

TEN YEARS OF ORIGINAL FICTION!

SEVERAL PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED STORIES!

What readers have had to say:

"Love some good mythology mixing... 'Sexy, dark-haired British man' – LOL!"

"I thoroughly enjoyed this. Lol. Wish I could find out what happened next or why he's now immortal but I guess that's all part of the mystery."

"Interesting concept... Fun. I like it."

"Excellent read. Engaging throughout. Your words brought the story to life and had me enjoying being in the magical realm you created. Kudos!"

"Kind of sad and whimsical, I definitely had to look [the painting] up."

"Ooh, ghosts. I like!"

"Very spooky, gives SPN [Supernatural] vibes."

"Fantastic story. The descriptions and cast of characters [were] great. Very well written and had me enjoying every word. The thoughts about and banter between Loki and Lucifer was excellent! Long live Fool's Con!"

“Apollo, the Sun”

An homage to modern chroniclers of classic mythology

Greetings, mortals. Now I know what it says up there, but don't get the wrong idea. I'm not actually the sun... just the god of the sun, among other things. I'm sun adjacent. It's rolled into the wide purview of duties I took on when Helios (sorry, buddy) got the boot and his solar responsibilities fell to me. It makes a certain kind of sense. The sun is an important, all-powerful force. So am I. Case closed.

Hearing the name *Apollo*, I'm sure you were expecting an awe-inspiring, melt-your-face-off, possesses the strength of one hundred men kind of immortal. And while all that is true, I'm not limited to one manifestation. Sure, some days I like to go old school, speak in verse, and smite pesky mortals (no offense) who don't offer the proper prayers or who insult classic rock. But I've evolved with the times. I know that the world down below Mount Olympus isn't the same as it was a couple thousand years ago. So, most days, I like to think I'm pretty chill. Still awesome, but an almost regular guy too.

You may not realize it, depending on your belief system, but I still pull a lot of weight in the theological community. The sun rising – that's me. Well, me and physics. And prophecy, that's a big one. I used to have tons of priestesses taking down my oracle's predictions and offering them to pilgrims petitioning for guidance. Of course, nowadays most of my prophetic disciples are scorned as charlatans and two-bit fortune-tellers. Never mind. Medicine, though. Also me... and doctors. But that's my point. I inspire them to cure disease and treat nasty sick people. And occasionally create plagues. But only when humanity deserves it. Or one of the four Winds throws my arrow off-course. However, that hardly ever happens. The last time was waayyy back in 2020.

Ah, but no one flourishes under my inspiration more than artists.

Yup. I'm the god of music and poetry too. My divine will is what drives writers to write, singers to sing. Some of those take my whispers in an... unexpected direction (cough, cough, disco). But all those who compose and create channel my essence. Essentially, they are my disciples, whether they know it or not. They owe much to their patron: *moi*. Some disciples are more devoted than others. Sure, not many will pray directly to me or burn offerings in my name, but anyone who experiences culture can attest that there are true artists and floppy sell-outs. Let's say that I favor one over the other. Whenever those passionate few look up into the heavens for inspiration, I feel their call and most of the time, I answer.

Oh, I remember so many desperate souls searching for an answer to the burning in their guts, the swirling mire in their minds. If they could just make it come out, it could be something amazing. So, I nudged them in the right direction. Homer was one of the first. That was back in the old days, when more people believed in us Olympians. Or maybe the world was just smaller, so it seemed like more. Homer was gifted with divine sight (which later resulted in his blindness – oops). What he saw often frightened him.

“Mighty Apollo,” he prayed, “Please tell me what I'm witnessing. Please help me make sense.” Come to think of it, he may have asked Athena first, since she's the goddess of wisdom. But Miss Know-

It-All was too busy strategizing a plan for some hero called Odysseus to fight in that squabble with the Trojans. Not my son, so I don't really remember. She didn't answer Homer, so I picked up the line.

