger for yourself, you have no place creating it in others, little wasp."

Indulgence, heavily furred, lying on a bed of petals with roasted seeds at their lips, had smiled.

They do not like to feel powerless, Indulgence thought in a voice like falling rain, knowing Melis would hear.

For that, they do not like you.

But they don't know what love truly is, so pay no attention to them.

Indulgence, curved and fat and ripe, had many lovers and equally as many beloveds.

Melis didn't understand but didn't need to; desire to Indulgence was the sweet taste of honey and the sting of the bee, but a sting Indulgence enjoyed.

Even Desire Unfulfilled was an aspect of Melis that Indulgence welcomed, moaning and bewailing disappointment and their broken heart with abandon before some new fancy caught hold of them.

Indulgence had always been Melis' favorite.

Harvest turned her back on him.

The Ever-Present continued to glower, as he always did.

Bloodthirsty War sulked and stared longingly at The Fair-Shaped, who did not think of War even absently.

She longed for mirrors, birdsong, and mattresses of feathers, for mouths, or fingers, and legs spread for her. Life-Giver as she was, she did not and would not yearn for Battle. Not even Melis could make that happen.

Not that he would tell War that.

Fucker deserved what he got.

Which was a dry cock and a bed empty of the one he lusted after.

War might speak of love, but physical need was as far as his longing extended and Melis had no interest in answering it. Perhaps he could make The Fair-Shaped want War, but he saw no reason to.

He had a million other wishes to consider anyway: rumors and prayers in the wind, curses muttered low as if even a lesser god wouldn't hear his name invoked.

Those cursing their fate were fortunate Melis was not inclined to wrath.

The wall around the temple complex ended at last, and the path beneath him began a slow incline to the highest point in this city.

If Melis had chosen to feel it, he would have been shivering at the cold in his simple tunic of linen.

The sky darkened; Night busy at work crooning to the moon as it rose.

Unaware of the song above them, humans around Melis ducked into homes and lit fires to keep the world warm and bright. Behind walls, they fought and fucked and shared meals. Some sat alone, content, others gazed out windows toward the sea, waiting for someone's return. Still others looked up to where the stars were beginning to shine and wished to not be so alone.

Melis didn't see what the stars had to do with it.

Most lonely humans could have fulfilled their own desires by simply speaking to one another, which couldn't be that difficult.



Most human wants and needs were the same: food, shelter, pretty things, friends, affection, and, for most of them, sex.

Melis didn't need the first three, and didn't have the last three, but he could have if he wanted. Humans could do the same if their desire was so great. At the very least, they could make offerings to the right god about it, instead of pleading to The Warmth of the Marriage Bed, or to The Fair-Shaped in her aspect of Physical Pleasure. Even Merriment, a lesser god, got prayers of gratitude for friendship and affection, as if Melis wasn't right there.

"They put you on their friezes so as not to offend you,"

Night took a moment from serenading the moon to whisper to Melis.

"It doesn't mean they love you or even understand you.

I bother most of them too, except in the summer when they welcome me—or really, the absence of Day.

The only ones who welcome me are lovers."

Melis flicked a hand up toward the moon, smiling to himself at the nearly inaudible chime of bells as the moon returned some of Night's admiration.

Something the moon could have done at any time, but perhaps it enjoyed the attention.

Some needed to be prompted to share what was in their hearts.

Others shared their hearts freely yet received no answer.

Melis, have I angered you? Or is it as they whisper, that I am your favorite and you keep me this way because my yearning pleases you?

Melis, child of the wind, is this what you have chosen for me in your wisdom? Is my loneliness meant to mark me as yours? I will be the priest of Desire if you wish it.

But only tell me if it's meant to be Desire only or Desire Fulfilled?

I thought this one loved me, Melis, but they were like the others.

Is it not you I have angered, but some other god?

Melis of Many Forms, am I to be forever alone? I confess, I find myself wishing it was true that you favor me so this is not divine punishment for something I have unwittingly done to offend you.

I... I thank you for the gift of wanting.

The keenness of my feelings serves you so I will try to be grateful.

But I cannot help but dream as I cannot help my hurt upon waking alone again.

I only hope this hurt at least pleases you, One Who Reunites Souls, Melis of Passion and Longing, Desire in All Its Forms. In which case, I thank you again, Melis, for your favor.

One human daring to call Melis by his proper names.

One voice low and husky with pain while thanking Melis for the loneliness causing that pain.

Melis could have blushed like a human, and was not entirely sure he didn't, because this one voice he had not answered.

He hadn't thought he'd have to, he defended himself sharply as he reached the gates of the palace, although there was no one to witness his internal wriggling.

And... perhaps it had been pleasant to hear his proper names spoken, even in whispers in private prayers.

Desire could have desires too, Melis decided with some irritation, and hearing his real names was not a dream that should bother anyone.

Feathers ruffled with irritation at gods who might judge him, Melis muttered under his breath and moved through the sliver of space between the closed gates.

The palace itself was nothing to the homes of some of the gods, but remarkable for the world of humans, although not for the reasons other humans might have imagined.

The palace had the signs of a considerate ruler who cared for his people.

The halls were clean.

The walls draped with well-tended greenery. Fountains of clear water splashed gently in several locations, as they splashed gently in all the fountains in the city. Where not lit by the light of the charmed moon, corridors of white or painted stone were illuminated by oil lanterns. Soldiers, already in cloaks though Autumn had only begun to stretch out her arms, kept watch in pairs throughout the grounds, some petting contented guard dogs to pass the time, others telling stories.

Servants were still at work, although not many.

Most were settling in for the night in the kitchen to enjoy a nibble of cheese or some wine from the well-stocked cellars.

Melis listened to the longing thoughts of one attending to the needs of one of the ladies of the house, who was apparently beyond lovely, perhaps even as beautiful as her brother, the king.

The servant was in awe of such a family, surely favored by many of the gods in their temperament, wisdom, and looks.

Then, almost in the same moment she thought it, the servant stopped to mourn the fate of such a house, gifted in all things except matters of the heart.

There was some hope for the lovely sister, but though the king had found lovers and sought a suitable match with someone of noble blood from any of the nearby cities, no one had chosen to stay with him.

At first, rumor had supposed the young king capricious, as the young could be.

Then, those abroad had whispered that the king must have some flaw, some misfortune or streak of heartlessness that had repulsed potential partners and sent his current lovers fleeing.

Now, with his city prosperous and thriving and his people ferociously defending him, a new story was carried on the wind: the kind, handsome, thoughtful king had been cursed, stung by The Prankster, Melis the Cruel, to be alone forevermore.

King Antero had angered Many-Formed Desire, the wind whistled.

He had beheld Melis' true face and turned from him, and Melis in his fury had doomed the king to want but never know the other part of his soul, or to receive the

kind of love he had offered so many.

Melis stopped to stare down at the shrine below of one of the palace's many fountains, unsurprised to see Mother and Harvest and The One Beneath the Waves honored so prominently in a palace on a cliff above the sea, in a kingdom where the people were plump and well-fed.

It was the small, winged figure set among the greater gods that stole his breath.

The face had not been carved, but wings had been cut into the stone with feathers that looked as light as a dove's.

Equally detailed was the tiny stone crown of roses resting on the figure's head, crooked and playful instead of straight and dignified the way the other figures wore their crowns.

The carver had given the figure a massive phallus.

Melis ducked his head to consider the bulge beneath his tunic.

Some expected a big cock on their god of Desire.

Others did not. Melis was depicted as young and old, virile and handsome, curving and fertile, or purely a mischievous youth who had nothing of note between his legs because he'd never fucked or been fucked and thus didn't understand the consequences of his actions. Each form was heavy with expectation and some judgment.

Too beautiful, King Antero had mourned to himself, they fear I will be unfaithful.

Not beautiful enough.

Antero's thoughts had held a trace of bitterness tinged with wry amusement.

I do not live up to the stories they tell of me.

That had been a lie told by one of Antero's potential betrotheds.

Melis had heard the truth as the betrothed had stewed to himself on his way out of the city.

The betrothed had loved another he could not have, someone themselves already in love with, or at least enamored with, King Antero.

The would-be betrothed had wanted to wound the king, and wound he had.

Melis had heard it all and not answered.

Not the betrothed and not the king, although he had eased the suffering of the innocent third party, coming to this sea-cliff city to ensure the short, pretty human had found someone new to gaze upon fondly.

Someone not the former-betrothed and also not the king.

If the king had gazed back at that short, pretty human, then Melis could have blessed their union.

Human rules about who could or couldn't marry kings were inconsequential; if a person found part of their soul in another, even a mortal, even a god, then they should reach for each other.

And like gods, if kings wanted to be with someone, they would find a way.

But gods could be as cowardly as some humans, and it was easier for them all to blame Melis.

One would think they'd know not to mess with someone capable of making even bloodthirsty conquerors and fearsome gods go weak-kneed and stupid.

Then, when he did that, because that was his role, people were angry about that too.

““You don't know what you do to people,””

Melis quietly mimicked several of his more powerful immortal brethren, adding a haughty scoff at the end. “Ha.”

Several of the guard dogs raised their heads as Melis passed, following the rustle of his feathers and the sound of his voice.

He waved them off to dreams of meaty bones and puddles big enough to splash in.

“I do my work as I am supposed to.

They're the ones too afraid to go after they want—or to listen to why they will never receive it.

War pestering someone who doesn't want him, perhaps because it means he will never have to bare his soul.

Storm-Bringer wants too many, too recklessly, tearing open their chests to gaze at their hearts without ever offering his in return.

The moon wants to be eternally wooed.

Fire and Invention wants to love and tells himself he has, he is, only to leave broken hearts behind him.

The Fair-Shaped adores everyone but keeps her heart to herself—and there is no reason for her not to, since unlike the others, she has never lured another with the idea of love.

And when she rejects them, it's even worse.

As if she ever claimed to rule over hearts! She certainly did not, though she might fuck who she pleases.

They know this and yet when she doesn't swoon for them, somehow I am the cruel one, the one who is blamed.

I did this to them because I am a foolish youth who doesn't know anything about anything.”

“A king smart enough to keep his city free of battles and conflict, and apparently pretty enough to make storytellers tremble with longing, cannot find someone to love him, and that is my fault?”

Melis continued to grumble, letting Night hear him, not that Night cared about Melis' guilt.

“I cannot answer every wish, and even when I try, people often remain unhappy.”

Melis passed slowly through an empty throne room.

“This king is certainly capable of great devotion.



He honors the stinging wasp even as he is stung.

He offers to the gods as he should, even to me, the smallest of them. If other humans do not love him, that is their foolishness, not mine.”

Well, Melis would show them.

The stories of this king’s lonely heart and the prayers from his people on his behalf had traveled the world, reaching deep beneath the mountains and high into the clouds.

After one too many sneers from The Bringer of Battles and knowing looks from The Fair-Shaped, Melis had stormed away from her palace and fallen into the wind.

The wind, guessing Melis’ decision before Melis had, had carried him here. So, fine. Melis would look upon the legendary king for himself and determine if there was someone in the world to equal him.

Frankly, he was surprised that neither Storm-Bringer nor The Fair-Shaped had taken King Antero to their beds.

Antero was looking for more than a fuck, but that sort of detail wouldn’t bother a god.

Not the elders, anyway.

If Antero was as perfect as the stories, his words, and his voice suggested, the elders might even fall for him... as much as the older gods could fall for anyone but themselves.

They weren’t allowed to touch him.

The strength of Melis' anger made him pause, although he hadn't spoken it and no god should know his thoughts unless Melis allowed them to.

Nonetheless, he modified the tone of his thoughts as he continued on.

He'd meant that he wouldn't let the elder gods near the human king, not that he meant to take Antero himself.

A ridiculous notion.

If Antero were to seek happiness with an immortal, it would have to be a powerful one.

