

Creatures of Myth - Part 1

For Sawdust22

By TheSpiralledEye

Three men travel to a deserted island for a week of adventure only to get more than they bargained for when they start becoming seductive mythical creatures.

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The boat skimmed across the crystalline blue water, leaving a trail of silver spray behind it. Trent laid back, letting the warm summer wind whip through his golden brown curls and took another swig of his beer. It had been hell saving for this trip but now that he was here, travelling through paradise on the luxury yacht it was all worth it. Most men just went down to the local strip club and got wasted with all their mates from work and called it a bachelor party but he wasn't about to waste the opportunity to go all out.

His fiancée, Tulla, was Greek and when she had suggested taking her two best girlfriends to Mykonos for her bachelorette party he had jumped at the idea to do the same. He'd not wanted to do just any old boat tour though, he had searched through the most obscure sites until finally he found the stories of the basically abandoned Greek island in the middle of the ocean. Like everything in the country, it had a storied history, filled with tales of mythical monsters.

Camping out with his two best friends on an ancient Greek Island sounded like the perfect mixture of luxury and adventure. If nothing else, they would be able to beat any wild bachelor party stories their other friends or colleagues told in the future. Tulla hadn't liked the sound of it.

"My grandfather used to tell me stories of sailors who washed up on that island being seduced by sirens and turned into monsters." She warned.

"You don't actually believe that rubbish?" Trent had scoffed and she'd told him of course not.

"But those stories often have a reason behind them, maybe there are lots of dangerous animals or poisonous mushrooms. Maybe snakes or spiders that make you hallucinate."

“We’ll have my first aid kit, it’ll be fine. You worry too much.”

Finding a boat willing to take them had been another problem. All the locals seemed to think the island was cursed and refused to get within a kilometre of the place but as always, Trent discovered that he could solve the problem by throwing money at it. A little more and he had a luxury yacht instead of a dinky little fishing boat. The man at the helm seemed nervous but Trent and his friends were not about to let that ruin the ambiance.

Hank had taken off his shirt the first chance he got and was relaxing in the centre of the deck away from the spray. His muscled body glistened with tanning oil.

“You slather that stuff on so thick your skin will be as dark as your hair before long.” Trent teased but Hank didn’t even bother opening his eyes.

“The chicks love a well travelled guy.” he said lazily, “A tan and a story about the Mediterranean is all I’ll need when we get home to pull whoever I want.”

“You already pull whoever you want.” Justin snickered, “You’re built like a house dude.”

“I could always have a few more muscles.”

“God, and they say women are vain.”

Hank did open his eyes at that, shooting Justin a look and sticking out his tongue a little.

“If you took more pride in your appearance maybe you’d have the girls falling at your feet as well.”

“I’m just glad this trip is the three of us, so I don’t have to watch them all fawn over you.” Justin replied, his words lacking any real sting.

“You love it.” Hank countered, “You get your pick of whoever is left.”

“I do not need your leftovers thank you very much,” Justin grinned boyishly, “I’ll have you know women find me very charming.”

“Statistically somebody has to.” Trent snickered and Justin whacked him with his hat.

They moved over the reef that seemed to encircle the island, all at once the waves seemed to cease and they were in a lagoon of near still, bright blue water. It felt almost like entering through an invisible wall; on the outside the rough looking ocean and real world and within, paradise.

Tropical trees lined the white sands and small rocky mountains that made up the middle of the island. Even as they approached Trent could see the ruins of what had to be ancient stone buildings. This was the sort of place totally off limits to tourists most of the time; either Greek people were more superstitious than he realised or archeologists had picked it clean of treasure and history long ago.

The boat reached the shallows before stopping and the sailor at the wheel motioned for them to jump into the thigh high water.

“I will be back in one week.” He said quickly, glancing at the island with a nervous expression. “I will wait no more than fifteen minutes for you here, so be here at exactly twelve on that date!”

“You can’t just abandon us.” Trent rolled his eyes, “You’d be sued to high heaven, my fiance knows exactly where we are, you’ll come and get us and wait if you need to.”

The man shook his head but Trent just rolled his eyes.

“Seriously, it’s the twenty-first century, curses aren’t real.”

He jumped into the shallow water, making sure to keep his pack dry and Hank and Justin carried the rest of their luxury camping gear ashore.

“Here, fifty euro for you if you hope out and set up these tents for us.”

“No, no sir, I won’t be setting foot on that island and neither should you or your friends.” He warned again.

“Come on, a hundred-”

“No sir, now I go. Please stand back.”