"Homer, my friend. You're catching glimpses of the gods, the divine Olympians. Don't fear. We'll only destroy your sanity if you stare too long." This didn't reassure him so much when I told him. I tried a different idea. "Homer, you have an amazing voice, such a vibrant imagination. You should record everything you see. Experiences are much easier to comprehend in story form. Or epic poem, whatever you're comfortable with." He liked this suggestion better and got busy. Soon it spread to other Greeks. And they didn't just write poems. A lot of theater came out of ancient Greece too.

Since the good old days, I've had fewer actual disciples – the ones who tended my temples and deciphered my prophecies. As the millennia went on, more were like Homer, simply creators I tended to influence. One of particular note to this era came to my attention when one of my nine Muses – lesser musical gods – pointed him out.

"Right there, Apollo," she indicated, literally pointing down from the edge of a pavilion on Mount Olympus. We'd just finished rehearsing for a choir recital in honor of Zeus. A lot of the events held on Mount Olympus are in honor of Dad. He's used to getting attention, being the king of the gods.

"I think I see him." When I squinted, my vision enhanced like the Hubble Telescope. "Scrawny guy, round glasses, kind of bowl-cut hair?"

The Muse nodded. "John Lennon. He is in a band with three others, all from that little island, Britannia."

I nodded. "That's England. Hasn't been called Britannia since the Romans. But I see who you are talking about. Think he deserves a little divine intervention?"

"Maybe. Actually, they're doing pretty well on their own. They might just need a tiny nudge," she said.

"Hmm. What about skipping across the pond? I have a good feeling about the music scene in America. I'll drop a couple television guys a line, get Lennon and his pals set up with a spectacular debut."

"What about Ed Sullivan?"

"Good idea. He did great with Elvis. That kid was going places."

"Too bad the American TVs cut out his hips," the Muse pouted. I tended to agree. Back to business.

"I'll buzz down to see Ed. Keep working on those harmonies while I'm gone," I told her. She rolled her eyes and returned to the other Muses. Such disrespect for their choir leader. And I'd just given her the honor of suggesting a musician for me to patron.

See what I mean? Without me, would the British invasion have even happened? You think Mick and Keith met by accident? Everywhere you look, my influence is at work. It really is exhausting being such a far-reaching god.

Of course, even I've made a few mistakes, as my sister is only too eager to point out. Mostly, I blame my muses. Or improperly offered prayers. Or the sheer unpredictability of humankind. I'm sorry for Bieber, by the way. Artemis never lets me forget that one. But don't worry, he won't get back in my favor, even if he invented me a new instrument. Well, probably. Still, the momentum of fame is difficult to halt. I blame mortals. But enough about that.

Artemis is always telling me I'm behind the times, sponsoring the wrong people. She'd have me boost the creative careers of twelve-year-old girls exclusively. I have to admit that thanks to Disney, there are more of those flooding the artistic demographic. But I'm slower to change than my little (technically, we're twins) sis. She adjusted her expectations of the maidens who followed her soon after the fall of Rome. I didn't stop expecting burnt offerings until the Middle Ages. And just when mortals needed an artistic guide the most. I had to go without disciples until the Renaissance. The same is true now. While the world moves on to digital media and popstars, I'm still rolling analog, listening to hairband on a Walkman. A solid gold, Hephaestus-crafted Walkman. It has great sound.

I remember one night a few years ago, Artemis came running up to me thinking she'd discovered the next big star, a girl worthy of Olympian influence. Par for the course, she sneered at my washed-out skinny jeans, high tops, padded gold vest, and neon aviators. I was going for a Marty McFly look, but more...me. Ever aware of current trends among pre-teen girls, she was wearing black leggings, a fitted shirt over a sports bra, and sneakers. Her hair was pulled into a tight ponytail, and her bow was slung over one shoulder.

"Brother, I know what you're going to say, but hear me out."

I rolled my eyes. "Not another one, Arty. Remember how Britney Spears turned out? Leave the music to my Muses and me. Let's not tempt the Fates again."

Artemis winced. "Don't call me that. This one is different. I'm sure of it. She is exactly what I look for in my girls."

"Then take her into your care. Help her win an archery competition or maybe become an astronaut. She can travel to the moon or something."