Little though Melis was, he wouldn't allow Antero to be used and discarded. Antero wanted a companion, a devoted, clever man to match wits with him and share smiles with him, to sleep in his bed and talk with when either of them had a burden. He wanted the complement to the jagged edge of his soul.

...And he said Melis' name sweetly.

For that, Melis would do his best to grant the king his heart's desire, and if Melis could not find someone good enough to make him happy, then he should at least try to find someone to feel affection and loyalty to Antero as a friend.

That might be tricky with Antero being king of the city, but there were other cities to look to.

The polished bronze shield of one palace guard didn't show Melis' reflection, which was fortunate, because Melis suspected he was scowling darkly.

The guard, bored, alone, trying to stay awake while his partner was off somewhere

relieving himself, was thinking of pretty women, but none in particular.

Busy seeking the chambers of the members of the royal family, Melis left the guard to it, lifting a hand idly as he tracked the thoughts or dreams behind each door.

Long day tomorrow, and yet I can't sleep.

...Too early to sleep.

Moon's bright enough to sew by, I swear.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“You must think me a naughty creature in need of punishment.”

Melis cocked his head curiously at that one, though the voice was not the one that had drawn him here.

He didn't quite understand the meaning of the words, but the desire beneath them was more than clear.

He wondered if he would be thanked tomorrow by the man currently receiving the punishment he'd asked for, but doubted it.

If he or his lover thanked anyone, it would be The Fair-Shaped as Physical Pleasure. But they might not even bother with that. Most humans didn't.

She should be thanked for the loud, and strangely stirring, sounds of enjoyment Melis left behind as he continued on.

But so should he.

Melis was not only Wanting; he was the moment passion struck.

He was racing hearts, and flushed cheeks, and the sudden absence of clear thoughts. He cackled over it at times, watching the arrogant trip over their words and certain know-it-all gods kneeling at the feet of some hapless human.

Desire Fulfilled, Antero had rightly named one aspect of him.

For that alone, he deserved an answer from Melis.

Melis stopped outside the door he'd avoided for too long to consider the solid craftsmanship of the door itself, and then the two human guards directly in front of it.

But they were easy.

It didn't take more than a single covert glance from one tall guard to the other for him to see that even the bravest of warriors could fear actions when actions might lead to their hearts.

He reached out to brush his fingertips over a muscled thigh.

The tip of his wing touched the shoulder of the other guard. Both of them gasped, one clutching her leg as if she could still feel Melis' touch. Then the second guard stepped closer to the one she had long adored in secret.

Melis slipped past them both while they were trembling and staring into each other's eyes.

Their shared ache for a kiss lingered along his skin like the sun's light and warmth.

A shiver carried through his wings, so he extended them to shake the feeling away.

The rush of air through feathers did not cause the form lying on the bed before him to stir.

The hour wasn't late.

Many nights, the king walked the length of his bedroom until the moon was high, searching for a solution to a problem of governance or unable to sleep for some other

reason.

Melis had never stepped into Antero's private chambers, but knew the wide window overlooking the sea as if he'd seen many times; that was where the king stood when his thoughts turned to his loneliness.

After long days, he would stand near the ledge of stone, the breezes stirring the curtains and gathering his words before it brought them to Melis.

The window allowed moonlight into the open rooms, a silvery touch nearly extending to the bed itself.

The moon would not dare go farther.

Melis assured himself of that with a vicious glare toward the window, then returned his attention to the rest of the space.

A table of carved wood and lacquered chair, a smaller room connected to this one, possibly full of articles of clothing or armor, for the king had studied arms and combat even as he strived to keep his city free of trouble.

The walls held murals, not of any gods, but scenes of their works: a field in the summer sun, a deep forest, the sea, mountains that seemed to tremble before Melis' eyes.

There was no cot in the corner of the room as he had seen in some noble houses in different cities and countries.

No servant stayed in the king's rooms with him at night.

There was only the king on his bed, a large shape beneath a light blanket, almost

hidden by curtains of fine mesh tied to the canopy above.

For now, Antero slept alone.

But Melis would take care of that, and perhaps, in the future, visit to make sure Antero was happy.

Not that Melis made mistakes.

He was a god.

Small and annoying, but a god.

Truthfully, War and the others were not entirely incorrect; the god of Overwhelming Passion, of Desire and Desire Fulfilled, Melis the Cruel, Melis the Prankster, Melis the Merciful and Most Giving, did not actually know much of love beyond those first moments he sometimes helped along.

He didn't really understand it, but the other gods didn't seem to either, so they had no room to talk.

Perhaps it would help Melis in his work if he observed human passion and affection and need for each other up close.

And what better human to witness than Antero the Faithful, who had yearned for the other part of his soul for so long?

He yearned for it now.

Melis put his feet to the floor to creep closer to the bed.

Antero had fallen asleep with an ache in his chest—having also observed the longing glances between his two guards and ensuring they were assigned night duty together more often.

A similar ache formed within Melis at the realization. Antero had been happy for them, and then also faintly despairing as he entered his unlit bedroom, stripping his clothes away by himself to sit on the edge of his bed and look out the window.

Human, Antero couldn't hear Night's song begin, but he'd smiled to witness the moon appear.

He'd thought, I shouldn't let it pain me.

I am blessed in many ways.

Is it not beautiful out there, Melis? I wish I could share the sight with someone who might find peace in it as I do. But for now, the view is mine, and I will enjoy it.

When, exactly, the king had taken to addressing Melis so frequently, Melis couldn't recall.

But he didn't mind, which was probably why he hadn't put a stop to it.

It was also probably why Melis had looked up to Night and the moon in the first place, and paid special attention to their music; Antero had seen the view and wanted it shared, and thought of Melis.

He hadn't known Melis was in his city on his way to him.

It is beautiful, Melis agreed, rubbing the spot over his heart.



I don't often appreciate the works of the elders, but they can be lovely.

Is that all you ask for, Faithful Antero? A lover to gaze admiringly at the sea or the sky with you?

Antero, of course, did not answer.

He rolled onto his side toward the window as he dreamed.

The blanket fell away, revealing strong shoulders with brown, warm skin, and a head of dark hair, worn short, but still long enough for half a curl to fall over one perfect ear.

He dreamed of his bare feet in the ocean and a hand in his.

Melis didn't think he'd ever put his bare feet in the ocean.

Not to stop and study the feeling at least, since he couldn't remember it.

The breeze from the window was the breeze in the king's mind, a gentle brush against his bare skin, and Melis couldn't summon a glare for that because then the breeze came to him, sudden and electric along his skin, as if lightning were near.

The wind would always come to Antero if the feel of it was that pleasant for him.

Melis could give him that even if he also gave him a beloved.

That, Melis would always have for himself, though the king might be happy with another and forget what Desire Unfulfilled was.

Strangely unsatisfied by the thought, Melis stopped to watch Antero's chest rise and

fall.

He didn't have to do this.

Melis knew that.

Even Antero knew that.

But Melis should not have been reluctant to do it. The Fair-Shaped had given Melis no answers but she must have made Antero so lovely for a reason, some purpose besides keeping him in her bed, since that she had not done.

Melis frowned and moved closer until his knees touched the bedsheets and the mattress gave beneath his weight.

Antero turned again in his sleep, falling onto his back, an arm thrown over his face.

In his dream, he was alone, wandering and exhausted.

Melis could have pushed his hand into the hair on the human's chest; he nearly did, marveling at it compared to his own although he'd never marveled at Storm-Bringer's chest, or The Ever-Present's, or the chests of any of the heroes who dwelled in the stars. All that stopped him was the knowledge of what might happen if the king felt his touch.

The air left Antero's nipples taut and made him shiver.

His dream changed again, becoming a garden of roses, a soft body yielding beneath his, oil-slick thighs, heat and a whisper in his ear.

Not words but feelings.

Surrender and please and more. Love, the feelings said, love, please don't make me wait.

Antero's cock stirred beneath the blanket, filling while Melis could only watch.

Melis had a heart, had blood when he chose, as gods did.

It had never throbbed beneath his skin before.

He swallowed though his mouth stayed dry.

Love, the dream called to him. Antero's mouth was busy granting kisses and gentle bites; his dream-lover was the one to sigh and beg sweetly. Love, do not make me wait.

Melis furled his wings against his back and clenched his hands against his thighs so he would not reach for the rigid evidence of Antero's need.

The breeze could not cool him.

Antero, dreaming, pressed him down into green moss and spread his legs with one thick thigh.

"Love,"

Melis rasped, pleading, and Antero flinched as he was pulled from the dream and into the waking world.

Melis fluttered back clumsily, almost human.

He forgot himself and put his feet on the ground, arms tangled in a curtain until he

freed himself and spun to face the king.

Antero was sitting up, blanket at his lap, chest and shoulders bare and shining in the presumptuous moon's light.

His face was the most perfect face Melis had ever seen on a mortal.

He was bronze and shadow, with hair that curled like new tendrils of ivy, and plush, parted lips that looked softer than even Melis' roses.

His eyes were deep in the dark of his room, warm with life and hot with the passion lingering from his dream. His gaze was like the voice Melis had heard for years now, full of lust and life and affection... and pain now that the dream was over.

Melis exhaled, shaken, and Antero stilled before frowning into the shadows.

“Who's there?”

he called, then waited, motionless.

Antero the devoted, Antero the lonely, Antero the king, threw aside his blankets to stand beside the bed, his body still affected by his dream.

Melis stared at legs and hips and thighs, at hair and skin gilded from exercising in the light of the lascivious, hateful sun.

He studied the heavy cock, and Antero's chest moving with his rapid breathing, and then his cock again, until Melis' entire body was aflame.

Then Melis stumbled backward, his heart racing, his legs weak, his thoughts a whirling panic.

His palms had never felt empty before, had never gone damp with sweat.

But he couldn't tear his gaze away to study them, or his shaky knees, or his feet, which tripped over each other whenever he moved.

He swallowed, but his tongue was too large for his mouth and his thoughts much too loud to allow for clear speech.

The window was near, offering escape and cooler air to calm his senses.

Melis snapped out his wings to ready for flight only to go still when Antero moved quicker than Melis could see to grab a short sword from the side of the bed.

He held it aloft, not rushing forward, but prepared to defend himself.

He probably wielded his sword well, Melis thought admiringly, although he cared not a jot for weapons or combat.

“Who's there?”

Antero demanded again.

“Show yourself.”

He glanced toward the door.

His concern for his guards rang pure and real through the air to Melis.

Melis wanted to touch all of him at once, and then again, slowly, taking his time with hands and lips and tongue.

Antero's mortal skin would not be smooth, his hair might be soft or coarse.

He'd offered light kisses and bites in his dream, and used the weight and force of his body to keep a smaller, slighter body down and displayed for him.

Melis could be that body. He wouldn't know what to do or where to place his hands, he would undoubtedly not be as beautiful as Antero's past lovers, but he would get to feel Antero and that was surely worth anything.

A more powerful god might have already approached Antero in disguise to gain his trust, or begun seducing him, or taken him to their realm to seduce him without distractions.

Seductions in name only, sometimes.

Those gods thought of their physical desires and nothing else.

Melis was too small to openly defy them, but he thwarted them when he could.

They could not be allowed near Antero.

No matter what it cost Melis, or how much older or stronger they were.

If they'd thought Melis cruel before, they would learn it again and remember it.

"What are you doing?"

Antero suddenly muttered, shaking his head before putting the sword aside.

"You must be half in dream because you are alone."

He swept another look over the room that appeared empty to him, then sighed and dropped his shoulders.

“As you are always alone, you fool.”

He ran a hand over his face, then twisted to look out the window.

The moon, with some grudge against Melis, flooded its light into the room to drench Antero in silver.

“It’s as if The Most Fair crafted you for me,”

Melis murmured weakly, forgetting that his bare, cold feet were on the floor of a human king’s bedroom and not a world away in a god’s palace.

