



# Apollo & Me

Loved by a forgotten  
god across lifetimes ...  
what would you do?

CATE MONTANA

# APOLLO & ME

## Chapter Seven

I slept like the dead and awakened late, vastly refreshed. Surely everything would sort itself out in its own time and its own way? Sunny skies and piles of red geraniums against whitewashed walls outside my windows definitely had a way of tilting my mood towards the positive. And the sparkling wine-dark waters of the Aegean called to me.

Granted, it was only April and far too early in the season for most people to be swimming. As I drank my morning brew, I made use of the binoculars thoughtfully supplied by the owners of the house, watching in amusement as a young man drove his moped to the sandy shore of the bay some distance away. Stripping down to his bathing trunks, he confidently waded thigh-deep into the water—only to immediately turn around and reverse the process, hurriedly leaving the water, putting his jacket and pants back on, getting on his bike and motoring away.

But for me and my northern-climed blood it was already hot enough to swim. I ate a light breakfast, finished unpacking and handled my emails. By noon I couldn't resist the call any longer. Shoving a towel and some water in my backpack, I walked the short distance from the gate to the path I knew and followed it to my left along the cliffs. Within ten minutes I'd arrived at the gully where I could descend to the beach. It was little more than a washed-out goat track, and I slowly picked my way down the crumbling hardpan cliff face leading to the isolated beach

where I could sun bathe and swim nude—if I managed to not kill myself falling the two-hundred feet to the rocks below getting there.

Scrambling down the last bit, I jumped to the sand and headed down the beach. As usual, the pebbles along the shore sparkled enticingly, flaunting their colors and patterns in greens and blues, reds and golds. Paros is one of the most ancient and prolific sources of marble in the world, and the beaches around Apollonias contained a fabulous mix of marble and other stones. I could spend hours ransacking the shores here. Last time I'd visited, before I could pack up and head home I'd had to lug at least ten pounds of rock I'd collected back to the beach.

Ignoring the siren call of the stones, I walked the few yards to my favorite sunning spot, plopped my pack onto some rocks, spread my towel, stripped off and lay down with a contented groan.

For a long time, I soaked up the warmth from the sun above and the sand beneath my towel, listening to the waves gently lapping the stony shore. Not wanting to overdo it my first day, I rolled over, face down, ruminating on my first evening back on the island and, of course, my stupid, ever-recycling concerns about Apollo.

Sufficiently baked, I got up and crunched my way over the pebbles and thick layer of dried seaweed to the water. The shore shelved steeply and the water was cold, but I quickly dived. No agonizing inch-by-inch immersion for me! The first few seconds were a shock, but I warmed up quickly swimming fast out to sea. Finally, out of breath, I flipped over and floated.

The Aegean has a higher salt content than the Pacific and I rocked effortlessly on top of the water, bright red-painted toes sticking out. Ears submerged, I could hear the crackling of shellfish and other sea creatures on the seabed below. Overhead seagulls circled, their cries inaudible. The high golden cliffs touched the blue above, a carved bulwark between sea and sky.

Finally, thoroughly chilled, I made my way back to shore, blessing the perfect swimming conditions. No tides to speak of, no currents, no sharks or barracudas, almost no waves when the wind was from the south . . . and crystal clear. I could have read a book cover on the seafloor fifty feet below.

Stumbling up the steep pebbly incline, I scrabbled for footing and failed, falling back into the water with a hearty *splash*. Laughing at my clumsiness, I used both hands and feet the next attempt and made it back ashore. Then I dried myself off, dressed and reluctantly packed up. No sense risking sunburn day one.

Climbing back up the cliffs was easier than coming down, but by the time I was at the top I was hot again and out of breath. The narrow footpath through the scotch broom and wild roses clinging to the cliff brought me back to my favorite tree and the gate. And . . . there he was. Even before I undid the latch, I saw Apollo waiting on the covered patio wearing his usual jeans with a white linen shirt unbuttoned to his navel, bare feet on the teak coffee table, watching me.

*Oh dear.*

My heart did the usual jumping up and down thing, but this time there was more than an edge of fear to my excitement seeing him. With no escape possible, quickly I crossed the yard. “Hi,” I said, casually dropping my pack on a chair like it was an everyday occurrence having a Greek god waiting for me on my porch—or a *psychopathic hypnotist who somehow knows where to find me all the time*.

