



A SCENT OF
GREEK

OUT OF OLYMPUS



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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A SCENT OF GREEK

(OUT OF OLYMPUS #2)

BY

TINA FOLSOM

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Book Description

When the god of wine and ecstasy, Dionysus, callously dumps his latest conquest, the mortal Ariadne, the goddess Hera has had enough. She robs Dionysus of his memory to teach him a lesson in humility.

Ariadne is deeply hurt after Dionysus dismisses their night of passion as "just sex" and doesn't want to see her anymore. When she finds him bloodied and beaten and suffering from amnesia, she quickly forms a plan to get back at him. As she pretends to be his fiancée, Ariadne makes Dionysus believe he loves her. But the longer the charade continues, the more difficult it becomes to really see who teaches whom a lesson.

And what if Dionysus gains his memory back? Will there be hell to pay for her deception, or can a mortal woman truly win a god's love?

1

“You may kiss the bride!”

Dionysus watched as his best friend, Triton, the god of seafarers and sailors, drew the lovely Sophia into his embrace and kissed her for longer than was decent at a wedding, particularly one at which half of Olympus was assembled. If he held her any tighter, her white flowing gown of pure silk would wrinkle beyond repair and be ruined forever, but neither of the two newlyweds seemed to care or even notice.

Even Dio was taken in by the picture: Triton’s blond hair and sun-kissed skin contrasted against Sophia’s long, dark hair, and while the two lovers looked like opposites, Dio knew they complemented each other perfectly.

More than one throat cleared before Triton—rather reluctantly—removed his lips from his wife’s and winked at Dio. It appeared that despite the fact that his once-philandering friend was now one hundred percent monogamous, he hadn’t lost his sense of humor and his passion.

At least Dionysus could be sure that his friend would be happy, despite the golden cage he'd just allowed the mortal priest to lock him into. By the looks of it, Triton didn't mind one bit. Dio shook his head and glanced at the guests, who now filed past the couple one by one to express their well-wishes. As Best Man, he remained standing next to Triton, in equal parts happy and sad—happy to know that his friend had found true love, yet sad for himself to have lost his position as best friend. Sophia was Triton's best friend now.

Sophia's mansion had been decked out for the wedding; no expense had been spared. Not even on Olympus could the event have been any more extravagant. The opulent house she'd inherited from her aunt and turned into a B&B to pay the federal estate taxes lent itself to affairs like this. The dining room with its fourteen foot ceiling had been cleared to accommodate the many guests present for the ceremony. The adjoining living area, which was as large as a ballroom, stood waiting with a most sumptuous buffet of the finest delicacies, and some even more enticing waitresses. Flowers adorned the entire house, inside and out, and the

scent of roses and jasmine permeated throughout the building.

Dio watched patiently as Poseidon and Amphitrite, Triton's parents, hugged their son and new daughter-in-law, both of them fairly beaming with pride. Even Orion, Triton's half-brother behaved in a civil way, shaking hands rather amicably. It appeared that now that Triton didn't represent competition for female attention anymore, Orion felt no animosity toward his sibling.

When Zeus approached, Dionysus stiffened in concert with Triton. In his designer tuxedo, diamond-studded cufflinks, and Italian dress shoes, Zeus looked like a playboy ripped from the pages of GQ Magazine: smoldering hot, powerful, and looking not a day over thirty-five. His five o'clock shadow added an air of danger, one every woman of the wedding party should heed, but wouldn't, because of his overwhelming charm.

The god of gods congratulated the young couple and kissed Sophia on the cheek. Triton's tension radiated outward like an ocean wave, making Dio physically aware of his friend's possessiveness. It could be endearing at times,

but at this moment, it wouldn't be prudent to act upon. Dio put a hand on his friend's arm, cautioning him not to do anything rash, even though he understood him only too well: Dio's no-good father was well known for his love of beautiful women, and not even the presence of Hera, his head-strong wife, assured that Zeus kept his paws to himself. But Dio hoped Zeus had enough sense not to make a pass at a new bride.