Antero turned sharply to peer into the dark where Melis stood—where no one stood that he could see.

He drew in a deep breath, then paused and did it again through his nose. “Roses?”

He brought his gaze up to where their eyes would meet, though he couldn’t know that.

His quiet guess firmed into certainty. “Roses.”

There were no flowers in his chambers save the ones in Melis’ crown.

“Are you a messenger?”

King Antero spoke with polite composure, though his wary attention did not leave the spot where Melis stood.

“I don’t know which god has sent you, but how may I help? Ah! Forgive me.”

He didn’t blush, or if he did, the warm tones of his skin and the silvery moonlight didn’t show it.

But he reached for the blanket across his bed and pulled it to his waist to conceal his nakedness.

“No!”

Melis threw out a hand as if to stop him, then froze, fully expecting Mischief—true Mischief, not Melis the Prankster—to dart from the shadows to laugh at him.

Antero stopped at the word, his chest heaving. “No?”

he echoed, his head tipped slightly to the side.

His gaze on Melis—on Melis somehow despite how Melis wished he would look away so he could breathe again—Antero opened his hand to let the blanket fall.

“They didn’t lie about you.”

Melis did not give his mouth permission to do anything and yet he spoke.

Yet he said that, his voice melted butter.

“That is....”

He had no idea what he ought to say after something like that.

He sounded like a young, inexperienced human, not a fucking god.



He stretched out his wings and lifted his chin.

“Antero the Faithful of this sea-cliff city,”

he began, only to wince when the radiant power of his voice struck Antero and made him stumble back a step. “I mean,”

Melis tried again, his voice higher but far more human, “I’ve come in answer to your prayers.”

Not much of an answer, he reflected sadly.

But Antero’s head came up and an expression of wonder crossed his face.

“My prayers?”

Antero wet his lips and even that was perfect.

Or that was the moonlight, drawing Melis’ attention to the shine at his lips.

Antero frowned slightly only a moment later.

“Forgive me but I try to honor each of the gods, and I do not know which you are, or are from. There’s perhaps one I’ve spoken to most often, but that’s because....”

He trailed to silence, bowing his head as if in thought.

He took a breath. “Roses,”

he whispered as he brought his head up.

“Melis, is that you?”

He was too clever, or too hopeful; Melis couldn't decide which, and his silence while he debated it seemed to spark a worry.

“Melis, are you still there? Have I offended you?”

Melis shook his head—like a fool, because Antero could not see the gesture. “No.”

He briefly allowed some power to slip back into his voice to make sure Antero wouldn't doubt him.

“No, never.

You couldn't, most faithful Antero.”

A shiver tore through the strong body in front of him.

Melis tried to gentle his voice again in case Antero was frightened.

“I am here to...”

help him find his match, which meant letting someone else stumble into those considerable arms.

Melis frowned and pushed out his lower lip like Day at his most sulky.

“I am here to... to see you.”

“Now? After years?”

Antero demanded, then gasped and held up his hands.

“Apologies.

I do not question your judgment, Beneficent Melis, but I’m afraid I don’t understand.”

Despite the polite words, his thoughts were pained, colored at the edges by bitterness.

“Since I reached manhood, I’ve been chased by others, and I was happy to be chased, and then to chase in turn.

But over time....”

Antero pulled in a deep breath and changed the words lined up in his mind.

As if only too aware Melis was before him, he stated simply, “You already know the desire in my heart.”

“Yes.”

Melis could feel it pulsing outward with every heartbeat, as he had felt the heat of Antero’s body on his bed without touching his skin.

It was making his heart skip and his body flush in response.

“You didn’t answer me,”

Antero went on, without accusation though Melis felt the sting of one, “not even to refuse my need or to tell me to stop speaking to you.”

“I liked it,”

Melis said, still foolish, and hurried forward on his clumsy, almost human feet.

He spoke in an embarrassed rush and stopped short before reaching Antero and falling into his arms.

Melis was young, as gods went, and yet he had never felt so young as he did now, dizzy, hot, and fumbling.

“You are the only one, Faithful Antero, to ever say my names as if you understand them.”

Antero went very still before adjusting to Melis being closer to him.

“It pleased you to hear that?”

The moon found him even when he angled his head down, showing a gaze nearly as warm and knowing as The Fair-Shaped’s.

“Even Desire has desires?”

The ache in Melis’ chest didn’t appear to be going anywhere.

Neither did Melis.

“Beauty has favored you in many ways,”

he justified himself.

The warm gaze would not let him leave, or think, or do much more than stare back,

which Antero could not possibly see but seemed to recognize anyway.

“But I am your favored?”

Antero prompted, accepting that more than one god might wish to touch him, because naturally they would.

But he wasn't pleased by the idea as many might have been.

“Is that why I'm alone?”

The unhappiness returned to shake his voice and color his dreams.

“Am I to stay alone?”

Again a fool who had forgotten he was invisible, Melis shook his head.

“You have tried to meet your equal.

I'm not sure they exist.”

Antero closed his eyes, then lowered his head.

“I am so very beautiful.”

His bitterness now was plain.

“Everyone is beautiful!”

Melis snapped indignantly, annoyed but desiring to dispel Antero's misery.

“The Fair-Shaped is pleased by all that she has made, and I have never seen one who did not shine with the light of her gifts.

But though she has crafted you to resemble a god, you are more than that.

Devoted. Faithful. Striving Antero,”

he called the epithets gently as if he was the one who prayed, and was relieved when Antero looked up.

“You are a compassionate and respected king.

Your people are happy and prove it when they defend you.

The wind knows you and hears your words, and brings them to me. Most Loving Antero,”

Melis’ voice grew rough, “your longing pleases me even as it pains me.”

Antero drew in a breath, his lips parting.

“You know what I long for? My dreams and stray thoughts? All my prayers to you were heard?”

Melis’ voice did not grow smoother. “Yes.”

Antero swayed forward.

“Did you enjoy those too?”

Melis inhaled the scent of the king, the cardamom and oil from a recent bath, the faint

traces of sweat.

His knees ceased to function.

His stomach tightened unpleasantly.

His skin was so hot he might have just stepped from a bath himself.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“What?”

He shook his head, wondering why the wind could not cool him down.

Antero raised his eyebrows, as if he had no idea what he’d done to Melis by moving a fraction closer and asking such a question in an intimate way.

“My desires,”

he explained, his voice a tug on Melis’ mostly forgotten cock.

“Did they please you? If that is all I am to have as a companion in my life, then let my longing bring you pleasure, Melis of No-Form.”

A great, wracking shudder sent feathers floating to the ground, visible to Antero if he cared to look.

Melis bent his head and watched two rose petals from his crown fall to join the feathers.

He turned his face up to Antero, bewildered.

“I don’t know what’s happening to me. I’m warm, and then hot, though I shiver. My limbs are shaky. What have you done to me? Tell me.”

Moonlight revealed a sharp gaze, eyes dark with some emotion Melis didn’t recognize as they swept over him—over the place where he stood, though Antero



could not see him.

Antero swallowed, his throat moving under Melis' fascinated attention.

"I am offering you my dreams, Melis."

Each word was precise.

Each word sent another sliver of lightning down Melis' back that carried through his wings, the sound like the rustle of trees in the wind. "Freely,"

Antero added, watching another petal glide to the floor before looking up again.

"If I am your favored, my desires are yours already, but it pleases me to say it to you.

May I take that small pleasure?"

Heat suffused Melis' skin and his body trembled.

Gods did not get ill, did not die as humans did.

But Melis was sick or dying or melting away.

A clever, beautiful, naked human offered himself, and Melis, feeble god that he was, humiliated himself by going mindless and tongue-tied.

"Melis?"

Antero prompted him gently and yet his blood raced, his thoughts sparkling like treasure in sunlight to hear the quaver in Melis' voice.

He was too clever, too perfect.

It was no wonder his lovers had fled.

He knew people too well. That he had offered to bare himself to them in turn hadn't mattered, because they were human and could never see into his spirit as Melis could.

Antero was proud of himself and blazing bright with hope.

The beat of his heart was so strong, Melis nearly put a hand to his chest to muffle it...or simply to feel the warmth of him.

“You enjoy showing yourself to me?”

He felt the answer before his question was even finished.

“Enjoy?”

Antero echoed, amused, possibly because the emotions running through him were far stronger than simple enjoyment.

“I have no friend or lover who has seen me as I am and stayed with me.

You have listened to my prayers for years, letting me speak to you as though we were friends.

My desires brought you here, and you stare at me so that I can feel it though I can't see you in return. Yes, I take pleasure in that. What made others leave makes you stay. I... I have been desired, but never for what's within me. It feels good... more than good. Are you pleased to hear that?”

He was terrifying as not even War could be.

Melis stared at him, his cock stiffening for the words that matched the aroused joy of Antero's thoughts: Wanted.

I am wanted.

Have me. Don't make me wait anymore.

Melis' brains seemed to have left his head.

Lust made humans and gods alike stupid, but physical desire should not have taken hold of him.

Melis ruled Desire, not the other way around, as gods ruled humans and did not have humans seducing them into being worshiped.

Antero wanted a companion and a lover, if not a soulmate.

He shouldn't settle for bringing a small god a small pleasure.

He'd prayed for an equal, and that was not what the gods offered their worshippers... or their lovers.

They'd have to raise them to godhood for that, which many were reluctant to do.

Melis could never offer such a thing, insignificant and young as he was.

What was Desire to a cyclone, or an earthquake, or childbirth, or a seed in the earth? What was he to this? No god, little or large, would ever have offered themselves the way this human had, the way some humans did every day all over the world while

Melis passed them by and never gave their courage a single thought.

Melis was not strong enough to match him, that was certain.

“But I am Melis, Brave Antero.”

“Faithful, you said before,”

Antero answered, as if he preferred that epithet to Brave.

“Is it that you’d rather have me as your priest, devoted to you since I can’t seem to have any other?”

He knelt gracefully without warning, putting himself at Melis’ feet before looking up.

“You already know I worship you.”

Melis reached out to touch his face and barely checked himself in time.

He knew what he was meant to do, what any other god, or human, might have done without hesitation with this before them.

He put his hands at his sides and kept them there, biting his lip to contain a beast-like growl when Antero let his mouth fall open.

“This is not all you desire.”

Melis would not change that by touching him, no matter how great the temptation.

“So?”

Antero didn't deny it.

"No one gets everything they want, and I want this much.

You know I do."

"You do not mind this much,"

Melis corrected as if he could not feel Antero straining forward or the thirst in his mind to have Melis' cock in his mouth.

"I will not use you.

I am not Storm-Bringer or Mischief, who take.

...Though I want to as I have never wanted anything. But I am only Melis."

The moon's silver glow was nothing to the shine within Antero at the words, as if Melis' warnings merely pleased him more.

"You listened even when I thought I was alone, which means I wasn't.

I was never alone."

Antero's eyes were no less deep with hunger in them.

"Only Melis' you say, as if you are insignificant.

But I tell you now, it was only Melis who kept company with me and came to answer to me.

Why shouldn't I desire you?"

"Nearly everyone desires me in some way,"

Melis admitted with a sigh.

"The idea of me."

"Not who you really are?"

Antero asked as if familiar with the answer, because of course, he was.

Melis clenched his hands tighter and kept his wings back though he shook with the effort.

"You're as clever as they say.

More than deserving of a... of a companion."

His struggle was audible in his voice.

"That's why I came.

I mean—that I have determined to find you one, if one exists.

Stand. Please. I cannot have you there, Antero, please."

Though gods should not beg, except perhaps Indulgence who might enjoy it, Antero listened to Melis' pleading and rose to his feet.

Melis had to tip his head up to continue to see his face.

If Melis took on one of his other forms, he wouldn't have had to.

But he had come here as himself and to change now felt wrong.