I ran my hands over my hair, hoping to smooth out what I knew was a mess of salty drying tangles. The silence stretched. For the life of me I couldn’t think of anything to say. “How are you?” seemed silly. And “nice day” was self-evident and dull.

“Nice day,” he said, eyes unwavering.

“I’ve just been swimming.” *Duh*. “Would you like something to drink?”

“No, thank you.”

I stood there fidgeting, for all the world feeling like a naughty child confronted by its parent. And his next words confirmed there was good reason for my defensiveness.

“I am not accustomed to taking refreshment from someone who considers me a blood-sucking, mind-twisting, psychopathic vampire hypnotist.”

*Oh-oh.*

“Yes, oh-oh. What in the world have I done to make you suddenly so afraid of me?”

In that moment, in the light, pumped from my swim and rock-climbing daring-do, hormones triggered by all the sunshiny vitamin D I’d absorbed, excruciatingly aware of my body’s reaction to the sight of his well-muscled form under the casually opened shirt, I was definitely not afraid.

I was pissed.

All my pent-up worries and frustrations and attraction boiled up in an instant, spilling over. “What have you done? You gotta be kidding me! What *haven’t* you done?” I glared at him, hands on hips. “You show up out of freaking nowhere. You read my mind, zap me into some sort of infinite black hole and PRESTO! change my body back 30 years like . . . like something out of *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Then you ask me to worship you. Then you take the offer of eternal youth away. Then you leave. Then you come back. Then you leave. What the hell am I supposed to think?”

I was on a roll, waving my arms and stamping around the patio.

“I can’t even *think* when I’m around you. I get all hormonal like a teenager with cotton candy for a brain. And all the while you’re playing me like a violin just like every other god has done when they got involved with a mortal.” My voice rose in pitch and decibel level. “And who’s the one that always ends up getting turned into a toad or a tree stump or dying some horrible death in the end? Not the eternal goddamned god, that’s for sure!”

“And you have the unmitigated gall to waltz in here and ask me why I’m afraid of you? Gee, uh . . . duh . . . let me think!” I stopped, hyperventilating.

There was a long pause.

A part of me wanted to laugh. I always get the urge to laugh at the most critically serious moments of my life—like there’s something way down deep inside me that knows better than to take any of this human drama stuff seriously. And I could see the answering flicker of the truth of this in his eyes. But he didn’t laugh.

Instead he said, “If I were any kind of man at all I would get up, come over there and kiss the hell out of you right now until all this stupidity faded away to nothing.”

My eyes widened and my knees threatened to buckle.

“But that would simply be one more example of my terrible influence over you and proof positive that all your accusations of psychological and sexual manipulation are true.”

We stared at each other for a very long time.

Impasse.

I picked up my pack, muttering, “I’m going to take a shower,” and stalked off with as much dignity as my Jell-O knees could muster.



*What to wear what to wear?* Savagely I rummaged through the closet. Sundress? Wrinkled. Pants? Too hot. Shorts? They made my waist and hips look thick.

*Who cares what you wear, you silly twit! You don’t even know if he’s still down there! And what do you care anyway?*

*But he said he wanted to kiss me!*

*And you just told him to piss off because he's dangerous and you need him in your life like a . . . like a . . .*

Hole in the head.

That was it. I had a hole in my head and my brains were leaking out. That must be what was wrong with me. In defiance of my own need to look my best, I grabbed a faded pair of red yoga pants, yanked on a rumpled t-shirt and refused to blow dry my hair, running a brush through it instead.

Barefoot and breathless, I rushed back down the stairs, refusing to peek around the corner of the dining room to see if he was still there. Pretending indifference, I sauntered into the kitchen and poured myself a glass of water at the sink, casually, oh, so casually turning around to see if . . .

He was still there.

My hand started to shake and I set the glass on the grey concrete countertop with enough of a *crack!* it was a wonder it didn't break. And in that moment, I knew it was over.

He'd already won and we both knew it. Had known it from the start. All my bluster was just show—the little human standing up for her small self in the face of something ever so much larger—like a flea jumping up and down thinking its actions will move the dog off its course.