However, just to make sure, Dio felt the need to steer Zeus's attention in another direction. "Zeus." He nodded curtly when he caught his father's eye. "I see you brought your wife. How nice of you."

The narrowing of Zeus's eyes confirmed that he didn't like to be reminded of Hera. "Your stepmother has a way of wringing invitations out of unsuspecting people." He shot a glance at Sophia, who had the good sense to smile, a charming, sweet smile not even Zeus seemed to have any defense against.

"I thought it only appropriate to invite her. She seems to be such a nice woman. And after all, we're all related," Sophia chirped good-naturedly.

Dio refrained from rolling his eyes and noticed that the cords in his father's neck bulged, attesting to the restraint it took him not to blow up and unleash his vile temper.

"Indeed, my dear Sophia," Zeus ground out instead.

The knowledge that Hera's presence at the wedding cramped Zeus's style made Dio feel almost giddy. Anything or anybody who pissed his father off was welcome. And that included his wicked stepmother.

"One big, happy family!" Dio grinned back at Sophia before he caught a movement in the corner of his eye and turned. "Ah, if that's not the person we're talking about." Just because he was glad that Hera's presence annoyed Zeus, however, didn't mean that he wanted to spend any time with her. If anybody had a chance at ranking higher on Dio's *shit-o-meter* than his father, Hera sure was in the running.

Dressed in a figure-hugging long, red dress, her long, dark hair draped high on her head, Hera arched an eyebrow before she nudged Zeus aside and hugged Sophia. She was beautiful. Dio had to grant his father that concession. But even Dio, who was no more interested in love and affection

than a street vendor was in a thunderstorm raining down on his goods, liked beauty with a hint of warmth. Yet, Hera's beauty was all ice: cold—with a chance of hail.

“Congratulations, my dear. You could have done much worse than Triton.” Hera made a pause, tossing Dio a sideways glance, a sure indication that a wicked remark was in the making. “Be glad you didn't fall for Dionysus.”

Before Dio could muster a comeback, Triton took Hera's hand and kissed the back of it. “I'm pleased you approve.” The twinkle in his eyes couldn't be denied, proving that his friend was too deliriously happy to have noticed Hera's backhanded stab at Dio.

“Of your bride, I approve,” she answered pointedly. “Your choice of Best Man leaves much to be desired. Defeats the purpose of *best*, doesn't it? Best at philandering maybe, even though I believe that title belongs to his father.”

“Ouch, you wound me, Hera,” Dio countered, clutching his hand to his chest as if suffering a heart attack. Not that she was too far off the mark. He wasn't any better when it came to relationships than Zeus. Cut from the same bone—thigh bone to be precise. But he needed no reminder of who

or what he was. “Will you excuse me? It appears I need to practice, since my qualifications as the number-one philanderer are being put into question.”

He ignored Hera’s thinned lips and wasn’t even remotely interested in Zeus’s reaction. He simply shrugged when Triton shook his head.

Yet Sophia gave him a charming smile. “The bar is open,” she hinted.

Bless her for her understanding, because as sure as the sun rose every day, two minutes in the presence of his father and his stepmother dried out his throat like a sandstorm in the Sahara.

Dio headed for the living room, where a bar had been set up at one end, and ignored the buffet tables on which deliciously looking hors d’oeuvres played neighbor to lavish flower arrangements. Soon, the guests would descend on the food like locusts onto a field of corn, albeit with less grace and manners. He gestured to the bartender to pour him a glass of Zin. He wasn’t the god of wine for nothing. Because if Dio knew one thing, it was his wine.

He took the proffered glass and swallowed away the remnants of his conversation with Hera and his father.

“Who’s pissed into your wine?” Eros asked, slapping him on the back of his expensive three-piece Armani suit, most likely imprinting a permanent crease with his powerful hand.