Antero's thoughts were a heated tangle: some fear, now, that Melis might leave or that Antero had offended him, then lust, heated and constant, and also a worry Melis didn't understand.

Then abruptly, the tangle was gone and Antero's gaze was clear.

"You had to come to my chambers to find me a companion?"

His tone made implications, but Melis still couldn't think with him so close.

He stumbled back a step before answering.

"Many rumors reach me, and I desired to...."

He heard himself being a donkey but could not be silent.

"I wanted to see you for myself."

Antero let out a breath, almost a laugh. "And?"

His thoughts were as clear as his gaze and yet Melis still could not focus on anything long enough to examine them.

"You are as they say,"

he admitted, though surely Antero knew that.

“You are more than they say.

I don’t understand the ones who left your side.

That is—I do understand because I know their yearnings, but if I were human, and you looked to me for the other part of your soul, I would do whatever I could to make the edges of mine fit. I would... no, that’s not how humans work, and that’s probably why they are so wounded when they leave you. Some edges might bump together well enough, but no amount of wishing could ever make them your match. You’re too great.”

Antero had not stepped back.

Melis looked up until their eyes met again even though Antero should see nothing but the painted walls of the room.

“You sent away the ones you realized were only interested in riches, or power, or purely your physical form.”

Melis’ gaze dipped for a second despite himself, his palms tingling to feel the half-hard length of Antero’s cock and hear Antero pant in his ear as he had done in his dream.

His tongue was eager to do something, so he spoke.

“I could feel their lust for you across continents.

I heard the others, the ones who left you, bemoan their affection for you, their yearning to be your equal. They found themselves lacking, not you. You bare your heart to them but they know...”



He shut his foolish mouth too late.

“What?”

It was careful and quiet.

“Tell me. Please.”

“They know you must have someone willing to do the same—bare their heart—and humans are hesitant to do that.”

Gods as well.

“Do not be pained, my beautiful Antero.

I don’t want you to be unhappy.

I would do anything to...”

Melis stopped, having enough sense left to remember that even accidental vows had power.

“I would search even the realms of the gods to find your equal.”

Antero closed his eyes, then inclined his head.

“I am honored to be favored.”

“My favored.”

Melis’ tongue had grown greedy again.

It made him say that, then rejoiced in the taste of the words.

There was a pulse of interest from Antero, and then such a wave of pleasure that he was surprised Antero could stay on his feet.

But Antero was experienced as well as stronger than Melis. If Melis showed age as humans did, he likely would not have appeared much more than twenty. Antero had years on him and had taken countless lovers within those years to have helped him learn control.

He might even keep that control if Melis touched him, giving Melis freedom to explore.

Oh.

Melis had never understood the lure of Indulgence before.

He could take all his favored had to give him and drown in Antero's desire to be desired by him, be as selfish as any other god and take all of him, then leave him as so many were left in the epic tales.

Humans blamed Melis when that happened.

But those humans, at least, he had never resented.

Discarded, heartbroken, forgotten, who else was there for them to blame without risking the wrath of their divine former lovers?

Melis sucked in a breath.

He didn't want that any more than Antero did.

He had not wanted at all until he'd arrived here.

Well, he'd wanted small things like respect and for War to shut his mouth. Nothing like this. That Melis would feel this desire only once and only now meant something, as it meant something that a human tempted him.

Melis would have said it was a challenge, but who would dare, and why? Some interference from the gods who felt he'd wronged them, perhaps.

A test so they could see if he would use the human who called out for him as they would have done.

"I cannot."

Melis' feet could not leave the floor, so he stumbled back and then around Antero until the air no longer smelled of Antero's bathwater and the oils softening his skin.

"I can't do that to you."

To hurt Antero would haunt him for eternity.

Whoever had crafted Antero had made him for ardent affection and adoration, not a god's demands.

"Not even that?"

Antero asked without turning, perhaps unaware that Melis had moved from him.

"Am I also denied the right to call myself your favorite?"

"No."

Even hearing those words made Melis shiver.

“For that is what you are.”

A god’s favorite was not always blessed, not if another god grew jealous, but he didn’t think that warning would matter to Antero, who was all heart.

“You have looked to me, a god no one thinks of for anything serious, a god no one thinks of fondly even when I make their wishes tangible, for part of your soul.

Or so it felt.”

No hero among the stars had dared that, no matter how many monsters they fought.

Even Melis wanted to flee in the face of Antero’s courage, and slowly recognized the heat in his cheeks as a blush.

He carried on as firmly as he could.

“But even someone like me could destroy you.”

Antero twisted to follow the sound of his voice.

His lips were soft with a smile.

“So concerned for me, Gentle Melis.”

No one called Melis gentle.

Melis’ cheeks burned hotter, the blush spreading down his neck and up to heat his ears.

“I want you safe,”

Melis insisted, his hands over his face though his blush was as invisible as he was.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“Happy. Cared for.”

“Loved?”

Antero turned to face him.

Strong curiosity colored the question, but no bitterness.

“That doesn’t seem to be my fate, unless you say otherwise.”

Melis’ hands became fists as he briefly pummeled the air in frustration at human stubbornness.

He stalked closer to the window in the hopes that cooler air could calm him and glared at the wind-swept sea.

“I will find you a husband and a beloved,”

he said through gritted teeth, vexed enough to come dangerously close to a vow he might not be able to fulfill.

“Or at least a husband who is not indifferent to you, and who might develop affection for you in the regular way.

A hero, maybe, who should be courageous enough to see your quality without flinching from it.

Warm feeling will be sure to grow. You are a fertile garden waiting only for..."

"A bee to ensure flowers?"

Antero finished for him, a hint of amusement in his voice like... like The Fair-Shaped herself, who forever knew more than she would say.

But his resignation quickly returned.

"Finding a suitable match for any king is a significant request.

A friend who is not family or a subordinate would do. Even,"

hesitation from Antero was unnatural and uncomfortable, "even an occasional visitor, at night when I am alone, would be a kindness."

Melis immediately scoffed.

"Crumbs.

You must have more than that, rare one."

Antero spoke as if wounded, though his desires stayed warm.

"I don't think others view me as you do, Melis."

Melis scoffed again and scowled at the sea that had not wronged him.

"I think they do and are afraid of their own weakness."

"And yet,"

Antero must have decided to step closer to where he believed Melis to be, because his words grew louder, “crumbs are what you allow for yourself.

If I am the only one to ever praise you properly, you must be very lonely.”

Melis shrugged that away as much as he could.

“They think I stand in the way of their desires, even when I don’t.

That’s how it is, even with the elders.”

“Elders?”

Antero prompted.

“Gods.”

Melis tried to shrug that away too, leaving his feathers ruffled.

“The ones greater than me.”

Which was nearly all of them.

“They say I am small and spiteful, call me a wasp and a bee for the stings of rejection and failure I dole out, as though they don’t kill out of pique or on a whim.

The Ever-Present makes bets with his husband on human fates.”

Running his mouth would likely cost Melis if he was overheard.

He glanced around before letting his gaze linger on Antero.



“Kano the Satisfied, known as Indulgence,”

who would surely would tell Melis to take Antero to sate this new hunger, “believes they are frightened of me.”

Antero regarded the air where Melis stood.

“Is there a reason they shouldn’t be? Love makes fools of even gods.”

“Love?”

Melis stepped back, bumping first into the edge of the window, then the wall beside it because he couldn’t take his eyes from Antero.

“That’s not my domain.

Many speak of that when they really mean lust, which is a desire—the one most think of.

Many also wish for friends or bedpartners or a spouse. But those are things—people,”

he amended his words quickly so as not to offend the human in the room with him.

“They’re not... I do not rule hearts.

I can only bring them together, the rest....

I couldn’t guide them if I wanted to, or teach them anything of...”

he was compelled to whisper the word, “love.

I don't know it."

"Ah."

Antero bent his head, considering the floor for a moment before glancing to Melis.

"May I help you there, my Melis?"

Melis gasped, although if Antero was his claimed favorite, it was his right to call Melis his.

His god as Melis wouldn't be for anyone else.

"Sex is a part of love for many, for me,"

Antero added that almost thoughtfully.

"And sometimes even an expression of it.

But sex can also be had without love or outside of it.

But I imagine the rush of infatuation can make people confuse the two. And, at least from what the poems say, love and physical passion can be intertwined, one heightening the other. Love means finding joy in another person and them finding joy with you—wanting you to be happy, however that is. I've wanted someone to listen, and someone to listen to and share burdens with. A husband, as you rightfully said. I want that—and smiles. Smiles must also be shared, but that is part of joy, is it not? That is—that would be—bliss."

"I don't deal in bliss,"

Melis informed him tightly.

“I might stick two soulmates in a confined space and leave them there to find each other, but they must work for bliss on their own.

And even with part of their soul standing in front of them, far too many don’t.”

Antero raised his head.

“Is that how even gods end up unhappy? Or do you cause that?”

Melis crossed his arms as he glanced away.

“I may have, once or twice, steered an immortal to what they insisted they wanted though I knew it would leave them miserable.”

The admission brought some warmth back to Antero’s gaze.

“And the happy stories? Princesses rescued from abandonment and death by enamored gods who dote on them for eternity and the like?”

“I might have helped those along.”

Melis did not enjoy blushes.

“But only for the gods I like.

It still doesn’t mean I granted them love.”

“You don’t know it,”

Antero said, warmth rising in his thoughts as well as his gaze.

“So there is no beloved waiting for you in your palace?”

The sea under the moon’s light was actually quite beautiful.

It didn’t compare to Antero in the moonlight, but was far safer despite the creatures lurking beneath the waves.

“I don’t have a beloved.”

Melis was the smallest, most pathetic of gods.

He might as well own to it.

“Or a palace.

What home is there for me among the realms of the gods, anyway? Desire is everywhere. I do visit them sometimes... mostly the palace of The Fair-Shaped.”

“As a lover?”

Fire raged through Antero, then was gone.

Melis should have laughed at the idea as The Fair-Shaped certainly would have.

But the flames of Antero’s jealousy had left his mouth dry.

His voice rasped.

“More as Mother.”

“Oh,”

Antero said, swallowing something else Melis couldn't catch in time.

Discomfort lurked in Antero's mind alongside something like clean, soft wool.

Fondness, it might have been.

A new affection though Melis didn't know what he'd said that might have caused it. Antero gave Melis' approximate location a study. “So where do you go to be at ease if you have no palace or realm of your own? Where do you sleep, as even gods sometimes do?”

Gods slept more for pleasure than need, but Melis supposed a human would ask that.

They were so vulnerable while asleep that it often worried the ones caught outside or among strangers.

“If I sleep, I sleep wherever I am.

I would make a palace if I needed one, but it would be a building occupied only by me and the sound of the wind.”

Melis didn't know why that would earn him another study and then a frown.

“That bothers you?”

“Forgive me, Melis, but you seem...”

“What?”

Melis demanded. “Lonely?”

He stepped away from the wall with his wings partly extended, the wind roaring through the window to lift and tangle the curtains around the bed.

“What do you know of it? You with your family, and your home, and your people who love you? I could answer every wish that comes to me and people would still hate me when their dream goes wrong, or for the wishes not granted even though those wishes would have led to suffering or pain.

Longing is what makes a fulfilled desire all the better—or worse, but they are meant to learn from that.

They are meant to feel it all and because of that they do not like me! No one likes me, I...”

Melis took a breath.

Antero watched him, braced against the wind, relaxing only when the wind subsided.

Melis sighed and shut his eyes.

“I’m sorry. Longing can hurt. It can hurt even the one who is meant to rule over it.”

“It doesn’t have to hurt,”

Antero whispered, closer than before.

Melis opened his eyes and had not even a moment to pull his hands down to his sides and step back before Antero was directly in front of him.

Antero tipped his head down, clearly tracking the sound of breathing to tell him where Melis' face was.

