



NEW RELEASE

THE SPHINX

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THE SPHINX



Some stories are told, others are not, the best ones are rewritten.

Stories are told of the sphinx—a monster with the head of a woman, the body of a lioness, the wings of an eagle, and a tail tipped with the head of a serpent. This beast was told to have been made to guard the entrance to the Greek city of Thebes. For each traveler to cross her path, a riddle was presented. If they could answer it correctly, access would be granted. What was her riddle?

“What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three in the evening?” The price to pay for answering the riddle incorrectly, which of course they all did, was not a simple denial of entry to Thebes. Instead of turning them away, the sphinx, monster that was, strangled them with her tail and devoured them whole.

The story goes that when it finally came to pass that someone could answer her riddle and the consecutive ones to follow, she committed suicide. What else was a girl to do? Some say she threw herself down from the high rocks and fell to her death, while others say that she devoured herself, subjecting herself to the same punishment she dished out to all those who had failed before, a talented feat.

However, the question remains ... what really happened to her?

INSPIRATION

The story of The Sphinx was inspired by Jessica's continued curiosity about the rarely mentioned creature from the Greek mythology. Often times her mind would twist the tale and create new origins for the beast who came to what she felt was an untimely death. There was so much more to be told. Jessica could see it and she aimed to figure out what it was. From that curiosity, Asa was born.

"She was young, and full of hope. She was a lover who she wanted companionship. That's all. She was naïve because she thought she could simply take it. She was a fool. I am not her anymore. Centuries of life have changed me in a way that is irreversible. I'm flawed, jaded, angry, and in some ways, more lost than I've ever been."

Jessica imagined the Sphinx to be a woman scorned. Someone who would eventually need to seek her revenge. The question was, who hurt her and why? The story that develops is intense, unexpected, and brings an array of twists that fans of Jessica have come to anticipate!

CHAPTER ONE

Standing atop the crown of the great green beauty gifted by France to the Americas, she stared down on the world, which had changed so much since the day she'd staged her death on the cliff outside of Thebes. Gone was the time that she had to run and hide, living in the shadows to avoid the attention of the gods. He, like the others, was no longer a threat to her, having fallen from their undeserved grace, and she could roam free again.

Those stories, though they worked in her favor, told of her in such a terrible light. A beast, a monster—and of course that was how he would want her to be remembered. That was the entire point of what he'd done to her. Because of his actions, and his selfishness, her light was diminished and replaced by hatred and ugliness. No one would ever know that she was in fact beauty personified, and that because of her beauty she'd been changed. A curse was placed on her, which transformed her appearance into something no one could love. As if that was not enough, he sent her to Thebes, a land not many dared to venture to. All of this for the purpose of stopping the world from finding out about his time with her, to make sure that the one he really intended to be with never knew she existed in his life.

She was done with hiding in the shadows. Centuries had passed, and in that time, her strength had grown a hundred times over. He would be made to face what he'd done to her. If she had to cut down a thousand gods to do it, she would.

A lesser known fact about the sphinx, one that even she herself hadn't always known, was that when she devoured those who failed to answer her riddle correctly, she absorbed their power. In the beginning, she hadn't realized just how the act affected her, but over the years of her sentencing, she learned that with each failed response and each meal, she became stronger. It wasn't until she came face-to-face with a witch disguised as a poor woman, that she learned just how much of a gift this was. The woman was there with the intention to do what she thought was an act of justice. Her plan was to launch an attack on Cadmus, the King of Thebes, who the old woman said had betrayed his own people to serve an unworthy god.

The sphinx thought it unfortunate that the woman was unable to solve her riddle. She would have loved to piss off the god who betrayed her by allowing his precious king to be murdered. It was her curse, however, to require the riddle be answered before she could ever permit a traveler safe passage. The witch, though bold and with power, was unable to solve it. Though she fought, attempting to use magic to defeat the monster who denied her access to Thebes, she failed and she too—like those before her—was devoured. After the witch was defeated, the sphinx turned to retreat to her nest to wait for another to dare to approach the boundaries.

With each step, she felt the change in herself as the energy stored in the body of the witch moved throughout her and gave her a high like one she had never experienced before. Content with her full belly and looking forward to enjoying the high of her meal, she headed back to her claimed space and hoped for an easy night of rest.

A cavern at the base of the mountain had become her home, filled with items she'd collected from those who became meals for her. No reason for good things to go to waste. The inside of the cavern was loaded with jewels, tapestries, and clothing she couldn't dream of wearing. There was even a corner that held relics she didn't really care for but would often take her rage out on. The shattered pieces proved to bring her comfort as she used her tail to fashion them in new ways. She stood in front of a mirror, another gift from a traveler that wasn't large enough to reflect her entire frame. Each night she looked at her deformed body and with a sigh, she made the useless wish that she could return to her former self. The spell placed on her to hide her beauty was still intact. Each time she passed the mirror and whispered the wish to no one at all, it called her anger to grow.

