

Arachne, Daughter of Gold

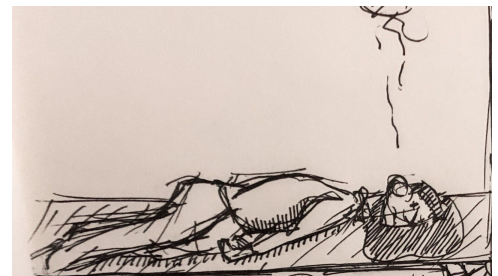
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This story is set in a world in which there is no such thing as myth. There are *lesser* and *greater* powers, and those in-between, but the dreams of humans have always come true. The gods and goddesses are many but most are old and uninterested in the world, to the benefit of those weaker. When the gods pay attention, those who are *lesser* suffer the consequences. The gods do not discriminate between targets and those who are simply in the way.

[*Doom Days* by Bastille begins playing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOX30Chr4JY>]

The opening of the film features a nighttime skyline. Lights glimmer and modernity is apparent. In penthouses, we pan across gods lounging, carelessly rolling dice. A fireplace flickers, and the song plays “when I watch the world burn, all I think about is you.” *Lesser* servants bring them food and drink, and arguments in the background lead to the sound of shattering stone. The arguments sound rehearsed. When those *greater* have overlapping specialties, competitions occur. For such beings, punishment is fleeting and forgettable. The same spat happens over and over again through eternity.

A seemingly human servant accidentally stumbles and falls against one of the gods. A casual flick sends him across the room and he crumples against the wall. The god doesn't look up as other servants move his body away.



Another room is lined with thrones. The lighting is a dull gray, and the *greater* here seem half-asleep. They have barely moved in the past centuries. It is understood that the beings in this room must remain undisturbed. The room is dusty and there are cobwebs in the corner,

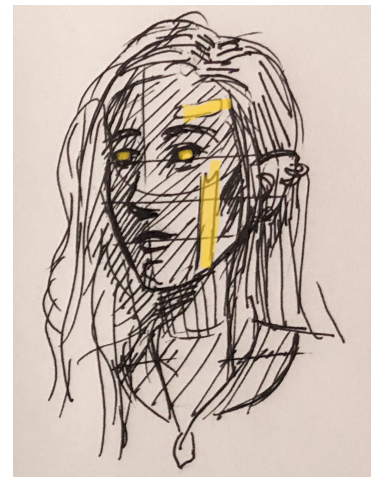


although few spiders have dared approach the thrones. One throne is empty and the dust suggests it was recently vacated. We follow footsteps out to the main room.

[The song fades out and the chorus to Billie Eilish’s “you should see me in a crown” fades in.

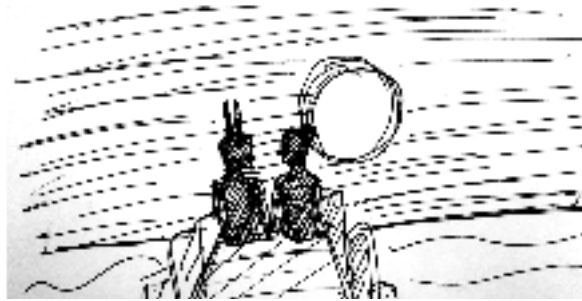
This is a precursor to who we are meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ah0Ys50CqO8>.]

The camera zooms in on someone else: she is plain in this room, cloaked in an unremarkable body, incongruous with the lyrics. The camera pans across her, noting details and giving sense to the song. A splatter of gold paint on one side of her face and her wrists mark her as an artist. Her gold eyes mark her as a god. The empty space around her, which no one has dared encroach upon, marks her as *greater*. She is the missing god. [The song fades out.]



In a new scene we’ve moved away from the luxury of the gods to everyday life. We pan across the docks and see vague, shadowy shapes, many of which don’t seem entirely human. Waves crash softly against the docks and indecipherable voices murmur. There’s a tall figure,

with horns protruding from the top of the head. Younger beings, lounging on a bench, spread wings and file claws.

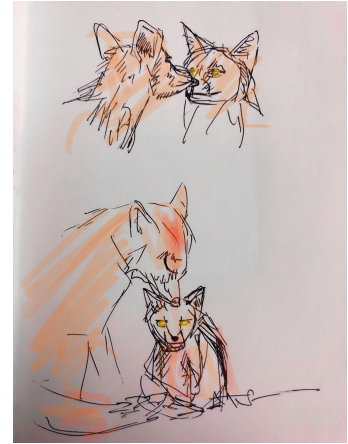


We zoom in on one figure, a man with the shadow of a fox occasionally visible behind him. We follow him to his apartment and he pauses at the door, momentarily gathering himself, before opening the door. On the floor, inside, we see a young girl illuminated with light. She turns from her crayons and beams, visibly elated at the sight of the man, her father. Her eyes shine gold.