He inhaled through his nose and smiled crookedly when he must have found the scent of roses.

Melis curled his fingers into his palms.

This close, with his wings brushing the stone wall and the window to one side, Antero seemed the only warm thing in the world.

"I cannot touch you.

I don't want to bring you more pain."

The warning might have been more effective if Melis could have spoken above a whisper or kept the tremor from his voice.

Antero leaned ever closer, his lush mouth near Melis' cheek.

His gaze went behind Melis, and Melis realized he was listening to the constant shiver of his wings.

"God of Desire, are you trembling because I nearly have you in my arms?"

"Yes."

Melis chose not to lie.

"But I still don't understand."

“What is it you don’t understand?”

Antero’s soul was a growing bonfire the longer Melis allowed him close.

He had to know what he’d done.

Even Indulgence might mock Melis for his ignorance, yet Melis did not believe Antero would.

“I don’t know what I’m doing here.

Will you tell me?”

“You said you came to see me,”

Antero answered with some pride, but then paused, his head slightly tipped to one side as he reconsidered either the question or his response.

“Do you see everyone you decide to help?”

“Of course not.”

Only after Melis had said it did he realize Antero had guessed that before he’d asked.

But Antero was gentle in victory.

“Do you need to see those you help?”

This time, Melis held onto his answer, hesitating. “No,”

he admitted softly at last, and the brave heart before him blazed with hope.



“You wanted to see me.”

This, Antero did not ask.

“I’d listened to you for so long,”

Melis confessed.

He’d spoken of it often to The Fair-Shaped.

Too late, he understood why she’d looked so knowing before he’d last left her.

He swallowed, then added, quieter, “I told myself I didn’t need to, but I wanted to.”

“As if I were your desire before you ever knew me?”

Antero said, almost breathless, and inched closer after Melis turned toward him, startled.

His lips nearly brushed Melis’ temple, the tip of his nose glanced over a rose petal.

“Stung by stories of me, though I was here alone, waiting for your touch?”

Melis clenched his hands so tightly he felt pain.

“I can’t.

Faithful, if I touch you, I might create desires where there aren’t any.”

Antero’s breath was damp and warm, but it was his lips against Melis’ ear that left Melis shuddering.

“Silly boy,”

he murmured—no, purred, as if humans could do that, “do you feel a shortage of desires from me?”

Melis’ breath hitched painfully in his chest, not that pain could stop him from tilting his head to keep Antero’s mouth close to his skin.

“I am a god,”

he reminded Antero unsteadily.

“A silly god,”

Antero agreed, soft against Melis’ jaw, “who will not touch me though he knows he could.”

Melis groaned.

The brief press of Antero’s lips silenced him.

“Am I permitted to touch you?”

“I...”

Melis had never stammered like this, struggling for each word with his voice high and nervous.

“No one’s ever...”

Antero’s mouth brushed his. “Hush,”

he ordered lightly, skimming his hands down Melis' chest, the tunic ensuring Melis couldn't feel much more than a tantalizing hint of warmth.

It didn't matter; merely that, and Melis' cock began to fill.

Embarrassment made him squirm.

"I'm sorry,"

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

he gasped, falling back into the cushion of his wings.

Antero stepped closer.

“None of that, my Melis,”

he whispered, Melis’ mouth once again beneath his.

Melis fought not to rise up to let their mouths meet, though he parted his lips and tilted his head as he had seen countless humans do.

Antero spoke his name, savoring the sound of it or the shivers it drew from Melis, while a thousand kisses played out in his mind, all the places and ways he might use his mouth to make Melis happy.

Melis’ thoughts were a heated mess of both of their desires and the feverish awareness of Antero’s hand continuing downward over his tunic; the cloth the thinnest veil between them.

Antero paused when he found Melis hard.

Antero had imagined kissing Melis there too; was Melis supposed to pretend he didn’t know that and it hadn’t excited him?

He didn’t get an opportunity to ask; leaving the tunic as a barrier, Antero traced the length of Melis’ cock, his mouth open over Melis’ as if to catch every shuddery exhale.

Then Antero pressed down, his palm hot over flesh that had never been so sensitive.

Melis sought restraint too late, but he couldn't stifle his cry as he pushed back into Antero's hand and came without any chance to stop himself.

He hadn't even known he was going to until his cock was jerking against Antero's palm.

He groaned at every pulse and wet, hot spill into the linen, futilely trying to silence himself and growing louder instead.

Antero only pressed back in response, breathing harder when Melis bit his lip and his groans emerged as a high whine.

Melis glared at him, or wanted to, but cock was even more sensitive now, which had to be some sort of design error.

He squirmed, foolish and embarrassed and still coming, but that hand stayed firm on him.

It was humiliating. It was good. And Antero knew exactly how much Melis was enjoying it. Melis could have burned under his satisfaction like a human in the sun. His hips continued to stutter forward, mimicking motions he had only ever seen in passing.

He imagined himself thrusting forward into the air, red-faced and whining, and belatedly tried to be still, his hands clutched tight around his feathers.

"Hush,"

Antero told him quietly as though Melis had spoken, and perhaps he had, too lost in

spikes of pleasure to notice.

“You’ve pleased me so much.”

Antero stared down between them at his hand, which to him must seem to hold nothing although he could feel the impression of Melis’ cock and the cooling puddle of his seed.

Melis licked his stinging lip where he’d bitten it.

“This is not how a god is meant to treat a lover.”

Antero raised his head.

“I am a lover treating a god, a god who blessed me by allowing me to introduce him to such matters.

You are new to it.

That’s all. People who do this many times learn to hold off because desire delayed can make the pleasure greater.”

“It gets better?”

Melis wondered without thought, blood sizzling with embarrassed delight when his words made Antero swoop in as if meaning to kiss him.

But Antero held himself back and spoke with a smile in his voice.

“Oh yes.

They use your gift for that, and you could learn to enjoy it too if you wish.

But I don't mind that you lost yourself to my touch so quickly."

"I wanted to touch you,"

Melis confessed, turning his face to hide his blushes, then realizing anew what a fool he was—and a coward, for staying hidden.

"I'd like to make you feel as you made me feel, though I don't know how to do that."

Antero pulled away from Melis and flexed his hand several times before holding it to his face and breathing in as if the scent was pleasing.

Which it must have been because he was hard.

Stupidly surprised by that, Melis looked at Antero's erect cock in the moonlight until his eyes burned.

He could kneel down. He could inhale as Antero had done, he could—

He couldn't.

For Antero's sake, he couldn't.

"You've truly never had others?"

Antero asked, unaware of Melis' confused hunger for at least the scent of his cock if he could not have the taste.

Melis exhaled shakily.

Antero seemed to take it for his answer.

“But there were some you wanted?”

“No.”

The very idea was ludicrous.

“Only you.”

““Only me?””

Antero made a quiet sound of surprise.

His thoughts were filled with prayers glorious and heady.

He wrapped the hand he'd used on Melis around his own cock, his thumb to the foreskin.

“I have more to offer, if you ask or demand it of me. I wouldn't refuse you.”

Melis watched that hand slide slowly up and down, Antero tugging his cock for Melis to see.

Antero wanted, Melis couldn't deny that, but this was not all he wanted.

Melis had to remind himself of that several times.

“You don't desire to only be used.”

Not even the eastern winds could have found Melis' words, so small they might not



have been said at all.

“You want more than this.”

“What do you think this is?”

Antero might have meant it to be playful, but his voice was rough and he slowed his hand to further tempt Melis into touching him.

Melis snapped his wings out behind him to splay them against the wall, the sound returning some of his sense, and with it, fury at himself and his behavior.

“You’re teasing me.”

Melis could not give like an experienced human and he could not take like a god.

Now, Antero, crafted by The Most Fair herself, thought to tease him? Of course, he would—his past lovers were better at pleasure than a god.

Even The Ever-Present would have laughed in Antero’s place.

The wind rose up, carrying what was more of a cry of anguish than an angry snarl.

“You play with my body and soul?”

Melis moved with the wind, whirling away from Antero in less than a heartbeat.

He was on the opposite side of the room when the chill of Antero’s fear hit him.

He stopped, wavering.

“Melis?”

Antero searched the dark, stepping forward until he reached the foot of the bed.

“Melis, don’t go.

Please.

Or tell me that you’ll still hear me, even if you won’t visit again. I forgot how little you know of this. I wasn’t playing with you. Don’t leave.”

The break in his voice brought Melis’ feet back to the floor.

“I’m here.”

Antero spun toward him, twitching forward before stopping himself.

He released a long, shaky breath.

“Stay, if you please.”

He appeared calm but his thoughts were not.

“I pushed where I should not have, so I will leave space between us this time—not that it matters with how you move.”

“I can go wherever the wind can,”

Melis informed him distractedly, more concerned with the splintering ice around Antero’s heart than how he traveled.

Antero let out another, longer breath.

This one seemed to steady him.

“I’m not playing with you,”

he said again.

“How could I? Even if my desires weren’t here for you to read, I’m only human and you are a god.”

“A little god.”

Melis turned away from Antero’s loveliness and his crown of roses tipped over his forehead into his eyes.

“A powerful god would be worthy of you.

But I suspect it’s a human you need as a beloved if you want a husband.

One who is not indifferent to you and who will develop affection for you.”

“What,”

Antero said flatly.

Melis raised his head.

Antero’s glare knocked him back a step.

“First, I am worthy of a legendary figure found by Desire himself, and now, I only deserve someone who is ‘not indifferent’ to me? If you will leave me too, Melis, you don’t need to dress it up or throw some pour half-soul my way.”

Melis flailed his arms, which Antero could not see.

“I am giving you what you want!”

He growled in frustration.

“I cannot pleasure your body the way your past lovers could.

I can’t even put my hands to you to soothe the worries I have stirred within you.

But this I can do for you!”

Antero tossed his head, his gaze once again unerringly meeting Melis’.

“Will you? And once this mildly affectionate husband is here, you’ll be content to watch me with him? You’ll listen as I continue to desire my true match and try to be satisfied with some fondness and a warm body in my bed? Will it please you, my Melis, to watch me give ecstasies to another that I might have given you? Because I don’t think it will.

I don’t think you’ll be able to bear it, because I know I will not.

When your breath mingled with mine, I felt the brush of our souls where they fit together.

But if you think it best, I will turn from you. If you ask it, I will cease my presumptuous conversations with you and talk only to my husband. But know before you find this man for me that you are wounding the one you called Faithful. Know that you are also wounding yourself.”

Lightning tore through Melis and stopped his lungs, crushing his heart while his

blood boiled.

He had not even left the room or begun his search and he wanted to howl to the heavens.

“You will have someone by your side for the length of your life as I cannot be.

And....

And I ought to know longing,”

Melis bit out, fingers curled like claws.

Antero would have a better lover and Melis must not touch them to alter their affections.

He must not think of Antero satisfying another while he still yearned.

Melis would ensure that didn’t happen... somehow. “If I know this ache, it might temper my actions in the future. Make me less cruel, less foolish.”

“Less cruel than you are right now?”

Despite his words, Antero looked ready to charge across the room and take Melis into his arms.

“You’ll leave us both unsatisfied?”

Melis could think of no argument.

“Clever One, I am trying to do what everyone says I’m not capable of.”

Desire could be selfless.

Surely even Melis could manage that.

“I’m not clever, Melis.”

Antero shook his head sadly.

“I simply know what you don’t—or are unwilling to know.”

He raised his voice, ensuring his words were heard alongside the truth in his heart that he continued to show Melis without shame, the way most humans were scared to do even with each other.

“Perhaps I have offered myself to others so boldly all this time because I was never meant for a human.

Perhaps I’ve done it all in preparation for this, and have only realized it tonight.

The others weren’t weak, Melis, they just weren’t you.”

“Faithful, you named me.”

Antero went on over Melis’ gasp.