"She's determined to be a musician. I have a duty to help maidens. And you have a duty to help me, brother. I haven't felt this strongly since Joan of Arc."

"That looney? Not a great example. She was martyred," I pointed out.

"Well, it isn't my fault she put her faith in the wrong divinity. But she never broke her vows of maidenhood, and she was an excellent warrior."

"She was a teenager. She died before she could get too boy crazy. But I can see you aren't going to let this go. What's the girl's name?"

"Taylor Swift."

I shrugged. "Never heard of her."

Artemis shot me a look. "That's why she needs you. Make her famous, or whatever you do." She seemed really eager. Artemis hadn't taken many disciples in the modern age, despite being up to date on all the latest fashions and popular interests, and forcefully informing me of them. She claimed that even though she couldn't accept modern girls because of their tendency to leave maidenhood, or run from it rather, she still had an obligation to look after them and understand them. That meant fully embodying a twelve-year-old. I relented. Our mother, Leto, always was encouraging us to bond more, to work together on things like the lives of mortals.

"Fine, I'll give her a listen."

And I did. Personally, I found Ms. Swift a bit too soft and poppy, albeit in a singer-songwriter way in the beginning. She wasn't to my taste, but Artemis insisted she upheld all the ideals of her and her ancient huntresses, the perfect disciple for us to share. This was before Taylor wrote every song about boys. Artemis dropped that one quick, but once again, it was too late. She prospered. At least she provided me with ammunition the next time Arty complained about my old-school ways while she was looking to the next new thing.

That's why I don't let Artemis suggest disciples for me to patron too often. She's worse at it than the Muses, and less grateful to boot. We don't get a long most days. We're too different. Sure, we share archery, and celestial bodies in space (though the sun is far superior to the moon). But everything else sets us apart, and not just the decades between our tastes. She scorns romantic love, while I welcome it. She is in constant disagreement with our father, and often other Olympians. I try to agree with everyone, so long as their interests align with mine. And I tread carefully around Dad. He's cut me off a few too many times in the last few millennia to act otherwise. Still, I guess I love the squirt. More than my other godly siblings, anyway. Zeus has way too many kids.

I always knew I'd do anything for Artemis, but usually I don't have to. She can take care of herself. But I guess that's always true until it isn't. In roughly five thousand years, I can count on one hand the number of times I've needed to spring her from trouble. I've had many ancient enemies target her to get to me, few successfully, but only once in this easier going modern era has Artemis genuinely needed my help.

It all started with a hunter. Ever since that Orion debacle, she's had difficulty with male hunters, despite being goddess of the hunt herself. She can never get along with them and often leads them astray, protecting the animals and natural spaces they endanger. Though most hunters, of any gender, seem pretty careful of their actions, Artemis tends to assume the worst of men with guns or bows, thinking they'll follow in Orion's footsteps, hunting mercilessly and betraying her.

This particular hunter wasn't an ordinary mortal man, though. He was an automaton crafted with glowing mechanical eyes. More than ever, when she saw him, he reminded her of Orion and she pursued him deep into dense woods in North America. She wasn't sure if she was seeing an escaped spirit or projecting her own paranoia onto a living hunter, but she felt driven to stop him. She didn't

realize he was an automaton, created for precisely this purpose. It was only a matter of time before she went from huntress to prey.

“Hey, Hermes? Have you seen Artemis lately? It’s been a few weeks since I’ve heard from her and she’s nowhere on Olympus.”

Hermes shrugged. “Sorry, Apollo. Last I heard, she was somewhere in North America. But I haven’t delivered any messages to or from her in almost a month.”

I sighed. You’d think as the god of messengers and travelers, he’d have a little more insight about one missing Olympian sister. Like “somewhere in North America” really narrowed it down. I tried not to get too worried. Artemis is a big girl, most of the time. She’s thousands of years old, and usually a lot smarter than me. Not that I’ll ever admit to saying that.