Trent scoffed, wading through the water to the shore so the man could turn around and sail back out into the ocean.

“What a wimp.” Justin snickered, “Scared of a little island.”

“Oh well, more for us.” Hank shrugged, “If there wasn’t that old superstition this place would probably be just another generic tourist trap filled with bars and cheap backpackers.”

He had a point. The exoticness of the location had been what drew him to it in the first place. Still, he couldn’t help but miss the amenities of a full staff that a resort would have brought. Luckily, Hank could lift most of their heavy equipment with ease and they soon found a soft, grassy spot where the jungle met the sand to set up camp.

He hadn’t spared any expense when it came to their equipment, this was a camping trip. Yes, he never understood why people insisted on roughing it. They each had a large canvas tent with two separated, airy rooms and a generator to power the lights and charging ports inside. Of course there was no cell service all the way out here but he refused to be without his music and tv shows. Thanks to the portability of laptops these days they wouldn’t be without movies, or popcorn to watch them with.

The self inflating mattresses were adorned with Egyptian cotton sheets and soft pillows. Not quite five star hotel worthy, but close. By the time they had their firepit and coolers set up the place was almost looking like a resort. Perfect.

“Soooo...now what?” Justin asked, flopping down on a deck chair, “Can’t exactly hit the bar.”

“Speak for yourself.” Trent grinned, reaching into one of the coolers and pulling out a can of beer, “I came prepared, we have a week’s worth of quality booze here, everything from beer and cider to enough spirits to make a mountain of mojitos.”

“Mojitos? What are you, a girl?” Hank teased.

“Cocktails taste better and get you drunk faster.” Justin countered, “I think it’s a rip off that wheat water got stuck as a ‘man’ drink, mojito me up, my dude.”

Soon the three of them were pleasantly buzzed, blasting music and watching the sun set on their own slice of paradise. Justin made sand castles which Hank took great pleasure in destroying. Trent watched the two run up and down the beach like a pair of kids, chucking

sand and handfuls of cold water at each other until finally they ran out of steam and the alcohol took its toll.

The three of them drunkenly lay under the stars, talking about Trent's upcoming wedding. His two single friends ribbed him for being whipped but he took it in stride. He was going to miss single life, that was true. But Tulla was pretty, decently smart and most importantly, rich as hell. A life with her on his arm would be easy and if he ever wanted to indulge in a little single life, all it would take was a slip of his hand to remove that wedding band for a night or two.

"Hey...let's go exploring." Justin said suddenly, "We've been here for hours and we've barely left the beach, I bet we find some cool ruins and shit."

He pointed to some of the bleach white stone that must have once been some sort of building.

"If there was anything cool we wouldn't be allowed here." Hank argued.

"Aw...are you chicken?" Justin asked, clucking a few times until Hank shoved him away.

"It's probably a little late." Trent added, "It's dark as in there, I don't want to get lost in the jungle on my first night here."

"Chicken! Chicken!" Justin teased, jumping to his feet, "I bet I can get deeper into the jungle before turning back than either of you."

Hank and Trent looked at one another and grinned; no way were they letting Justin hold that over them, they'd never hear the end of it! They got to their feet and followed after Justin, torches in hand. Contrary to what he thought, the jungle was open and airy. Trent actually found it quite nice to walk through, even as the foliage became thicker.

Soon the sound of the waves disappeared and they were surrounded on all sides by trees and craggy rocks. The moon filtered through the treetops, giving their torches a little help illuminating the path. For a few minutes, it was exciting; Trent felt like an old fashioned jungle explorer and kid like wonder filled him. That excitement soon faded though as they came across nothing but trees, bushes and the occasional rustling sound that must have been caused by a startled animal.

They passed an open, grassy meadow dotted with mushrooms and wildflowers that seemed strangely out of place with the jungle surrounds and got a good look at the high cliff faces above them on the central mountain but other than that, there was nothing of note.

“Well, this sure is more fun than drinking on the beach.” Hank said sarcastically.

“Where is your sense of adventure?” Justin sighed, “The whole point of coming out here was to do something different; every bachelor party is about getting drunk this is-woah!”

Justin stepped forward and immediately disappeared from view, sliding down an embankment they hadn't noticed with a sharp cry. Hank and Trent rushed to the edge and shone their torches down to find Justin on his ass looking more embarrassed than hurt.

“You okay man?” Trent asked.

“Yeah fine, I just landed on something hard.”