“I wait, and I give, and I offer, but you do not take.

You’ll marry me off to someone who starts no fires in my heart.

You must be a little god, as mean-spirited as everyone says, as unwilling to make yourself as vulnerable as those you gift and torment. I humble myself before you, but

you can't even risk a touch? Then you are right; you are not the other half of my soul and love is not meant to be yours."

He was magnificent, a human king bathed in silver, breathing hard while his desires spilled out into the dark around them.

He could have scorned any god and they all would have shuddered before him.

Melis was no exception.

He took a step, then stopped himself so forcefully that his roses slipped farther into his eyes.

He licked his lips but his tongue and mouth were dry.

"But I could not marry you."

He was nearly begging to know why he could not.

"Even disguised as a human, I could not stay at your side as some sort of consort.

And I have no palace to bring you to.

You longed for a friend and companion as well as a lover. For love. I don't know how to do that. I don't even know how to kiss."

Antero stared at where Melis should be for several moments, a hopeful glow pushing out his dark, frozen fear.

"Are those your only objections? Should I even call them that? Your doubts, perhaps? Ah, now I am the silly one.

You've been telling me you're inexperienced, that you aren't used to being wanted.

I should have listened better. Forgive me."

Melis was already shaking his head.

"You've done nothing wrong."

"But I have.

You have been more forthcoming than you might even realize, telling me you don't know what to do, asking what's happening to you."

Antero sighed and studied the air around Melis again before glancing at the bed.

"Maybe I am meant to show you love, even just for my lifetime.

Maybe that is what my life is for."

Moonlight haloed the bed, telling Melis whose side the moon was on.

Antero put a hand to his chest over his heart.

"Maybe Love is meant to be part of your realm too, Sweet Melis, and my fate is to love you so you might help others."

Melis still didn't understand what about him should be worthy of that, but the wise king before him did, and perhaps also Mother, who had arranged this.

He took another step forward, absently pushing roses from his eyes.



“For that, you ask for my heart, mind, and body? You ask for all of me?”

Antero’s smile was warming.

“All I require, Melis, is knowing you are near, if not every day, then enough that I don’t miss you too much.”

He glanced at the bed again before sitting on the edge of the soft mattress and looking back over to Melis.

“I would like to lie with you, in sleep or otherwise, and in doing so, give you a place where you can rest.

A home, even if it’s only a human palace, even if it’s only for the nights.

I wish to make you happy—to know that I’ve made you happy. I would be more than content with that.”

Less happiness than he deserved, but more happiness than he would find with another.

“You make no demands of me?”

Melis wondered, genuinely confused.

Antero raised his eyebrows.

“Didn’t I just say them?”

“No.”

Still lost, Melis gestured his frustration though Antero couldn't see him.

"You listed my desires."

Antero's eyebrows went even higher.

"Melis, beloved husband, you don't know what you tell me when you speak so."

Melis bumped into the bed, clumsy with beloved husband ringing in his ears.

His crown once again tipped forward into his face, blocking his view of Antero, so he yanked it off and tossed it to the side.

"You haven't even seen me,"

he argued, his weight sinking the mattress and his palms sliding over bedsheets, making his progress vexingly slow.

"Does one have to see a husband to know him?"

Antero returned, sitting back against the head of the bed to watch the mattress dip as Melis crawled to him.

"Clever,"

Melis muttered, his tone admiring.

"Wise and beautiful.

Upright and compassionate.

Are you certain I am your equal? I have nothing for you.”

“‘Have nothing for me,’”

Antero said back to him in low, aching voice.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“I did not ask for a hero or a god atop a mountain.

I asked for a beloved.”

Melis sighed.

“You dream of it.”

“I have dreamed of you,”

Antero countered, and reached out to find Melis and pull him closer.

His hands were hot even through cloth, his hold strong.

Melis settled over him light as a cloud, and shivered once he had fully straddled Antero’s lap.

“You still will not touch me?”

Antero asked, earnestly polite even while his soul sang his joy.

Melis raised a hand to nearly his cup his cheek.

Antero turned toward it as though he felt the heat.

His lips could have brushed Melis’ palm.

Melis stared at the bow in his upper lip.

“What if...?”

“What if.”

Antero interrupted him, not seeming overly worried about the wrath of the deity in his lap.

“Desire must be convinced he is wanted.

So I ask again—am I permitted to touch you? God you may be, but you are also my husband, and having come this far, we might as well continue on as married people do.”

More teasing.

But his joy would light the room if it burst free of his ribs, so Melis could not take offense.

“We are already touching, in that sense,”

Melis pointed out breathlessly, the inside of his legs pressed to the outside of Antero's.

“So we are,”

Antero murmured, and closed his eyes before sliding his hands beneath the hem of Melis' tunic.

He curled his fingertips ever so slightly into the padded muscle at the top of Melis'

thighs.

As if it felt as good to him as it did to Melis, he let out a harsh breath.

“You are real, though your skin is soft as no human’s could be.”

His hands inched higher, pushing the skirt of the tunic up to bare Melis’s cock to the air.

When Melis gasped, Antero went still.

“This is new to you.

Do you wish me to stop or slow down?”

“Keep going,”

Melis commanded immediately, making Antero laugh and tug at the bit of tunic he held.

“Then allow me to remove this, if it please you.”

“Oh.

Clothing, yes.”

Melis gave a start at the reminder of other requirements for such acts, then sent the tunic away.

Antero jolted as it vanished, then laughed again, shaking his head ruefully a moment before he splayed his hands over Melis’ ribs.

“I would have liked undressing you, even if I can’t see you.”

“I am enjoying this,”

Melis insisted, arching to better feel the touch of those hands over his stomach and then across nipples suddenly peaked and eager.

Antero discovered the light hair on Melis’ chest and smiled to himself before moving on to learn other parts of him.

This included touching Melis’ nipples again, his smile growing when Melis began to pant, “And my wings would have slowed you down in the... in the undressing.

Antero, it feels.... Stop, or do not stop; it’s so much.”

Antero paused, hands warm over flesh already too sensitive.

“Overwhelmed?”

he guessed, quieting Melis flustered attempts to defend himself.

“It’s fine, love.”

Then he paused again, clearly just noticing what Melis had said and possibly remembering one of the features in nearly all statues of Desire.

“Wings.

Yes, of course.”

He swallowed, his thumbs sweeping restlessly over Melis’ ribs.

Then he nodded with decision and moved his strong hands to Melis' back, exploring the smooth skin under the base of each wing before touching the wings themselves.

Melis couldn't stop shivering at each hesitant caress to his feathers. "Antero?"

he whispered into the air around Antero's neck, bashful despite the throb of his cock and the heat all through his skin.

"I want to move.

Should I?"

He shifted his hips forward slightly to demonstrate.

"Like this?"

He tentatively rocked his hips to feel their skin together, enjoying even the sweat where their thighs touched.

"Like that."

Antero splayed his hands at Melis' back to steady him, then pulled him closer without stopping Melis' efforts.

His approval was a blessing.

"Will I even need to teach you? Or is it a god's instinct to take?"

He brushed his lips across Melis' cheekbone, then bent his head to do the same to the place beneath Melis' ear.



He exhaled damply to sear the impression of his kiss into Melis' skin forever.

“Do as you please.

I'm enjoying all of it.”

Melis lifted his arms and stretched out his wings before bringing both forward.

Not trusting himself to leave his hands free, he rested his arms around Antero's strong shoulders, then hid Antero's loveliness from the moon's prying eyes with a solid wall of feathers.

Some of them must have teased Antero's skin, tickling, because he laughed again.

Melis was surprised to find himself laughing with him, snorting once and stopping immediately, only to laugh again.

“Every night.”

Melis was reckless with a joyous Antero beneath him.

“Even though I can only give you this, closeness and my clumsy fucking, it is yours.”

Antero's hands were flint and fire, slipping down to Melis' hips to finally direct how Melis should move: back-and-forth rocking, and slow, swaying rolls, and up-and-down glides that Melis didn't understand but trusted Antero had his reasons for showing him.

So far, he liked the first the best, especially when Antero pulled him in until his cock dragged along Antero's stomach.

Melis pushed closer until there was no room between them, only to find there wasn't enough pressure no matter how he pressed in.

Not enough to bring him to completion, only enough to come maddeningly close.

Antero let him chase the feeling, kissing his way down Melis' throat when Melis threw his head back.

That was when, unable to get closer, Melis tried the second motion: slow, small, rolls of his hips with Antero's cock hot and hard beneath him, Antero's hands clenching and unclenching on his hips.

Melis strained muscles he had never once given a thought to, muscles he technically didn't need to strain.

But he was melted wax in Antero's hands, and the kisses to his neck Antero gave him as Melis teased them both made his soul shiver.

Teasing was exactly what it was, a mimicry of what they might do—would do, if Melis had his way.

Yet he didn't want to ever stop this, although the longer he poured himself like hot honey into Antero's lap, the more he yearned to have the real thing. "Just don't look at me. I'm small and foolish. You don't believe me, but I am. Don't look so I won't have to leave you."

"I won't look, beloved,"

Antero promised, "but I will take if you will not."

Then he guided Melis' mouth to his.

Melis fell against his sworn husband, face tipped up, his heart pounding.

Antero's kiss was firm against his lips and soft against his rough places.

The desires of the rest of the world muted.

The wind danced and twirled above the dark sea outside.

When the kiss ended, Melis whined faintly for another.

Another was granted.

Melis surrendered to it without hesitation.

His hands slid down over Antero's shoulders, then up to rest tentatively at Antero's jaw.

Antero's skin was not divinely smooth but marked with lovely imperfections.

The hair on his body was coarse, the texture an unexpected thrill.

There was even stubble at his chin, equally delightful against Melis' palms.

The realization of what Melis had done was slow to occur, and then slower still to reach the parts of Melis not occupied with learning what to do with his tongue when kissed or how to let his human husband catch his breath between kisses.

"I touched you,"

he murmured as he pushed up for another.

His heart was beating fast, but it had been since he had first kneeled on this bed.

Antero's heartbeat was steady.

He kept Melis close and kissed him until Melis' lips seemed to buzz like a hive of contented bees. He might have paused to give Melis space, but Melis leaned forward whenever he tried, and then they were kissing again.

“And do my desires feel any different to you?”

Antero wondered, over Melis' mouth, into his mouth, kissing Melis deeply before Melis could answer.

Melis kissed back as he'd been taught, once again slow to recall what he'd done.

His guilty, traitorous hands were creeping toward Antero's hair but remained in contact with his skin.

The glow between them didn't change.

It grew brighter, warmer without burning, and that wasn't enough to convince Melis to stop.

Melis pulled back but then didn't care for the distance and pressed forward to sweat-slick skin.

He felt that, tasted it, pressed the length of his cock to it.

Antero, he thought, and Antero's arms tightened around him.

He slid his mouth to Antero's jawline, then, unsure of the stubble against his lips,

dipped his head to kiss his neck.

Antero made a startled noise, reminding Melis that Antero could not see him and didn't know where to expect kisses though he welcomed the ones he got.

With only a short pause, he tipped his head to the side, silently telling Melis to continue.

Melis had his mouth on him again in seconds, kissing, sucking, nipping, licking, reveling in each and the taste of his husband's pleasure, only realizing afterward that he was smiling.

"Beloved,"

he tried out, scarcely more than a breath.

But Antero shuddered, skating a hand over Melis' back to rest it at his nape and keep him where he was.

"Beloved,"

Melis repeated louder into skin wet from his kisses, so bright inside he could challenge the moon and the sun in turn.

Antero couldn't see that any more than he could see Melis, but he trusted it was there, as he trusted it was Melis in his arms.

Melis shifted back into the second rhythm Antero had taught him, his favorite, rolling his hips to press himself against Antero's stomach and then, when Antero took both of their cocks in hand, to stroke them together in his blessedly tight grip.