After waving Hermes away, I decided to check Delos, our hometown. Leto, our mother, still lived on the island. I was reluctant to look there because Mom always complains that I don’t visit often enough, that I spend too much time lazing around Olympus or meddling among the mortals. She doesn’t understand how much my followers, those I lend patronage, need my inspiration to thrive. Human culture is a little beyond her, so if a few hundred years go by without artistic evolution or creation, she wouldn’t notice. It’s a point of contention between us.

Leto loves us equally, but she and Artemis share a special relationship. If Artemis was on Delos, I’d be interrupting another mother-daughter retreat. She likes to make sure we feel like individuals and sometimes bonds with us separately.

“Hey, Mom!” I called when I materialized on the shore of the island. I found her working in her garden. A surprised smile grew on her face.

“Son! Oh, it’s been too long since you came.” She rose from her knees and wrapped me in a tight hug. I tried not to shrug away. Moms never think their sons are too old for hugs, even if they are several thousand years old. After a moment, she leaned back and said, “What do you want?”

I was tempted to feel a little hurt. I didn’t only visit when I needed something. But the longer she looked at me, the more nervous I felt.

“You haven’t seen Artemis recently, have you?”

“No. Why? She’s not planning to stop by for another few months yet.” Then she grew suspicious. “What have you gotten her into?”

Now I really was hurt. “Me? Nothing. I just haven’t heard from her in a while and you know how she gets sometimes, going off on her own.”

Leto shrugged. “So? She’s a capable girl. And you two go decades without talking.” That was a bit of an exaggeration.

"Well, she was going to meet me a few weeks ago, for some uh..." I mumbled the rest, not willing to admit to my mom that Artemis offered me a few archery tips. I hadn't handled a bow myself in quite some time and Hera had one of her blasted Olympian Family picnics coming up. She'd love nothing more than to see me embarrassed during the archery competition, which I was obliged to participate in, being a god of archery and all. Hera loves to make fools of any of her step kids. Like I said, Zeus has way too many children. Not too many of them are with Hera. Anyway, Artemis, running around being the goddess of the hunt, used her archery skills a little more often.

"What was that, Apollo?" Leto pressed. I knew I wasn't getting out of talking.

"Um, ahem...archery practice. Artemis was going to meet me for archery practice. You know, for Hera's picnic." I winced at the last. Mom sniffed, annoyed. She wasn't invited.

"And she never met up with you? She might be on a hunt. Perhaps she lost track of time."

"I guessed that. But three weeks? Her hunts only last so long if she's tracking something dangerous. Or if something's gone wrong."

"You should ask her hand maidens, the Huntresses," she suggested.

I sighed. "Yeah, Mom. Arty doesn't really have Huntresses anymore. Mortals don't follow the old ways so much. Her disciples are more of an honorary, patron from afar nature these days." Leto didn't get out much.

"Well, I'm sure you will find her. Ask one of your oracles, maybe."

I felt like slapping myself upside the head. Why hadn't I thought of that? Sure, usually the oracles were meant to deliver prophecies to human heroes, not gods. But they were my oracles after all. I should be able to benefit too. Or as much as one could benefit from prophecies. They weren't always good news.

"Thanks, Mom. I should have thought to do that sooner." I hugged her briefly before walking back to the shore.

She nodded superiorly. "That's what moms are for, honey. Say hi to your sister when you find her."

I decided on the Oracle of Delphi, my most famous and most trustworthy oracle. A prophetic spirit living inside the body of a teenage girl, she wasn't too hard to find. The spirit is tied to its homeland in northern Greece, so the oracle also tends to live nearby the original sanctuary of Delphi. Currently, she resided in Mt. Parnassus Psychiatric Hospital. I guess randomly speaking words of ancient prophecy was no longer revered, just treated like schizophrenia. Common misdiagnosis, but the two require entirely different treatments (god of medicine).

I wracked my brain for the name of the current oracle. Zoe Anastas, that was it. She'd become the oracle at birth and would remain so until she was no longer a maiden. Not that she knew this. The oracle switches bodies often enough that I tend to lose track. Plus, it's a little awkward to materialize in front of

a young girl and state that she can now see the future. I've been pepper sprayed one too many times. But now I needed the oracle's help.

