

TITAN

From Earth's Past A Hero Rises

by

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PRELUDE

With a look of determination on his face he continued his ascent, wiping the sweat from his brow, breathing in the clean mountain air. Despite how far he had travelled and how hot and tired he was, he had never felt more alive than right at this moment. Still, he knew he would have to rest soon or he was going to collapse because of the way he kept pushing himself. Although, every time he felt the need to just sit down and drink from his canteen for a few moments, something that he could not explain or understand compelled him to get up and keep moving. In fact, it was that same feeling of compulsion and need that he had been experiencing for the past six months off and on that he was feeling now; the only difference being that it was now stronger than ever, and growing with every step.

At first, he had just ignored it figuring that he was working too hard and his nerves were getting to him, but more and more he felt as if something or...someone, as odd as that sounded...was calling to him, a tiny noise in the back of his head like a faint whisper, not that that made any sense. The only thing that seemed to be constantly calling to him was the endless amount of work that was piled up on his desk that always seemed to get higher no matter how many hours he put in. But, as the weeks were flying by, he felt the need to just...get away. It was not just the feeling that most people had of needing to take a vacation, lying around and not being in any way productive for a short time while they recuperated, but something more. Usually, his overwhelming sense of needing to keep busy and the work ethic that was instilled in him so early on by his father made even the thought of a vacation unfathomable, but he needed to leave. More so, he needed to leave now, so here he was...and he loved every adventurous minute of it! If he had known that this was what people were doing all the time whenever they spoke of "getting away from it all," he would have done it a lot sooner. Actually, that wasn't really true. He was enjoying the adventure and the thrill of being outdoors and out of the office, but he knew that the only reason he was really here was because of the strange feeling that was compelling him to come here was stronger than ever, so strong that he would have not been able to resist it any longer if he had even tried. Well, that was fine because he was having a much deserved break. And on top of that, he had always wanted to visit Athens, Greece.

His father and he used to make a habit of hiking and mountain climbing when they were younger, but since he had died ten years ago the compulsion to do it had pretty much fallen by the wayside. Now he was so busy he usually just relaxed by exercising four or five times a week to work off the daily stress he experienced to stay healthy and strong. As good as that might be, however, it was nothing compared to actually being in the wild and exploring the tallest mountain in Greece. At 9,570 feet, Mt. Olympus was one of the tallest mountains in Europe. Practically as soon as he had checked into his hotel at Plaka and taken a shower, eaten a nice meal and had a good night's rest, he had started to ascend the mountain, his pack weighing on his back of things he might need on his trip.

As he was continuing his climb, he stopped and took some time to realize how quiet it was. He was totally alone and the quiet was absolute, the beautiful scenery awe inspiring and the wonderful smell of the outdoors filling his nostrils, almost making his head swim.

"Oh, my God," he whispered with a smile of wonder and satisfaction as he took it all in. The breathtaking beauty of his surroundings mixed with the stillness of nature was truly magnificent. Being a native New Yorker, he had become so accustomed to the noise around him, he had

forgotten, if he had ever realized in the first place, how wonderful a noiseless environment could be, so peaceful and serene. “This is what I’ve been putting off for so long? What an idiot I am!”

With a satisfied grin, he continued with his need to move on until he arrived at his destination, wherever it was taking him. Even though he had a map in his pack, he was letting the voice – more and more, that was what it was beginning to feel like, a voice – guide him. After awhile of continued movement, he noticed something in the distance in front of him. With a perplexed expression, he walked towards it until he was standing on the outside of it.

It was a cave.

He took the map from his pack and looked along the trail that he was following and did not see any kind of cave listed. Apparently, he had discovered something that had been missed by whoever had made the map. Either that or it had just not been labeled.

Then, at that precise moment, a sharp sensation shot through his head that made him gasp. He started rubbing his temples with the first finger and thumb of his right hand.

He immediately realized what it was. The growing feeling that he had been experiencing all these months and that had compelled him to come here was now the strongest that it had ever been. Something...someone...wanted him to go into the cave. He was sure of it. The answer to everything he had been wondering about was now just a few feet in front of him.

“Well, Harry, adventure is why you’re here, so let’s get to it,” he whispered as he peered into the cave and then walked inside. He was about to set about making a makeshift torch since it seemed the appropriate thing to do when entering a dark place, especially an unfamiliar dark place, and then realized that even though he was currently a good distance away from the entrance of the cave he could see into it clearly, the walls visibly outlined. It was almost as if the light from the inside of the cave, something that made him more than a tad uncomfortable, was beckoning to him. It also made him wonder what might be inside it. Still, he told himself that this was what he had journeyed halfway around the world for.

Tentatively, he entered the cave, it seeming the perfect height for his six foot frame, and proceeded to walk, his eyes and ears alert for anything out of the ordinary, the only sound the crunch of his hiking boots on the dirt. Then, he came to the back wall. Looking around, there was nothing out of the ordinary to see at all. No markings, no alternate routes, no artifacts, nothing. A dead end. The only thing he did find was that the feeling in his head was stronger than ever, but there was absolutely nothing to see. Apparently, the trip he had taken with such conviction and dedication to find the answer to a riddle that had been troubling him had all been for naught.

“Well, this isn’t good,” he said to nobody. He looked around again and saw something that made him do a double take. There was now an image on the wall that he had somehow missed before. Moving towards it and inspecting it he saw that it was a very beautiful and detailed representation of the Earth, the various colors of it practically leaping from it. “Beautiful, but not what I think I’m looking for.”

“Hello, Harrison Richards.”

Startled, he immediately turned around and looked in surprise at what was in front of him.

Standing before him was the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen. She had long, flowing blonde hair, green eyes and a curvaceous figure that featured a full bosom. She was dressed in a beautiful green flowing gown that left one of her shoulders bare. There was a welcome expression on her face as though she knew him, had in fact been waiting for him. However, he did not know her. A woman who was this incredibly beautiful he would be sure to remember, of that he was certain!

“Uh, hello. You startled me. I’m sorry, do I know you?” he asked politely.

With a loving smile on her lips, she slowly approached him, looking into his blue eyes and stroking his dark hair. He could not help but notice how soft and delicate her fingers felt when they caressed him, almost hypnotic, his knees becoming weak. Standing so close to her there was a sweet aroma coming from her that was absolutely radiant, a scent that he could not place. In fact, there was something about her that was so stimulating he was finding it hard to concentrate, and it was not just because of her obvious beauty. There was something about her that was simply just...unexplainable. He felt that he was in the presence of something that he simply could not put into words.

“I’ve been waiting for you, Harrison. I’ve been waiting for you for so long. I love you,” she said in a melodious tone.

“I’m sorry? Uh, not that I’m not enjoying the attention, but I think you have me confused with someone else. I don’t think I know you and, believe me, if I did, I would never forget someone like you!”

She exhaled a small whisper of a laugh at his bewilderment and then, without saying another word, put her arms around him and kissed him on the lips.

Startled at the way things were going...and how well they were going...he was not sure how to react, so he did what came natural whenever a man was in the presence of a beautiful woman who was showing a more than casual interest in him. As strange as all of this seemed, as strange as all of it was, he felt that he did know her somehow, that she was the reason he was here, that she was the reason he even was.

He placed his arms around her and held her close as he returned her kiss, and for the first time in his life felt truly alive.