Antero's heavier breathing was music.

Melis put his mouth to places he'd already kissed to kiss them again.

He didn't want to harm Antero ever, yet wished to swallow him whole, to have him inside where they would fit together exactly. "I touched you, and you feel the same. Actually, you want me more,"

he stumbled a bit there, because the images and ideas of where Antero would like his hands to go were distracting.

Melis thought that, then dared to drop his hand, pushing Antero's aside so Melis could be the one to hold Antero's cock.

Too tight perhaps, but then better because Antero's desires were there for Melis to read and respond to.

Antero had been right to want this from him, Melis decided immediately and brought his head up to kiss Antero's slack mouth while he continued to clumsily pleasure him with his hand.

Antero's chest heaved.

His cock was beautiful like the rest of him, hard and hot, sticky and silken.

"You have felt my touch and your desires did not change,"

Melis told him, crooning to soothe the need making Antero twitch against his palm.

"Now I won't be able to stop touching you.

I will sate myself in touch alone, and then turn my attentions to taste, to smell.”

That, Antero had also indulged in, so Melis took a moment to try that, sniffing and then licking his fingers.

Liquid pearls from an aroused lover tasted of desire in its purest form.

Oh, oh, Melis had not known.

So many of his reluctant worshippers had spoken of it as they had spoken of being on their knees for all their lovers, of wet tongues and honey pots and fountains of pleasure.

But he hadn't realized they were intoxicated on the taste of physical desire itself.

Melis' head swam.

He moved Antero and himself without thought, uncaring of anything but getting what he wanted until Antero exclaimed in shock at suddenly being on top of Melis, who was now flat on his back beneath him.

Melis twined his arms around Antero's neck to pull his startled Antero to him, and his beloved husband fell to him with grace, even stunned as he was.

He was a bit heavy, however.

“Forgive me,”

Antero ground out, keeping his face against Melis' shoulder though he shifted to get onto his knees.

“I forgot you were immortal and this surprised me.”

“I am sorry for scaring you,”

Melis told him, gracious because Antero was a pretty sight kneeling over him.

His hands were on either side of Melis, and it took Antero only another second to look up again.

He frowned toward Melis, toward his hands, pressed obviously to the bed and nothing else.

“Your wings?”

“I can disguise myself however I please,”

Melis informed him, pulling to try to get him back down again.

“But you are still Melis?”

Antero wondered with seemingly genuine concern.

“I might not see your face, but I’d like to know you are wearing it, if it please you.”

Melis let his arms fall to his chest.

He smiled up at Antero like a foolish shepherd chasing after a faun.

Such a chase usually led to ruin, but even knowing that could not deter him.

“Devoted Antero,”



he sighed around his smile, “you could instruct me in the ways of love much better if you were down here with me.”

He inched his legs apart, then moved his hips so Antero wouldn't fail to understand.

Antero's gaze found his, even if he didn't know it.

“I won't ask if you're sure.”

He said this in the manner of someone being generous.

Melis reached for Antero's cock to stroke it the way Antero's desires told him to, pausing only to lick the flavor from his fingers.

“After I've had you inside me this way, I would like to try my mouth,”

Melis informed him, attention fixed on the gleaming tip of Antero's cock pushing through his wet fingers.

Antero bent his head, letting Melis explore him without any complaint stronger than a groan.

“We will need oil.

And you must tell me what you like or don't like.

I cannot see you, and I cannot know your wants as you know mine.”

His Antero was the most thoughtful, the most caring.

Melis didn't only think that because desire was luscious on his tongue.

Antero truly was a remarkable creation.

“I would strike down War himself if he ever tried to bring harm to you,”

Melis vowed huskily.

Let the moon tattle it to the sun when they passed each other; he didn't care.

“Shush.”

Antero's caution was sensible, but his smile was uncertain, as though he liked Melis' words but found them shocking.

For that, Melis defied his wisdom, too giddy for sense. “No!”

This only grew worse when Antero slipped away from him to find the oil he said he needed, then returned just to spend a considerable amount of time arranging Melis how he pleased—which involved groping for what he could not see, and then kissing at the crease of Melis' hip, and over the heavy weight of his testicles, and then down to the soft, soft places on Melis' inner thighs, which were shaking by the time Antero got there.

Perhaps that was why Antero put a hand on Melis' hip and bent over him in one graceful motion to take the tip of Melis' cock into his mouth.

Melis instantly shuddered apart under Antero's fragile strength and coaxing tongue.

He grasped Antero's hair and pushed him down until all of Melis' cock was cradled in tight heat.

He'd meant to control himself, but his enthusiasm seemed to please Antero, who

groaned around the length of him before pulling back slowly to swallow around the head.

This gave Melis the pretty view of Antero's hollowed cheeks and moving throat as he greedily drank Melis' seed, and then sucked again to make Melis arch from the bed.

Antero's dark eyes somehow met his, as if he knew and enjoyed Melis' every broken thought about the movements of his tongue.

And when there was no more nectar to be had, he at last let Melis' cock slip from his mouth and then licked his lips, which were darker and wet, and if Melis was not mistaken, slightly swollen.

Melis was never going to be able to forget his cock again.

No wonder so many were obsessed with the things done in bed.

He owed his thanks to The Warmth of the Marriage Bed as well as Physical Pleasure.

But later. Much later.

"I will have you as the other gods take their lovers,"

he promised feverishly with Antero's desires around him but not on him, not in him.

"I will come to you as a rainstorm, as an animal with the strength of a bull, as a song slipping inside you.

Whatever you want.

Antero, please. But you must take me too. I know I'm not experienced, but I'll learn."

“Because I will teach you.”

Antero’s voice was heady with thwarted need and desire for yet more of Melis’ seed in his mouth.

The curl of his tongue had felt so good Melis thrust up at the memory.

Antero easily pushed him back down.

“Close your eyes and keep them closed. Experience this as I do, beloved.”

Melis shivered but obeyed.

He was a god, but no fool.

“I’ve shut them.”

“Think of whatever you can that is not your body,”

Antero further instructed, lifting one of Melis’ legs, then pausing to kiss his knee.

“You held off better this time, but now you must fight it as long as you can.

Until it hurts.

Until you can’t be still and your voice is hoarse from calling for me.”

“Delaying makes the pleasure greater.”

Melis remembered, but in truth, he was already struggling to keep still from the night air on his spent, wet cock, and Antero’s hands pushing his legs apart.

Antero smoothed some of Melis' trembling by massaging tense muscles and bending a few times to press a quick kiss to his lower stomach.

Each quick kiss was followed by a softer kiss of apology, as if he'd felt Melis startle.

Again and again, he did that, until finally Melis was pliant beneath him and each warm press of his mouth soothed Melis and left him sighing.

Warm, oiled fingers over Melis' hip came next.

Melis gasped but kept his eyes shut, turning his head to the side, toward the window and the moon.

Melis would have been bathed in silver too if Antero could have seen him, though he didn't know if Antero would find that beautiful.

The oil was thick, the kind to drip down and soak into the bedding, the kind to make Antero's hands slip easily along Melis' thighs.

Antero stopped to rub more into his palms, a sound to make Melis tense again but now with anguished delight; those palms would be on him soon.

"This is all you require of me?"

he asked without air in his lungs, his knees bent and the space between them filled by his human husband.

"Not all,"

Antero promised, and then put one slick finger to the furl of Melis' entrance to tease him.

Or not to tease, to prepare, but it felt much the same.

Melis rolled up into the touch and the life-giving glow of desire and approval from above him.

Antero did not stop, not even when Melis lifted his hips and slid a hand down to his cock on his stomach.

He merely pushed Melis back down as if expecting his husband's obedience—and got it, though Melis had to bite his lip and clutch the sheets.

“Yes, then?”

Antero asked, not without smugness.

“You like this and wish to continue?”

Melis squirmed for Antero's obvious pleasure in making him respond, and then again for his obvious pleasure at Melis' squirming.

His cock began to plump again.

He didn't allow himself a single stroke, but strummed his fingers over the shaft.

“I delight you.”

Melis squirmed this time solely to bask in Antero's pleasure.

“Keep going.

I will take you like a proper husband.”

Antero growled then cut off the sound.

He pulled one of Melis' knees over his shoulder and said, "Deep breath, little god," before pushing his oil-slick finger inside.

Melis barely remembered that he was a god, head back as he gasped and allowed Antero to enter him.

The pleasure was inside him now too, already close to overwhelming.

He listened desperately to the wind, to wishes and desires from across the sea and within this cliff-top city, and tales of woe both real and imagined, and even with those in his mind, couldn't help but also notice there were no desires in this room except the need to feel more, to be closer, to peak and peak again.

"Antero,"

he began to whine after he had been opened by two fingers, or perhaps after the third.

"Antero, my body will be what I like, do what I like.

You won't hurt me.

Antero, please."

"But I enjoy this, as you must know,"

Antero told him, as if his need wasn't forefront of his thoughts: Take him as a husband.

My mewling innocent, thighs open and slick, body ready, his heart beating so loud even I can hear it.

If I can't have this again, I must take this time now.

“Antero,”

Melis rasped, tossing his head restlessly.

His tone was plaintive, perhaps even mewling, a humiliation, but one that Antero liked, so Melis found he liked it too.

He was Antero's god; he could whine and squirm and whimper for him.

“Please don't make me wait. I can receive you. I am ready. Please.”

Antero was suddenly over him, arms on either side, the breadth of his body between his legs.

He waited until Melis turned to him, breathing hard, then kissed him as Melis stretched up to do the same.

He settled his weight onto Melis slowly, gentling his kisses until Melis got his arms around him.

Then he pulled back as if trying to peer into Melis' eyes and exhaling roughly when he couldn't.

When Melis stroked the side of his face, his happiness flared bright once again.



## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“Love,”

Melis wrapped his legs around Antero’s waist and put his lips to his jaw, caught in this dream, “Love, don’t make me wait.”

It didn’t hurt, though whether that was from his husband’s careful attentions or Melis’ desire to receive his cock, Melis didn’t know, or care.

Hands fit to his hips, to his thigh.

Antero’s worry for his discomfort only a small fraction of everything else within his heart as he pushed inside.

Their blood was the same, their breath. Antero froze above him, panting as he waited for a sign that Melis enjoyed this. Please, his heart said as it beat within Melis, as if Melis didn’t exist to take him like this. Melis was little and Antero was large, intensely so, or so it felt now, but the fit was tight, good. Perfect.

Melis realized he had a hand in Antero’s curls.

Antero was tense all over, muscles shivering the longer he was still.

So Melis exhaled and thought of all those gentle, soothing kisses to his stomach until his body remembered anticipation and not worry.

Then he rolled his hips as he’d been taught. His startled moan as he took Antero deeper was all it seemed to take to convince Antero to have him properly at last.

Melis tried to notice the wind, to distract himself with prayers of the broken-hearted, of the lonely, but what were those to Antero's cock and his heartbeat and his mouth, or the muscles of his back beneath Melis' hands? His pleasure, their pleasure, mingling.

Tight, Antero thought, spearing Melis on his cock and reveling in the hungry, pleading noises that were all Melis managed.

Tight, but I will ruin him.

He will want only me.

Antero thought that idea futile, wistful, even with lust flaring brighter and brighter through his veins.

Melis' need was growing too, building until not even turning his face to the window and the cool sea air could keep pleasure from rising in him.

He dragged his hands over Antero's skin, clawing to keep him near, close, deep, barely able to match his thrusts.

His thighs shook.

His skin itched with sweat, strange and sweet.

They were as close together as two souls could be, yet Antero could not sense desires so Melis opened his mouth to speak them, panting hot against the side of Antero's throat with his divine voice. "My priest. My favorite. My husband. Mine."

"Your wings."

Antero's voice was barely more than a growl, his hands briefly bruising and wonderfully tight.