The embankment wasn't too deep, only a few metres, allowing Hank and Trent to easily slide down to join him. As he reached the bottom Trent was surprised to feel hard stone beneath his sandals; cobblestone. They shone their lights about, finding crumbling walls seemingly set out at random.

“See! I told you something was just around the corner!” Justin grinned, clambering back up the hill and looking down to get the lay of the land. “Woah! It looks like a maze! Or, maybe it used to be when all these walls were standing.”

Trent and Hank joined him and found he was right, the walls formed corners sometimes and were spread out over a pretty big area. A lot was missing and it was no challenge at all to find the flat courtyard that must have once been the centre of it.

“An ancient Greek maze?” Hank said, sounding puzzled, “Why build a maze on an island?”

“Maybe it was their equivalent of Disney World?” Justin joked, “Mazes were all the rage before roller coasters.”

“I don't think that's true.” Trent replied.

“Well, you can’t prove it’s not till we get internet access back in a week, so I am right by default!”

“I don’t think that’s how *that* works either.

“Agree to disagree.”

“Can we please just go back to getting drunk on the beach?” Hank groaned.

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It was late morning when Trent finally emerged from his tent the next day. He could still feel the slight buzz of alcohol leaving his system and his head immediately made him go straight for the water bottles. Justin was laying face down on a towel, groaning. He’d always been a lightweight and was clearly paying for it now.

Hank on the other hand, seemed totally fine and was doing pushups in the sand with a wild grin on his face.

“This place is great!” He called in greeting as Trent flopped himself down on one of the beach chairs. “I haven’t woken up so invigorated in ages! I’ve already gone for a run along the length of the beach and back.”

“Stop making us both look bad.” Trent groaned, sipping his water and sighing in relief.

“Not my fault if you guys can’t put in the work! You want a body like mine, you have to earn it!”

Trent had to admit, be it the ocean or their little jungle trek last night, something in the air was agreeing with his friend. Hank’s muscles seemed to have grown a little over night, his pecs especially. As he stood up and stretched Trent found himself blinking in surprise; his friend had always been tall but he swore he’d gotten taller somehow. A trick of the light perhaps.

“I feel buzzed!” He announced, downing half a bottle of water in a few deep swigs, “How about another little jungle adventure, eh? Feeling up for a walk, Justin?”

“Fuck oooooooff.”

“What? Not keen on it?” Hank teased, “After all that big talk last night?”

“Fuck. Off.”

Trent grinned and dumped the rest of his cold water over Justin’s back making him shriek, the sound was high pitched and girly which sent both Hank and Trent into peels of laughter.

“O-oh my God, I wish I had that on film.” Hank laughed, “You could audition to be the girl in a horror film who gets killed first.”

“You’re both asses.” Justin grumbled, “I’ll get you back for that, mark my words!”

“I have zero doubt.” Trent shrugged, “NBut you can never take away our memories of that sound. It’s going to take a lot of beer and women to convince me you’re not the chick of the group now.”

Justin pouted for a moment, earning another snicker from the others before he stood up and straight and turned on his heels, heading for the jungle.

“I’m going to go climb that mountain.” He announced boldly, “I’ll yell down at you both right from the top. Then we’ll see who’s man enough.”

Hank scoffed.

“There is no way you are going to be able to drag your twig ass up there.”

“We’ll see.” Justin said simply, heading off.

“He’ll be back, begging us to come within five minutes. Ten tops.” Trent dismissed, opening a new water and helping himself to some of the food they packed.

Five minutes passed, then ten, then twenty and a nervous feeling started to gnaw at him. They were bros, they teased one another all the time but something seemed different all of a sudden. He never felt guilt about his insults, and normally they washed right over Justin like

water on a duck's back. But today he was feeling...guilty? Especially because Justin seemed genuinely hurt by the words. Surely he wasn't going to actually put himself in danger climbing up that white, rocky mountain all by himself to prove a point?

"Should we...maybe go get him?" Hank suggested after a bit, "I thought we were just messing around."

"Yeah, maybe." Trent sighed, "He can't have gotten far on his own, Justin gets lost trying to find his own house."

They began following the path of crushed leaves and sticks that showed which way Justin had gone and Trent found himself invigorated by the surroundings. The air smelt sweet; so much so that he almost thought he could taste it like honey on his tongue. He realised, with a start, that the scent was getting stronger as they approached that meadow from the night before.

As they passed through a line of trees and into it he felt a genuine gasp of wonder escape his lips. The meadow looked beautiful; the flowers were a rainbow across the ground, the mushrooms just as bright and even the grass seemed greener. The most incredible thing of all was that Hank didn't even seem to notice.