[“Born to Rule” by Transviolet begins - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXyQEXcrKi8>]

So begins a series of scenes of the girl growing up. The girl’s name is Arachne and she toddles after her father, crayons clutched in one hand. He walks her back to her small desk and admires her crayon drawing of the two of them. Even at a young age, she has an odd aptitude for art and he draws his eyebrows together, slightly worried. He doesn’t really remember where her eyes came from but they’re not common, even in this world. We see his hazy memory of an obscured face with golden eyes shining out from the smoke. [For a brief second “Born to Rule” is replaced by “you should see me in a crown.” “Born to Rule” returns as he shakes off the memory]. The next day, he brings her a small flute to try and diversify her talents.

In the next scene, he returns after a rough day and retreats to the comfort of his fox form. She joins him and they curl up in front of the heater. Her eyes remain gold but they both look like normal foxes otherwise. It brings him comfort that she inherited the ability to shift to a fox from him. Perhaps any other blood is diluted enough that she won't have trouble in the future.



In the next scene Arachne is a older and furiously working. It's a landscape painting of mountains no one has seen. It is beautiful, but lacks luster. We see her present it at an art competition later, proudly standing next to it in a suit. At this the camera pans over a line-up of pieces with child artists standing next to them. She doesn't place in the top three but, rather than becoming angry, she looks determined. That afternoon she is back in the common room with sketches scattered over the floor illuminated by sunlight. Her father sits and reads in a corner, keeping an eye on her work. Later still, when it becomes dark, he walks in with a pack of oil paints to replace the ones she had used up.

In the next scene Arachne is older still and has begun to add gold jewelry to her wardrobe. Acceptance to an art school lies on her desk, opened and read frequently. At least a few years has passed since the previous scene. Gold rings grace her fingers and gold eyeliner accentuates her eyes. She finishes a painting of the same mountain she had submitted to the competition all those years ago. Everything that the last painting had last is present and, as she puts the final touches on the painting her father walks in. We see another set of hands weirdly superimposed over hers - another hazy flashback of her father's.

[“Born To Rule” fades out and “Icarus” by Bastille fades in. This may be a different story, but there’s something to be said of a fox that was trapped by one as great as the Sun

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPSQHsXUGWQ>].

This time we see a full scene, although it is still slightly obscured. There’s a sense that maybe Arachne’s father’s memories have been tampered with. Gold adorned hands paint in a dim room as the man who is sometimes a fox rests on the couch. The painter’s back is to him and he seems... unattached to the world around him. Time passes as the woman paints, but nothing else changes. She turns and he sees gold eyes before jolting out of the memory. His daughter continues to paint, unaware of his thoughts. He looks apprehensively at the room covered in paintings and coaxes his daughter into her fox form, anxious to have her away from art for a little bit. [“Icarus” fades out and the screen fades to black. Text on the screen indicates that a few years have passed by].

[“Burn the House Down” by AJR begins to play and the next few scenes flit by quicker, more of a montage - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnyLfppyi94>].

The judges view Arachne’s piece with quiet awe. They cannot place the mountains all agree that it seems like a long ago memory. They murmur among themselves about her golden eyes and the rumors of a *greater* artist with a penchant for gold. Arachne wins the competition that year, and has gains the attention of the local art world. She celebrates with her father and then goes home to paint some more.

In the next scene she wins a competition with a painting of a cottage in woods no one recognizes. She is incredulous and the colors remain bright and happy, reflective of her success.

The audience blurs with her tears. She wins another with a painting of her father superimposed with his fox. A painting of an endless ocean with pinks and yellows and reds is chosen to be displayed in the city center. She goes out to the street and charms everyday beings into letting her take a photo of them to paint. An entire gallery of hers is full of beings who she met briefly. Some worry that she is *greater* and trapped her subjects in the paintings but none are brave enough to ask.

Every competition and gallery increases the whispers of her bloodline. Her father does his best to remain outside of the spotlight and she ignores the questions about her mother. She doesn't know and won't ask her father, whose memories seem to be half a dream. Those who have seen work from the golden painter of legend note the skill in her daughter's pieces. Eventually those *greater* begin to commission her. They all know her relation to the golden painter but Arachne remains oblivious. She gains fame and prestige, growing slowly confident in her skills. ["Burn the House Down" fades out].