Who was I kidding? I might irritate him. But I wouldn't change what he was and what he was about. And I didn't want to.

I wanted mystery. I wanted answers. I desperately yearned for a larger conversation with somebody . . . larger. Most people were so boring. Society was so lost. The day-to-day grind of making money to survive was degrading and soul killing. Where was there any light? Where was genuine guidance without ulterior motives? Where was wisdom? Where could man and womankind find hope? Not the desperate hope born out of pain and despair—but the hope that comes from knowing there is a path out of the darkness?

My body began to shake and tears started from my eyes.

I wanted this—wanted what was happening with this . . . man? God? Thought form? Illusion? I wanted more from life. I had asked for more, loudly and often, and here it was . . . everything I'd ever wanted and oh, so much more being handed to me on a plate. And what had I done? Had I been equal to the opportunity? No! I'd sunk beneath the waves of my own fears and doubts and smallness.

My fist clenched on the countertop beside my forgotten glass of water. What did Marianne Williamson once say? *It's not our darkness that frightens us but our Light.*

I dashed the tears from my eyes and looked out the French doors.

Apollo had every reason to be angry with me. He was the God of Light for heaven's sake—the template for intelligence and higher consciousness. And I'd let a bunch of stupid talk about vampires and some old Greek woman's superstitions get the better of me, running roughshod over what, in the deepest places in my heart, I knew was the truth: that Apollo was who he said he was, that my own desires and dreams had manifested squarely into my life and that it was up to me to put my Big Girl pants on in order to be equal to whatever the task at hand actually was.

I squared my shoulders and took a few deep breaths.

*Nothing like a good, self-administered bitch slap to put things in perspective.* And with that thought, I picked up my glass and walked outdoors to join Apollo.



He eyed me warily as I sat down. Which surprised me. I figured he'd tracked the whole storm in the bedroom and kitchen by remote view and would now be up to speed.

He shook his head. “Your thoughts when we are not together should be your own. I should never have pried yesterday. I am . . . sorry.”

Apology didn't come easily for him and I was touched by the effort. "No, I'm the one who's sorry," I said earnestly. "I was being incredibly stupid."

"No, no, you were right. We are an insufferably entitled lot and it is really not a fair contest . . ." he stopped.

"Between the gods and human beings?" I had the grace to laugh. "Hey, we play along swallowing the whole unworthiness thing." I shook my head. "It's easier thinking you're nothing. That way you're never disappointed in yourself."

We were silent, not looking at each other.

Two raucous crows flipped past overhead, black wings beating the air. I still couldn't get used to Greek crows with their buff-colored bodies and strange calls. A third crow joined the pair and all three circled the house before dropping down to settle on the lawn in front of us, heads cocking back and forth, watching us, beady-eyes curious.

"λίγο αγγελιοφόροι," Apollo whispered, smiling.

"What?"

"Little messengers."

Of course. The crow was one of Apollo's sacred birds, along with the hawk, the raven and the swan.

"When I was a little girl there were always lots of crows around. They'd sit in a row up on the telephone lines and hang around in the trees of our yard. I used to try to talk to them and thought they had very important things to tell me if only I could speak their language." I laughed, remembering my mother's worried expression as she watched me sitting patiently in the yard mimicking the cawing noises I heard, hoping for a reply. "Everybody said they were pests. But I didn't believe them. I thought crows were grand and wise."

The three on the lawn hopped closer, clucking softly.

“They were my first connection to you,” said Apollo.

I turned to him questioningly.

He cleared his throat. “It was a way to be close without arousing any suspicions.”

“What?”

“I could not just show up in your yard,” he explained. “Your family would have rightly called the police.”

My mouth sagged open.

“You have a thing for hawks too, don’t you? You see them everywhere.”

“I almost took up falconry,” I whispered.

“And you think it is a coincidence that your mother gave birth a month early so you were born under the protection of the lion?”

*Apollo’s sacred animal.*

“And it is another coincidence that you compose on the harp and are attracted to medical subjects and mysticism, I suppose?” He shook his head, smiling. “And Delphi was the first place you traveled in the world when you were what, nineteen?”