Dionysus swiveled and glared at the god of love. Just the person he wanted to see right now—not! At least Eros had had the decency to leave his bow and quiver at home. He looked almost at ease in his elegant grey suit. Zeus had warned that whoever gave any indication to the assembled mortals that half the guests were gods and other immortal creatures, would be punished severely. And his father knew something about punishment.

“Piss off!”

Another slap on his shoulder announced the arrival of Hermes, the messenger god. “Envious?” he prompted, motioning his head in Triton’s direction.

Dio jerked his gaze toward Hermes. “Of a golden cage? Think again.”

“Triton doesn’t see it as a cage.” Eros had the audacity to exchange a smirk with Hermes.

“He looks positively happy,” Hermes added. “Whereas you look like you’re drinking vinegar.” He waved to the bartender. “A glass of red, just not the same as he’s having.”

“The wine is perfectly fine. It’s the company that stinks.”

Eros took a step closer. “You wouldn’t be talking about your two best friends here, would you now? Or are you in the mood for a fight?”

Maybe that was what he needed, a good bar brawl to feel like himself again. The last few weeks, helping Triton and Sophia with the arrangements for their wedding, had taken their toll. But as Best Man, he’d felt obligated to chip in and take certain errands off Triton’s hands—such as handling the guest list for the immortals and smoothing over bruised egos. But not even he had been able to prevent Sophia’s invitation from reaching Hera.

As the mother goddess, Hera had a special connection to all women. She could hear their pleas even if they weren’t addressed at her personally.

“If I knew you’d be fighting fair, I’d love a quick hand-to-hand.”

Eros lifted his hands in a show of surrender. “Moi? Not fighting fair?” Then he looked at Hermes. “Have you ever heard of such a thing?”

Despite himself, Dio had to grin. Hermes joined in laughter a second later. And just like that, Dio’s bad mood was gone. His friends could do that to him. That’s why he loved them. It was just a shame that they’d see so much less of Triton now that he resided in the—admittedly very charming—city of Charleston. Even Dio had a little bachelor pad here that he used on occasion, that’s how much he liked the city and the many bars. It wouldn’t be too much of a hardship to visit Triton from time to time. So, maybe very little would change after all.

“Did you notice the lovely redhead in the crowd?” Hermes asked.

“Francesca? She’s Sophia’s best friend. But don’t bother.” Dio took a big gulp of his wine.

“You think I have no chance?”

“Depends on the competition.” Dio loved needling his half-brother.

Hermes grinned. "If you're the competition, then I'm home free."

Eros laughed. "I'm happy to play umpire."

Dio waved his friends off. "I'm not interested in her, but you go right ahead and compete with Zeus."

Hermes deflated as if somebody had stuck a pin into a balloon. "That's just so unfair. Why does he always get first dibs?"

"He doesn't always," Dio interrupted and smiled to himself. The delectable morsel he'd chosen for himself hadn't entered Zeus periphery yet, and if Dio could help it, his father would never set eyes on her, at least not until Dio was done with her.

"Which means exactly what?" Hermes challenged.

Eros graced him with a knowing glance. "It appears our dear friend has found a victim that has so far escaped Zeus's eye." Because a beauty like her would attract Zeus's attention instantly.

Dio winked at the god of love. "And that's all I'm saying."

"Who is she? Is she here?" Hermes asked, eagerly craning his neck to survey the crowd that had already poured into

the living room and was now jostling for position in the buffet line.

“Do I look stupid enough to choose somebody from the wedding party when I know for certain Zeus will lay claim to her as soon as he sees her?”

“Ah, so maybe one of the waitresses?” Eros interjected.

“Same difference. Once Zeus lays eyes on her, not even Francesca’s beauty can keep him from going for my girl.” Not that she was his girl yet. The lovely Ariadne had so far resisted his advances and only allowed a few chaste kisses, claiming she wanted to get to know him first. Just like Dio wanted to know her—in a biblical kind of way.