A flicker of light caught in the corner of her eye caused her to turn back to her reflection and find herself, the way she remembered, before he thought it okay to take it away. Sun-kissed skin in milk chocolate tones that shimmered as if dusted with gold and stood in strong complement to the thick, dark hair which fell around her frame. Her face was no longer ugly, distorted by magic and anger. Returned were her soft features, alluring plump lips, and eyes that reflected the depths of the ocean. Her body was once again her own—no lion's frame or eagle wings, no tail that hissed at her when she went too long without feeding. She danced and laughed, happy to have finally broken the curse, but her celebration was short-lived.

As she came down from a leaping twirl that sent her flying in the air, the strong legs of a lion steadied her landing. The change was not lasting, but it was telling. The disappointment, however, was suffocating. How could this be? How could this change not last? Afraid to view herself, but needing to know what she was, she returned to the mirror. As the last of her real face faded away, hidden by the curse yet again, tears fell from her eyes. Wings wrapped around the thick body that replaced the one she longed for, and she did her best to hug away the pain of her defeat. For a moment, she was herself again. For a moment.

It took two days before clarity returned to her mind and the epiphany found its way to the forefront. This was a spell; it was something unnatural that had been forced onto her. This could be broken, and she had proof. For the first time she looked at herself, cursed reflection and all, and there was excitement in her eyes. There was so much more to her than she had ever known; so much that she wouldn't have discovered if not for the one who broke her heart. Quick to realize the advantage that had been given to her, perhaps by chance, she devised a plan. She wouldn't live the rest of her life shackled by this curse and the god who hoped to keep her hidden. She would find a way to get enough power, enough magic, to rid herself of the curse for good!

While he was celebrated, the one who took away her freedom, lifted by those who worshipped him and the other gods, she retreated into the obscurities of life. She would let him have his praise and continue to keep her existence hidden. It wasn't as if he would be searching for her. He hadn't attempted to investigate the reports of her diminishing appearances, or even come when the stories of her death rose to the heavens. Foolish of her, but she hung around, waiting to see if he would.

He'd all but forgotten about the woman whose life he'd ruined all for his own selfish means. Her outrage was no longer a crazed display meant to torment those who lived in or dared to attempt to visit the city of Thebes. She became more strategic in her targets. Those of power, or strength, they were her prey. Magical beings, but no one too high in their ranking. She was playing a long game. Settling for the lesser-thans, and avoiding anyone too powerful, made sure that no unnecessary attention came to her. For the sake of keeping up her appearances, she would still pick off the random traveler here and there. If she went missing, he would send someone else, another beast to replace her, or perhaps to hunt her down. The last thing she needed was for there to be a new monster put in place to ruin her plans.

Once strong enough and confident in the power she'd taken, the sphinx moved forward with her plans to escape the life that had been forced on her. Full of the magic she'd absorbed from carefully chosen targets, she convinced a traveler who crossed her that he had solved her riddle fair and square, and as punishment for her failure, she could no longer live. It worked. Oedipus, who would eventually be celebrated for many things including ridding Thebes of their pest, went on to become the new King of Thebes and she was free.

She lived no more as the sphinx, but she could never be her true self again. The reflection in the mirror, the face she longed for, would still be hidden behind a veil. Only this time it was a veil of her choosing. She couldn't risk returning to her old visage or the life she had before. The last thing she wanted was a run-in with her former lover. There were few others who knew of her, but she feared that he would find her. She created a new identity for herself. The new face was one that could make her smile, and one he would never recognize. She was gone and not one soul mourned her. Not even the one who claimed to have loved her.

Asa was the name she assumed. Over time, she blended into the thread of humanity, taking on different identities and fading into the background when necessary. It wasn't hard to stay hidden when no one was looking for you. All she had to do was remain careful, and make sure not to bring too much attention to her dealings. She continued to consume those of power—those who, like her, wouldn't be missed—and with each one, her power grew more. As the gods of Olympus fell, with the human population losing their faith and their idolization for the ones who did more to torment them than to protect them, Asa rejoiced. She would be free of the shadows! She could live the life she desired. She could feed on those who were more powerful. That is exactly what she would do ... because unlike everyone else, she was no fool. Faith or not, gods were eternal. They would return, and when they did, she would be ready for them.

The Sphinx
is available on
Amazon.com

ABOUT JESSICA



Award winning and USA Today Bestselling author, Jessica Cage was born and raised in Chicago, IL. Writing has always been a passion for her. She dabbles in artistic creations of all sorts but at the end of the day, it's the pen that her hand itches to hold. Jessica had never considered following her dream to be a writer because she was told far too often "There is no money in writing." So she chose the path most often traveled. During pregnancy, she asked herself an important question. How would she be able to inspire her unborn son to follow his dreams and reach for the stars, if she never had the guts to do it herself? Jessica decided to take a risk and unleash the plethora of characters and their crazy adventurous worlds that had previously existed only in her mind, into the realm of readers. She did this with hopes to inspire not only her son but herself. Inviting the world to tag along on her journey to become the writer she has always wanted to be. She hopes to continue writing and bringing her signature Caged Fantasies to readers everywhere.

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