I was shocked. *He knows so much about me!*

Apollo’s temple was a place I’d dreamed of ever since I first read about it in grade school. Greek mythology had captured my mind so completely I ended up with a double major in college between English and archaeology. My parent’s gift of a three-week trip through Greece at age nineteen, although I had been accompanied by my mother, had been the highlight of my young life.

Apollo chuckled softly. “You were so curious and filled with life. One of the hardest things I’ve ever done was not talk with you then.” His eyes held a distant look. “I remember you

walking around my temple barefoot the whole time so you could connect more deeply with the energies of the past. I think that is how you explained it to your mother?”

“And I smoked cigarettes the whole time and had to keep asking her to ‘Step on that would you please mom?’ every time I dropped a butt on the ground.”

“Never once stopping to think you were desecrating my holy precinct with your trash.”

*Ooops. I thought. Filthy habit.*

“Hmmm,” he agreed.

“Back in those days you could walk through the amphitheater,” I said wistfully. “I remember sitting on the top row one evening at sunset, waiting for all the tourists to leave so I could have the place to myself.”

“And you did the same thing this time,” he said.

“What?”

“You came and sat just outside the ropes almost exactly where you sat forty-one years ago. And the guards had to fetch you at closing—just like before.”

“Oh, my God. That’s right,” I murmured, awed at how patterns repeat themselves. “So, why didn’t you approach me the first time?” *Back when I was young.* I couldn’t keep the thought from taking form even though it was silly and I already knew the answer.

He sighed. “You were not ready. You were so naïve . . . so willing to take the world at face value. So programmed by the world itself. So . . .”

“Ignorant.” I supplied. “And pliable.”

“Yes.” He nodded.

“You would have blown me away,” I said bleakly.

“I would have destroyed you,” he replied bluntly.

What could I say to that? He was right. But then I suddenly realized he was only partially right. “We destroy ourselves, Apollo,” I said, mildly. “Sometimes we just have help.”

It was the first time I’d spoken his name.

He looked at me squarely. “That we do, Ekateríni. That we do.”

There was more to his agreement than just words. A veritable avalanche of meaning lay behind them and for a little while Apollo just sat there, hands folded across his flat belly, looking out to sea. Then he heaved a great sigh. “You have no idea how convoluted the path to destruction can be.”

His words lay heavy upon the air. Finally, he threw his hands up in resignation. “Where to begin?” He looked at me wretchedly. “How do I tell you this?”

“Tell me what?” I asked, growing alarmed.

He sat there, clearly at a loss as to what to say. The crows, feeling our distraction, croaked their goodbyes and flew away.

“Some people start at the beginning when they write a story,” I prompted, softly. “Some start in the middle. Some skip around writing whatever parts come to mind and then glue it all together.” I pulled my chair closer to the coffee table and Apollo. “Me? I’m boringly methodical. I start with chapter one and plod on through to the end, one step at a time.”

He nodded abstractedly, then shrugged and started talking. “Since we began our conversation, have you not wondered how an Ideal—a pure idea such as myself—came to take human form?”

I was confused. “You told me at Delphi.” I cast my mind back to that conversation in the sun on the slopes of Mount Parnassus—a conversation that seemed like a million years ago. “I was surprised you were physical and you said something like, ‘What kind of template for mortality would I be if I could not take mortal form?’ . . . or something like that.”

“That is what I said.” He paused. “I lied.”

“You what?”

“I dodged the truth because in that moment you were not ready to hear it.”

“What . . . and now I am?” I asked, sarcastically.

He nodded. “The truth is . . . well, we have touched upon it already.”

“We have?”

He made a sweeping motion with his hands indicating his self, “I am a perfect example of how the most pristine precise creation, once put into motion, can run away with itself and produce unexpected forms and derivative creations.”

???

“And you . . . you . . .” he jumped out of his chair and started to pace the patio. “You say how easy it is for you as a human to feel worthless. To feel as if you are nothing. Nothing!” He groaned, hands clenched. “What a foul joke! And by the gods who made you feel that way? Eh? *We* did.” He thumped his chest angrily. “And you know why?” He stopped in front of me, glaring down. “Because we were jealous of humanity and ultimately feared you.”

“What? B-but that doesn’t make any sense,” I said.

