

Queen of Sparta: Out of the Lion's Shadow

Costas Komborozos



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The queen tightened her grip around her hooded scarlet cloak and made her way up the cold, snowy mountain. For a brief moment, she shut her eyes and reopened them. There was a shattering of starlight. Then the light became a sea of bright white. For a moment, her view of the mountain was punctuated by glimpses of a scarlet sea. The scarlet sea roared as a group of warriors rushed toward a dark army. Then Gorgo watched the scene fade into the familiar whiteness that overwhelmed her senses once again. The mountain stood tall and rigid before her, the sound of the wintry air rushing maddeningly into her ears. She felt as though a future birthed by impending war were suddenly screaming to life, and that she was hearing the sound of a Spartan child's heart as all innocence fled. Gorgo remained firm as the wind began to relent. Her cloak nearly wavered in the frosty wind, but she quickly tightened it again with hands that were nearly frozen. A part of the whiteness reached blissfully toward the heavens. And then she saw it. The lion. It moved with ferocious speed up the bright white mountain. It leaped over snow dunes and climbed higher and higher. It reminded her of her beloved Leonidas, the Lion of Sparta. The lion roared but then looked back at her. Gorgo maintained her eyes on the lion as its eyes remained fixated on her. Then it resumed its perilous course. It moved defiantly over the bright vertical mass. The lion reached far beyond where she could reach. It reached the peak in seconds, looking down at the near-endless depth of Mount Parnassus. The lion observed the carcass beside it. It was the carcass of another wild animal that somehow rose to this majestic height. The lion looked away from the bones and maintained its eyes on the glorious sight beyond the lofty peak. Then it peered down the whitewashed length of snow and appeared to wonder if it could make its way down again or whether it would share the same fate as the lifeless leopard-like creature that perished on the peak long ago. Then the lion looked away from the depths below. It remained fixated on its position on the peak. I imagined the lion wondering if it would have more luck than the wild animal that died on the peak. The other animal may have seen that climbing back down the mountain would be impossible, and that it was trapped on the peak. The lion remained still as a mass of snowy wind obscured my view of it. A surge of whiteness erased it completely from her view. The queen imagined herself peering down the unparalleled height of the peak one day. She saw herself moving steadily upwards and gain proximity to the height the lion had reached. But the lion was no longer in her sights. Then she saw the Oracle of Delphi. Pythia emerged from the temple and approached her. A vaporous haze followed her as she drifted serenely before her. Her eyes shone brightly and revealed her future. "The sea will flow with scarlet," she said as she channeled the divine energy of Apollo. Then Pythia vanished.



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