“Your girl? Dio, you wouldn’t by any chance have given up your one-night-only rule?” Hermes gave him a *you’re-shitting-me* look.

Dio shook off the thought as if it were poisonous. “Don’t be ridiculous! Do you see me walking down the aisle anytime soon? As soon as I’ve had her, I’ll let her loose. My weeks of wining and dining her will pay off tonight.”

Eros laid his hand on Dio’s forearm. “Hold it. Are you telling me that you haven’t fucked her yet?”

Dio swallowed hard. Admitting to his friends that he hadn't gotten a woman into his bed on the first try was like admitting to a monumental defeat. "I'm enjoying the chase." Which wasn't entirely untrue. Seducing Ariadne slowly had its charm. In fact, the thrill of a slow seduction was growing on him. And for some strange reason, he enjoyed this unfamiliar feeling.

Hermes broke out in hearty laughter. "Finally a woman who doesn't drop her panties the moment you crook your finger."

Anger churned up in Dio. He felt compelled to defend his sexual prowess from Hermes' attack. "Believe me, she will drop her panties tonight, or I'm through with her."

"Sounds like a dare." Eros lifted his glass in mock-toast.

"It's a fact!" Tonight, Ariadne would surrender to him. He'd sink into her sweet heat and finally unleash his passion on her, take her to heights she'd never known before, and make her beg for more. And then he'd do it again until the sun rose. Because once the night was over, he'd leave, sated and done with the inexplicable draw she had on him. It was that draw that had compelled him to start dating her

when he never dated. All he usually had were one-night-stands. It was different with Ariadne. For two weeks now, they'd played their little game, gone out for dinners and dances, yet she'd always stopped him when he wanted to go further. With any other woman, he would have stopped his pursuit and moved onto the next, not willing to waste his time any longer. But Ariadne held his attention.

He stared at his two friends. "Tonight she'll be mine. And tomorrow I'll be moving on to the next one." He raised his glass. "Mark my words."

As he toasted to his friends, his gaze strayed into the distance and collided with Hera's. The glower in her icy-blue eyes confirmed that she'd heard each and every word of his conversation with his friends. The mother goddess wasn't pleased.

2

Ariadne twirled in front of the full-length mirror in her living room.

“You clean up great!”

She caught Natalie’s eye in the reflection and made a face at her friend’s casual compliment. “You sure?” Ariadne cast another critical eye over her outfit. Her flowery pastel blue and green summer dress was held up by spaghetti straps. The empire waist created a nice focal point for her average-sized breasts and made sure the soft material flowed effortlessly to her knees, taking the emphasis off her round hips. Childbearing, that’s what her mother always called her hips. Ariadne simply called them too wide.

“Or should I wear the red one?” Doubts bubbled up in her.

Natalie’s hand on her arm made Ari look back at her friend. “The red one screams ‘slut’. And I thought you wanted to make sure he knows you’re a good girl.”

She nodded. “You’re right.”

“Besides, once the two of you have been together for a while, you can always surprise him with that dress, and

believe me, he'll be all over you. And by that time, he knows you're a keeper, and you won't give him the wrong impression."

Ariadne hugged her friend. What would she do without Natalie? Her friend had gotten her through the worst of times, and now she was there for what she hoped would become the best of times.

"Are you sure Dio will like it?"

Natalie winked. "He'll be all over you. And isn't that what you want tonight?"

She nodded, but the nervousness that had spread all day in anticipation of this evening wasn't waning. "Maybe I should wait a little. It's too early. We've only been dating for two weeks."

Natalie tsked. "Wait any longer and he'll lose interest. You've got to show him that you want him, or he'll just think you don't care about him. Men want a little show of affection. And if you don't put out, he'll go somewhere else. You've told me yourself how virile he is. Do you really think a man like that is going without sex for longer than a couple of weeks?"