“For this, I'd have you as you are.”

Fast as the trained warrior he was, he kneeled up and flipped them so he was sprawled on his back and Melis was gasping atop him. “Take,”

he instructed with heat, one hand on Melis' thigh, the other at his hip.

“As a husband, but as a god.

Receive me and move as I showed you.

Take your pleasure.”

It would also be Antero's pleasure.

The feelings within him were clear.

His voice was rough.

His cock remained hard and slick with oil.

Melis unfurled his wings and snapped them out to their full width, then tipped his head up to watch Antero's eyes flutter closed.

Melis flushed hot to be displayed like this for only the moon and not Antero, so he whined for Antero instead as he guided Antero's cock back inside him—a shocking thing, to have that sort of power.

All gods should know humbling embarrassment over slippery fingers, and then torturous, exquisite pleasure to accept another inside of them.

Antero's cock had not changed but astride him like this, every single movement, every flutter of muscle within Melis reminded him that he was filled, and it was delicious and it was a torment.

Antero was flat beneath him, waiting, holding his hands lightly over Melis' hips but not directing him.

Melis began to move, careful and slow with each motion, testing what felt best, what made Antero sigh or choke or say his name.

The third motion, up, then down, made him stop, shaking and wretched and trying not to come though Antero would have let him.

He tightened inside, helpless not to, and Antero gripped his hips hard.

Melis moved again without thought, no longer concerned with his approaching peak or his husband's pained pleasure.

He threw his head back to moan to the ceiling, riding wildly, nearly bouncing in a way that would make him squirm again later to think of.

Squirm, delight and beg to do it again.

He had no divine dignity in this bed but what good was that compared to the glide inside him and the sounds his husband made?

Then Melis' eyes were shut too, the better to feel the flex of stomach muscles as his husband pushed up, the shiver as Melis slid down to meet him, the breeze from his

wings on their damp skin, the deep, internal beat of Antero's heart.

His hands landed, feather-light, on Antero's chest, then fell to the bed on either side of his ribs.

Antero's palms were callused and human over his back, at his hips, hauling Melis to him with every controlled fall.

Melis dropped his head to whine, his teeth in his bottom lip.

He didn't want it to end. He understood now. Desire unfulfilled could be beautiful.

"Love,"

he exclaimed finally, voice rising as he continued to cry it out, "Antero!"

Then pleasure found him whether he wanted it to or not.

He stuttered to a stop, Antero's name in his mouth as he came, spilling over the hand Antero had put to his cock to drive him to it, his body tightening around Antero's cock inside him.

Antero groaned, pained, one hand squeezing the damp skin of Melis' hip over and over as he waited for Melis to stop shaking.

Finally, Melis opened his eyes.

Beneath him, his husband smiled to the air despite the shivering tension in his muscles.

He was entirely made of desire for this and for anything else Melis might do.

He was trust and need and pure happiness. He was love itself.

“Antero,”

Melis called softly, banishing any aches and pain within his own body so he could move again.

He was slow and careful.

The first roll of his hips made Antero moan and slide the hand wet with seed to Melis’ other hip to try to push deeper into him.

“Beloved, I want...”

“Please,”

Antero begged freely, unashamed.

Melis leaned down, stroking his beautiful face, touching his open mouth, thinking of kissing him but not allowing himself to indulge yet.

“I believe I understand teasing now,”

he observed.

He spread his knees wider, experimenting, and when Antero gripped him tightly again, he thought that good enough.

Antero ought to mewl too.

He didn’t squirm and delight over it as Melis did, but he wanted it.

“I am yours to ruin,”

Antero said breathlessly as if he knew Melis’ thoughts.

“Do not stop.”

“Mine,”

Melis agreed, “but not to ruin.”

He spent a moment basking in Antero’s desperation, overjoyed to give his husband the greater pleasure of desire delayed.

Then he resumed the deliberate motions of his hips.

They had the night, after all.

In the hour before dawn, when the envious moon passed out of sight but the sun hadn’t yet woken with a lazy stretch, the household of the king began to wake.

Today, I will ask to brush my lady’s hair.

I hope she will let me.

That’s a small thing to ask, and she won’t possibly know what it would mean to me.

“One more hour of sleep to make up for what I lost talking until midnight and drinking that wine with you.”

“One less cup of wine last night would have done us both better.”

Melis stood at the window, his head angled up to hear the stories brought to him by the wind, the rest of his attention on the slumbering figure in the bed behind him.

Antero slept on his stomach; his spread legs tangled in the blanket he'd pulled over himself at some point in the night.

There were marks on his back, bruises from the fingers of a god clawing at him in ecstasy.

He would have to explain those to others if Melis didn't remove them.

Melis had spent much of the night considering it; he'd spare Antero any embarrassment, but he wasn't certain Antero would be embarrassed.

He might just as easily walk the lengths of his palace and declare himself the favorite of Melis, and his people would know he had found some sort of beloved at last.

Not the one they had imagined for him, and a worrying one if they knew the tales of other gods and other mortals, which many of them certainly would.

Melis didn't know how to reassure them without showing them that Antero had made Melis weak for him, that Antero was more than Melis' equal.

He had instructed Melis exactly as he had promised to do.

He could not have been more suited to Melis.

The Fair-Shaped had undoubtedly been the one to see to that.

For some greater purpose or simply to make Melis happy, Melis could not say, but Melis was no one to be trifled with now. If the elders thought to use Antero or hurt



him in any way, they would face Melis' wrath.

A stirring from the bed drew his attention and he turned to watch Antero roll onto his back and scrub his hands over his face.

The noises outside the door to Antero's chambers were not loud, but Antero must have been used to them, and to rising not long after his servants did.

Antero extended his arms in a long stretch only to freeze midmotion.

He swept a hungry, searching look around the bed, then the rest of the room before falling back onto the pillow with his eyes squeezed shut.

"Dreams again,"

he murmured, his hand to his mouth like a human stifling a scream.

Melis scooted forward with one last glance to the window to make sure the sun was not there to witness.

"I am here,"

he announced himself, not quite able to say husband.

Inexperienced Melis had been, but he knew that words said during moments of physical passion were not always true when the physical passion was over.

But Antero sat up and turned toward his voice all in one movement, then threw the blanket to the side.

Relief and cautious happiness emanated from him, turning Melis' knees to water.

“Melis? You haven’t left?”

“Not yet,”

Melis informed him, hating the words.

He couldn’t allow disappointment to take hold of his beloved, so he stepped forward again, stopping at the foot of the bed.

“I have work to do, as you do.

Your household stirs. Your people will expect their king.”

Antero nodded, yet seemed to dismiss that at the same time.

“But you’ll return? Soon, if not tonight?”

Melis’ knees weakened further.

He briefly clung to a bedpost, smiling and silly. “Yes.”

He took a breath and then pushed himself back to standing.

“And I will keep returning, for as long as you wish me to.”

Antero scoffed, but it had more of the sound of a startled laugh.

“Whenever you like,”

he vowed without hesitation, “for as long as I live.”

Melis wanted to scoff too but kept it to himself. “Love,”

he pronounced the name the way it felt to him, another pearl on his tongue, “that might be for a very long time.”

As if Melis would ever allow Antero to die.

He couldn’t now anyway.

The All-Mother was wise indeed, wiser than many gave her credit for.

Desire was well enough, but Desire and Love together? No god could withstand that.

Antero, smart though he was, was a man just waking up from a night he’d thought a lovely dream.

He drew his brows together with some confusion.

“Desire Requited,”

Melis continued, so full of light that the sun would be shamed, “if anyone is ever so foolish as to try to be your enemy while you are still king here, tell them to consult an oracle before they strike against you so they can learn that to harm you is to harm me.

Or direct them to pray to me.

You are the favorite of Melis and it will be known.

Even if you decide you no longer want me,”

his voice broke there, although Antero was already shaking his head to repudiate the

idea, “you will remain the other half of me.

Melis the Cruel will ensure they and their people will never desire anything again.

They will not eat.

They will not fuck. They will not love. They will rot in their beds and their city with them if they try to hurt you.”

Antero swallowed.

His dreams were a muddle of pride, arousal, and worry over unnamed people Melis would destroy for him.

Melis gazed upon him fondly.

“But you will tell me not to, for you are loving and compassionate.

You will temper me and teach me affection.

She crafted you well.”

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 12:15 pm*

“Crafted me?”

Antero’s surprise was clearing enough for his clever mind to start working again.

“Beautiful Antero.”

Melis happily gave him the epithet, though his stomach tightened with some fear.

Antero had made Melis more powerful than he had ever been, but standing before him, Melis was again little, again weak.

Their souls might fit together, but Melis could not be his match if he could not be his equal.

“Loving One, there is something I must show you before you choose me. I... I must trust in your noble heart.”

That didn’t mean he couldn’t still be terrified.

He kept his gaze above Antero’s shoulder as his invisibility fell from him like a dropped cloak.

Antero pulled in a sharp breath.

Melis had many forms because that was the nature of desire.

With no one to face but his reflection or his beloved, he was a slight but soft

masculine figure of perhaps just past twenty years, with curved, plump cheeks and freckles across his nose and shoulders, and only a dusting of hair across his chest.

His skin was warm gold, his amber eyes a fraction lighter than his messy, shining hair.

His teeth were blessed with a slight gap at the front, his hands and feet were too big for his frame, and his cock was adequate, though nothing to Antero's perfection. His wings were tawny brown and shining gold, lighter than air itself.

A burst of admiration brought his head up.

He met Antero's gaze as it returned to his face and smiled wide enough to show the gap in his teeth. "Truly?"

Wanted.

Melis' heart carried the word through his veins.

Wanted.

As I am, I am wanted.

Childishly perhaps, this was followed by a spiteful thought suited to The Stinging Wasp: not even War is as brave as me.

Then lust came on the heels of Antero's admiration and Melis forgot War entirely.

"Melis of This Form, Beautiful Desire,"

Antero purred, "silly boy.

Come here if you wish a kiss.

Or command me to come to you and I will.”

“I cannot command you anymore, Love,”

Melis told him in a distracted rush, flying across the bed to take his place in Antero’s lap.

He removed his crown of roses and settled it over the head of his beloved husband before dropping his hands to Antero’s shoulders.

“But I do desire a kiss.”

Antero gazed at him with wonder, seemingly too mesmerized by Melis’ face to ask about the crown, although Melis spent a satisfied moment thinking the roses suited him more than they had ever suited Melis.

“You can’t command me anymore?”

Antero asked in a daze, reaching up to trace the small arch of freckles across the bridge of Melis’ nose as if enamored of a few speckles.

“Are you certain of that, little god?”

Melis smiled wider, so much that he was embarrassed at himself but could not stop.

“I am not certain of anything, except that I am the most powerful god there is if you are near, and that if my husband does not kiss me soon, I will leave him to his day’s business, unkissed and unfulfilled for all the long hours until night falls again.”

“If that is my husband’s desire,”

Antero teased as he slid a hand to the back of Melis' neck to pull him in.

Melis pushed closer to meet him, bodies fitting together as neatly as their souls.

Antero was smiling as well despite his lingering confusion.

Melis would explain all to him, but later, much later, after kisses and whatever else they might manage before their time spent apart. Melis was hoping to taste more of him, and to have Antero see him, this time, while he made Melis squirm. He suspected the humiliation would be stronger that way and shivered so hard it rippled through his wings.

A god begging.

Indulgence would approve.

But most importantly, Melis desired it and Antero was proud to give it to him.

His husband was all heart. That was why he had waited for Melis and why Melis had needed to prove himself worthy.

The warmth radiating out from Melis met the glow from Antero as the sun reached to embrace Day.

"I thought you didn't deal in bliss?"

Antero correctly named the feeling between them.

What Melis might have stupidly called mere joy only yesterday.

"We do now,"



Melis informed him breathlessly before he was kissed at last.

The End