"Look at this place!" Trent gaped, "It's beautiful!"

Hank glanced about disinterestedly.

"Yay, flowers, shouldn't we be going?"

Trent felt his worries melting away in the presence of the meadow.

"Justin will be fine, but you can go ahead, I want to look around."

"Alright, but don't go eating any of those shrooms," Hank warned, "Anything that brightly coloured has got to be poisonous."

Trent waved him off, barely paying attention as the giant man crashed through the trees toward the mountain. How could he not appreciate just how beautiful this place was? It was like something out of a dream. Trent had never been one of those people who felt at peace out in nature; he'd only picked camping for his bachelor party because of how exclusive and

bougie he could make it with all his money but suddenly, the idea of roughing it sort of sounded appealing.

He imagined himself in his thin, summer sleeping bag, laying out here at night under the stars; cushioned by the soft green grass and soothed to sleep by the sweet smell of the flowers. It felt heavenly.

With a smile and a song on his lips he wandered the large meadow, humming to himself as he settled on a stump and leaned back to enjoy the sunshine. He could feel the slight breeze rustling his curls and the hair on his legs, it was so-wait, hang on, the hair on his legs?

He looked down in surprise to find that his legs were indeed hairier than usual. Normally he had a light dusting of golden brown hair there, barely noticeable but now it was almost starting to look like fur. Dark brow, with a few hairs long enough to be curly themselves! He wasn't really into manscaping or any of that sort of thing but if that kept up he was going to have to look into shaving his legs when they got back. At least nobody but Hank and Justin was around to see it; he was pretty sure the women who preferred their men hairy also preferred them with a dad bod which was the opposite of his thin, fit physique. Tulla certainly wouldn't be a fan, of that he was sure.

Trent felt his brow furrow as he studied himself further. Unlike Hank, he didn't spend hours upon hours admiring himself in the mirror every day but he did have a passing knowledge of what he looked like, so looking at himself now he could tell there was something off, beyond the hair. His legs looked slightly thinner at the bottom, and thicker at the top. A few more pounds and he'd have a pair of thunder thighs on his hands. He could see his board shorts stretching in an effort to keep them contained, the thin fabric tight in a way it had never been before today.

Now that he'd noticed it, he couldn't stop. The pants felt itchy and uncomfortable, almost chafing despite not being skin tight yet. He kicked them off, sighing in relief before blushing a little. He was walking around naked from the waist down, yet he didn't feel embarrassed. He even kicked off his shoes and found that the walk yesterday had hardened his pampered feet, turning the soles hard enough that even when he accidentally stepped on a thorn, it didn't hurt.

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, Trent knew that wasn't right. His heels shouldn't have gotten so tough so quickly but...who was he to argue with what was right in front of him? No matter how impossible it was, it had happened, so had the hair growth. Hair that he could now see was climbing up his ass and along his crotch as well. That was concerning.

Feeling a rising sense that something was wrong Trent forced himself to put the pants back on, no matter how wrong it felt. Then he headed back toward the beach, if he

was lucky the face razor he'd brought with them would be strong enough to shave all this off before Hank returned with Justin.

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Justin couldn't decide how he felt. His emotions suddenly seemed all over the place. He'd woken up hungover and in a bad mood and the others teasing him had just come at the worst time. He'd told them to go away, but had they listened? No, they never listened to him. Normally it didn't bother him so much but today, for whatever reason, he wasn't in the mood to take it.

He stalked through the jungle, feeling frustrated at just how slowly he was moving without Hank's bulk to shove the thicker branches and leaves aside. Stupid Hank and his stupid muscles; and Trent with his money. It was stupid, those two had everything and yet they felt the need to insult him all the time? Didn't they have enough over him already?

He reached the base of the mountain and began to walk up the incline, finding a thin path carved into the stone by time. Birds darted past as he moved above the treeline and he was suddenly hit with a wave of yearning. Who hadn't dreamt about flying at least once in their life? This was stronger though; Justin suddenly felt a pull toward the edge of the cliff, not to fall and die but to take to the skies. It was a stupid hope of course, he wasn't actually going to step off into thin air like an idiot. But the strength of the urge took him by surprise all the same.

The higher he climbed the better he felt, the cool air whipping at his hair seemed to melt away his irritation. The guys were just messing around, he gave as much shit as he took really, they'd just needled him at the wrong time. He'd go back and apologise once he'd reached the top.