The chastising look Natalie tossed her made Ariadne swallow away her fear. Not every man was like her ex-fiancé. Dio had to be different. Over the last two weeks, he'd been the most attentive man, showering her with flowers and expensive dinners. They'd taken romantic walks along the shore and slow danced to Burt Bacharach. She knew that at heart Dio was a romantic, and it was only natural that he wanted to sleep with her. And it was natural that she wanted the same.

"I know those frowns."

At Natalie's words, Ariadne lifted her head. "I'm sorry, I'm just scared. What if he does what Jeff—"

"Forget that asshole right now!" The sharp tone in Natalie's voice made her jolt back. "I don't want to hear that man's name ever again. Do you understand? What Jeff did was despicable. It's over. Time to move on. Dio is a good man. Now, get ready." She peered at her watch. "Jesus, I'd better run or the chef is going to lay an egg. We have tons of reservations for tonight."

Ariadne nodded. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have kept you for so long. You need to get back to work. Thanks for

everything.”

Natalie smiled. “What are friends for?” Then she pulled her into another hug. “Now go get him, Ari. And tell me everything—and I mean, *everything*—tomorrow.”

Ariadne felt herself blush at the thought of laying her sex life bare in front of her best friend. If everything went well tonight, and she and Dio really spent the night together in bed, then she wasn’t sure she wanted to share any of it with anybody, not even her best friend. If Dio’s kisses were anything to go by, they would burn up the sheets together once they got naked.

When the front door snapped in behind Natalie, Ari scrutinized her image in the mirror once more. Her dark blond hair billowed over her shoulders, and her green eyes were enhanced by the subtlest of make-up. Her lips were covered with the barest of lip color, merely a hint of transparent red. She hadn’t bothered with more, knowing that Dio would kiss her, wiping the lipstick off instantly.

Tonight, she’d take the first step toward restoring her faith in men. Dio had given her every indication that he was interested in her for more than a fling. The way he ran his

eyes over her whenever they were together, and particularly when he thought she wasn't watching, sent warmth through her body. There was so much affection and desire in his gaze that she just knew he was the man for her, a man who would cherish her. A man who would love her.

Tonight, she'd offer herself to him to show him that she was willing to give their relationship a fair shot. She would make the past vanish forever.

By the time the doorbell buzzed, announcing Dio's arrival, the butterflies in her stomach had moved in permanently. Maybe Dio could evict those little buggers with his touch.

Ari pressed the buzzer to open the downstairs door and took a few steadying breaths before she opened the door to her apartment.

Dio looked amazing. His clothing was casual: faded jeans that hugged his thighs showing off each muscle in his toned body, a white shirt whose top two buttons were open, revealing just a light dusting of dark hair on his chest. If anybody could make casual clothes look like a million bucks,

it was Dio. His dark hair was longer than currently fashionable, but he carried it off with an air of ruggedness.

“You look stunning.” The words came from him, the sound of his voice huskier tonight than she’d ever heard him. He took her hand and guided it to his mouth, pressing a kiss into her palm. “I couldn’t wait to see you.” His blue eyes connected with her, the underlying promise evident in them.

“Dio.” Was her voice really this echo she heard in her head? Had she already lost all her senses just by ogling him?

Suddenly she was flush against his body without registering that he’d pulled her toward him. Or had she flung herself into his arms? Her breath caught in her chest as his lips hovered a mere inch above hers.

“Something is different tonight. Are you wearing a new perfume?”

Ari shook her head. “I’m not wearing anything.” She caught the flare in his eyes and felt a responding flame in her belly, only now realizing what she’d said. “I mean ...”

“Yes, the fabric of your dress is so delicate, I can feel every outline of your body, every curve. Can you feel me?”

He slid one hand down the curve of her backside and gently pressed her against him.

Her breath hitched as she felt the hard outline of his erection pressing into her stomach. In an attempt to stop herself from moaning, she pulled her lower lip between her teeth.