["Loyal" by Odezza begins to play. This is a very strong song and it underscores the strength of the character we are about to meet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz_YPczxzZc].

We now shift back to the *greater* golden painter from the first scene. Sun streams in through windows, illuminating the various canvases propped up everywhere. She doesn't really have a name, although it is likely her worshippers had one for her once. Her hands match the one in Arachne's father's vision. Black hair is braided out of her way, and the gold on her hands show clearly against her darker complexion. A ticket to the opening day of Arachne's latest gallery lies on the table next to her.

The camera pans around her room slowly. Her paintings are glorious and, like Arachne's, every single one is touched with gold. Not a single one is signed: she has never needed to differentiate her art from another's. Arachne had natural talent but worked hard to gain renown. For the golden painter, art is easy. However, as we continue panning, we see copies of Arachne's paintings. It is clear that the golden painter has paid attention to her daughter.

Like Arachne's, the paintings are beautiful but also colder. Each painting hints at the cruelty from those *greater*. The mountain is bare of life and filled with skeletons. The cottage is a hulking shape in the dark, and the firelit windows promise pain rather than warmth. The portrait of her father lies unfinished with gold handprints marring his arms. As we go back to the golden painter we realize how very inhuman she is. Each reaction is a little bit off, as if she is simply trying to mimic those *lesser*. She picks up the tickets to Arachne's show and walks out of the room. The screen fades to black. ["Loyal" fades out.]

["Strength of a Thousand Men" by Thomas Bergersen begins playing. Arachne's hard work is now going to be tested: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwJj2EpC8vg>].

The golden painter arrives at the gallery, devoid of all paint stains. The gallery claims to host an exhibit from the best painter the world has seen. Her sunglasses hide the golden of her eyes and she has masked the aura of danger that she usually carries. This is as nondescript as she can get. She tours the works - paintings of those *greater* who had commissioned Arachne. Zeus, stirred only by his pride, stood resplendent among lightning. Iktomi stands tall in his human form, a mischief curving his lips. Spiders hide in the background. We see the *greater* who have faded

into myth but woke when the whispers about Arachne became shouts. Still, she is the only one of those *greater* present at the event. The others had a private viewing even earlier.

The golden painter begins a conversation with Arachne. What speaks quietly but Arachne grows angry. The gallery rings with Arachne's refusal to thank her bloodline for her success. She has worked *hard* to be the best painter of modernity. Her golden eyes glow brighter, threatening those *lesser* with her lineage and the power dormant within it. But the golden painter only laughs, and gestures for art supplies to be brought to them. Two easels are set-up and overhead windows let in bright sun. She removes her glasses and the sight of her gold eyes shocks Arachne into silence. Mutely, Arachne begins painting, aware that she is at a disadvantage.

[The song changes to "Pretender" by AJR: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7alhDELOFw>]

A circle forms around the painters. While they paint, we see the father's eyes superimposed on the screen. He remembers the golden painter and we briefly see the hazy scene from before with the golden painter in crystal clear focus. She turns and smiles at him before showing him her newest painting. There is always sun shining into her rooms.

We watch the two painters and the audience around them grows bigger. The painters stop at dusk and the easels are moved side-by-side. The golden painter painted power. As always her painting has an edge of cruelty. A collage of those *greater* destroy civilizations on a whim. Blood is splattered across it. Arachne also painted those *greater* but on her canvas we see gods slumbering on their thrones. They are old and abandoned, powerful but ultimately forgotten.

[Music changes from “Pretender” to the golden painter’s theme: “you should see me in a crown”].

The golden painter is too powerful to care about Arachne’s reasons and her painting is a slight that cannot be tolerated in such a public venue. Perhaps she would have once been allowed to forgive her own daughter, but she cannot do so without acknowledging Arachne’s superiority - something she will not do. Instead she magically alters this daughter of hers, binding her into her fox shape. She can no longer create art of the sort she had in the past and so it is punishment enough. Without a glance at anyone else, the golden painter takes both paintings and leaves. Arachne’s father falls to his knees and his daughter-fox takes comfort in his presence, unable to shift to a more humanoid form.

As the credits begin, we see paintings from the golden painter of the fates of Arachne and her father. Mostly a small, dejected fox pads around the house as her father works. In the last painting we see all three in humanoid forms in the penthouse from the first scene. It is implied that Arachne’s punishment has been reversed and her status elevated to match the golden painter’s. Her father’s eyes shine orange, indicating that he has also become *greater*. The three of them sit together, isolated from everyone else, and a feeling of menace surrounds them.