“No? Ekateríni, I was created to be the ideal of the perfection of masculine beauty and the functioning of the masculine principle through the intelligence of higher mind. But I am a mere blueprint . . . whereas *you*. Good God, woman, don’t you see? *You*—man and woman—are the house all the blueprints were created for . . . the temple through which the divine can shine in bright fullness.”

He stopped, distraught at my confounded look, running a hand through his heat-dampened curls.

“Humans are designed to be creators just as Source itself is creative. Yes, everything ever created evolves and, in a sense, everything creates because it is one with Source. Even rocks dream and have consciousness. But humans were intended to be more than just animals. You were designed to learn and evolve and eventually understand who you are so you could become a conscious creator and take a full part in creation itself.”

He shook his head wonderingly. “Even when you dream at night you spin new forms into life. You cannot help creating any more than I can help being beautiful. It is what you are. And just as humans write characters in books and create songs and paintings and civilizations . . . just as your scientists and computer people are now experimenting with what you call artificial intelligence, which will, by the way, be the next derivative intelligence created in this part of your galaxy,” he bowed his head and I could no longer see his eyes. “So you created me.”

“Excuse me?” I was sure I hadn’t heard him correctly.

“Humanity created all the gods and goddesses—the whole pantheon and more besides.”

I leaned back in my chair. “I don’t get it.” I said flatly. “How?”

“You are spirit, Ekateríni. Consciousness. God, if you will. And once God comes into form it starts its own creative processes. But you got lost in the overwhelming sensory overload of physical existence. You did not know who and what you really are. You still do not.”

Abruptly he started to pace the patio. “You got lost and became frightened and confused. And in your confusion you unconsciously invested all your considerable psychic power—all your thoughts and emotion—into worshipping and placating forces outside you.

“You turned around and made gods out of the very Ideals that helped birth you. You invested *us* with independent life and eventually, over eons of time, gave us the power to take form. You made the gods you believed in real by worshipping and fearing them.” He stopped once again in front of my chair and looked down at me, copper eyes bleak. “And you are still doing it.”

I stared back at him, eyes wide. *Holy shit!!* My mind spun, grasping for something solid and rational and all I could find was wheels within wheels within wheels . . .

“Ezekiel’s vision was an excellent visual representation of what he realized about the nature of reality,” Apollo said, calming down. Taking a long breath, he exhaled slowly. And as the tension left his body, his eyes softened. “You look like you are drowning.”

“I feel like I’m drowning,” I admitted, looking up at him helplessly. “I don’t know what to say. I don’t know where to even begin to go with this.”

“Perhaps some food would help?” he asked hopefully.

*Food?* I laughed semi-hysterically. “You tell me we created the gods that have been lording it over us for thousands of years and ask me if I want to eat?”

He shrugged, looking miserable. “Ekateríni, what can I say? This is one of the things I came back to explain. It is time the conspiracy of silence and the gods’ power over you is broken. I have risked much to do this. And I did not know how to tell you except to prepare you as best I could and then . . . tell you.”

“Uh . . . a little late aren’t you?”

“How do you mean?”

I laughed humorlessly. “I hate to be the one to break it to you, Apollo. But you guys have been out of power here for quite some time.”

He shook his head dismissively. “There are other gods, Ekateríni. And they are very real and their influence over humanity today is extremely powerful . . . and completely self-serving.”

Shivers ran up my arms and neck. Mutely I looked up at him standing before me, arms dangling at his sides, face naked, as honest and vulnerable as could possibly be. And it was that, more than anything else, that allowed me to accept what he’d just told me.

Not understand it. But accept it.

The bombshell he'd just dropped was too big, too otherworldly, too overwhelming to be immediately absorbed. Nor could I connect to it on a personal level. I was, truth be told, numb. Plus, I had the feeling I'd only been allowed to see the tip of the iceberg.

I shivered again.

"Come. Let me cook you something." He reached out a hand. I took it gratefully and he hauled me to my feet. The contact was warm, his touch comforting rather than electric.

"You cook?" I asked, dazed, letting go of his hand. *Of all the silly things to ask at this point.*

He bowed, hand on his smooth tanned chest. "I am a blueprint of many talents," he replied.

"Better watch it or I'll start believing you really are the ideal man." I laughed shakily, and led the way back into the house to the kitchen.

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