“I take that as a *yes*,” Dio whispered into her ear and lowered his lips to her neck, planting open-mouthed kisses on her heated skin. “My sweet Ariadne, you are my greatest temptation, do you know that? When I’m near you, I can’t think of anything else.”

She tried to steady herself, putting her hands on his shoulders, but the heat under her palms made her feel dizzy. Was she panting already? “Dio.” This man reduced her to one-word-sentences.

He didn’t lift his head but merely grunted and continued kissing her neck and stroking her backside with his hand.

“We have to ... the reservation ... the restaurant,” she managed to say, trying to gain back the control she’d lost the moment he’d pressed her against him.

Finally he lifted his head and studied her, his eyes dark with passion. "I'm sorry. You're right. We should go." He cleared his throat as if he too was trying to wrestle back control. "I apologize for attacking you like this."

It hadn't felt like an attack. Far from it. It had been a sensual assault, one she didn't think she could fight off next time it happened, one she didn't think she would want to avoid. "Don't apologize."

He graced her with a wide smile and took her arm to lead her outside.

"Where are we going tonight?"

"A small bistro in the neighborhood. Nothing ostentatious, but it's quiet and intimate." He emphasized the last word and gave her a sideways glance. Then he shook his head. "By the gods, you're beautiful."

She chuckled nervously. While Dio was never shy with compliments, the way he lavished them on her tonight was different. Almost as if he'd only just realized that the lighthearted compliments he normally served had turned into absolute truths. "You're different tonight," she said. Did he know that she had made the decision to sleep with him

tonight if he made an attempt at intimacy? Was it written on her face?

“Different, how?”

“More intense.”

“Is that good?” He led her hand to his lips and kissed it.

“Yes.”

He suddenly stopped and turned, pressing her against the wall of a building. “Baby, I’m not sure I can make it through dinner tonight.”

Her chest heaved as she tried to get enough air to speak. “Aren’t you hungry?”

“Oh, I’m hungry.” His eyes told her of his hunger, the desire in them more intense than she’d ever seen it. “But not for food. I’m hungry for you. And I’m afraid of scaring you off with how much I want you right now.”

At his admission her heart made an excited salto. She took all her courage and stroked her hand against his cheek. “Would a kiss tide you over?”

“We could give it a try.”

And then his mouth was on hers, his lips nudging against her, his tongue licking at the seam of them, asking for entry.

Without reservation, she opened up to him and allowed his invasion. Heat flooded her, and tendrils of fire licked up her body. His hands seemed to touch her everywhere as his tongue dueled with hers and stroked her in the most tantalizing rhythm, soft and strong at the same time.

Both tenderness and passion combined in his kiss, making for an irresistible cocktail of emotions. Her head swam with images of their lovemaking, of a relationship, a future together. And her body burned with desire for him, with lust she'd never felt before. As if he conjured up these feelings in her by the magic of his tongue exploring her, his lips nipping at her, and his body grinding against hers in a dance as old as time.

If she could get this hot with her clothes on, she could only imagine what would happen once she was alone with him in her apartment where they could tear each other's clothes off. She could barely breathe now, her heart beating so fast, she was afraid it could jump out of her chest and into his hand—the hand he'd just slipped onto her breast to knead it gently but with purpose. When his thumb stroked

over her nipple, turning it hard in an instant, she tore her mouth from his.

“We have to stop,” she whispered, catching her breath.

Dio breathed as hard as she did. He leaned his forehead against hers, his breath ghosting along her skin as he spoke.

“I know. But later. Promise me ... I need you, Ariadne.”

She gave an almost unperceivable nod. He needed her—how those words warmed her. “Yes.” Her heart still thundered into his hand, a hand he hadn’t yet removed from her breast. As she straightened, he seemed to realize it and dropped it.

“You rob me of my sanity.”

She lifted her head to read him and saw despair in his eyes.