As the path got thinner he had to stop walking and start climbing, kicking off his sandals so he could grip with his toes. He was surprised by how easy it felt, digging his nails into the stone almost like claws as he rose higher and higher. As he glanced down to the island below he waited for his sense of vertigo to kick in, but it never did. In fact, the higher he went the more comfortable he seemed. Until finally, he reached a rocky outcropping as close to the summit as he could reach.

The sun was already moving to the other side of the sky; he'd been climbing for hours. Yet he didn't feel tired at all. He looked down at his hands, his nails crusted with dirt and noticed that they were indeed almost talon-like; his nails filed to points and as hard as the stone itself, not a crack to be seen. That was...odd, to say the least. A glance down at his toes showed the same thing; as well as the skin across them seeming almost leathery and slightly yellowed from the sun.

His wonder at being up so high dissipated slightly in confusion as he took in the changes to be his body; this wasn't like a suntan he could dismiss from being outdoors. Nails and feet didn't just change like that, or at least, they didn't normally. Something tickled at his neck and he reached up to grab at it and felt the soft down of a feather against his fingers. Assuming it had floated down onto him from some birds next he raked his fingers across it, trying to comb the feather out only to wince as he felt something pull from the base of his skull.

He pulled it around to see that it was indeed a feather, a bluish tinged brown one. A tiny spec of blood tipped the end as he stared at it in confusion; realising he'd just pulled it from his own head.

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Hank cursed under his breath; why did Justin have to be such a drama queen? A real man took his lumps with a smile and if he was really offended, he threw a punch. He certainly didn't go storming off like a teenage girl waiting for his friends to come chasing him back. Still, if he meant to climb that mountain Hank couldn't just let him go alone. Justin had the muscle mass of a small bird, he'd fall easily and not have the strength to pull himself up when a cliff inevitably crumbled under him.

Speaking of crumbling, Hank realised he was walking through what remained of that maze as he searched for the easiest way up the mountain. The side facing the beach was all sheer stone after a bit and there was no way Justin would try to climb that. He must have tried to go around.

He vaulted over the crumbling walls and smiled, feeling the satisfying burn of his muscles stretching and strengthening bit by bit with each challenge he faced. Soon he was deliberately heading for the highest remaining walls, jumping and pulling himself over them in a zigzag pattern, having temporarily forgotten about heading toward the mountain.

Before he knew it he was right in the centre of the crumbling maze. The central courtyard was paved with what would have been a very intricate mosaic floor that had been bleached grey due to time, occasionally a single tile here or there held some colour, hinting at the pattern that had long faded. He peered down at the shiny tile, somehow they had all been smoothed by time and were now so reflective he could see himself in them.

He didn't even know that was possible but he continued walking right to the centre, where the grout was so thin the floor was basically a giant mirror. He looked at himself, towering toward the sky, muscles built and shining thanks to his dark tan. He looked gorgeous if he did say so himself. He posed a few times, flexing his muscles and grinning;

he didn't care what the others said, he loved the way he looked and didn't see the harm in indulging in a bit of vanity.

His pecs were especially large right now, despite not having any weights to lift. Hank's brow furrowed; in fact, they were a little too large compared to the other muscles around them. They looked almost round and when he pressed a hand to them, the skin there was soft and sponge, not at all taut or corded the way they should have been.

He scratched his head in confusion; he was so careful about what he ate and his work out regime, how had they gotten so fat without him noticing? He jolted as his nails scraped across something hard under his hair. Carefully he threaded his fingers through the dark locks, finding two hard, bone-like bumps poking out of his skull. Dry skin? No, he couldn't yank it off, it almost felt as if they were *part* of his skull! What's more, if he stayed still he swore he could feel them growing.

The more he peered at himself the more confused he became; his nose looked a little flatter, wider too and seemed to be tinted darker. He pressed a finger to the skin there and found it slightly rough; had he burned a little under the tan? No, that couldn't be it, a bad tan couldn't change the shape of his nose entirely and his nostrils flared as his panic started to rise.

Something wasn't right; his muscles were still burning even though he'd been standing still for a few minutes now. Or, had it been longer. As he glanced at the sun in the sky he realised he'd lost hours jumping around this maze, admiring his own reflection; he hadn't even realised.

Something very strange was happening; something he had no explanation for. Feeling a rising panic in his chest Hank barrelled out of the maze, jumping over the lower stones with ease as he rushed back to the beach; Justin was going to have to wait. He needed to find Trent and figure out what the hell was happening to him.