I stepped onto Earth as a Greek man in his early twenties, with dark skin and hair, and golden-brown eyes. I idly wondered if I bore any resemblance to Zoe. I'd only caught a glimpse of the girl in my mind when she'd had her first vision, several years before.

"Hello," I greeted the older woman sitting behind the hospital's front desk brightly. "I'm looking for Zoe Anastas' room. I'm her, uh, brother."

The woman studied me carefully. "Name?" she asked, speaking Greek. It was a little different from the ancient dialect but came to me as easily as any other language.

"Apollo," I answered immediately. "Um, Apollo Anastas?" I hoped she'd buy it.

"I didn't know Zoe had a brother, but then, I've only been here for a few months." I sighed in relief. "Sign in here, and again when you leave." The woman indicated a clipboard on the desk. I signed and looked up expectantly. "Room 104, down the hall, to the left. Does she know you're coming?"

"Uh, yes. Why?"

She shrugged. "The girl can be a little emotional." I nodded. It must be very frightening to learn the future. And have people think you're crazy. I face the same on Olympus, but for different reasons. And I'm a god. I felt a twinge of guilt for Zoe, even though I don't control the spirit of Delphi. It's still my oracle. I decided I'd try to help the girl, after I'd found Artemis.

Following the woman's directions, I found room 104 and knocked.

"Come in," a high-pitched voice answered.

I peaked in and found the girl sitting on a hospital bed fitted with colorful sheets and a quilt. The room was decorated how I pictured a young girl's room - posters on the walls, lots of colors, and tokens from home. Zoe wore regular clothes, though noticeably nothing with sharp edges or ties. Though I knew she wasn't really crazy, for some reason I expected her to look unstable. She didn't. Her eyes were focused and steady, her hair and clothes neat. She looked up from the book in her hands.

"Uh, hello. Who are you? You don't look like a doctor."

"I'm not. My name is Apollo." I figured that shouldn't cause too much of a stir. It was still a somewhat common name in this country. She wouldn't believe I was the immortal Apollo anyway. "I just have a question to ask you."

Zoe nodded. "Okay," she said slowly, like she would be demanding more information once I asked. But for now, she reserved judgement.

I looked deep into her eyes. It had been eons since I communed with the spirit of Delphi personally.

"O Oracle of Delphi, do you know where my sister is?" As I asked it, I tried to send waves of godly energy into the girl, searching for the spirit that lingered within. I had to be careful not to overwhelm her and accidentally destroy her, though.

Zoe looked confused. "What? Why would I know... Who are you?" Her tone shifted from unsure to panicked. She scooted away from me before going slack jawed, her eyes glazing over. I could tell the spirit of Delphi had taken over.

"Please, tell me how to find Artemis," I asked again.

"The Huntress chases the hunter long dead, the only man who could draw the moon in day. But beware a trap in gold and stone, the godly hand the trap does stay. In northern woods she's bound, awaiting her half to meet. Guided by an enemy long imprisoned and eager to greet." Zoe, or rather, Delphi, intoned the message clearly and without inflection. Already, I was trying to make sense of the lines, which should have been easier for me than it was. I'm the god of prophecy for the gods' sake.

Zoe shook her head, coming to herself again. "Sorry, I must have had an episode. I..." She trailed away when she remembered what we'd been talking about before her prophecy. "You! You were in my hallucination. But – but you didn't look like you. I'm so sure though." She held her head in her hands, tugging at her hair. "What is going on? Be straight with me. Do you know something about my condition? Why it started so young, or why I see the things I do?"

"Um, you were diagnosed with schizophrenia, right?" I wasn't sure what to tell her. She'd only see me in a bed next to her if I told the truth.

"Yeah, but my symptoms are atypical. Usually visual hallucinations, rarely auditory, only small sounds to match what I see. And the doctors tell me I sometimes speak in gibberish, sentences that make no sense, when I'm having an episode. The meds make no difference, and I'm completely functional the rest of the time. Doesn't exactly sound like schizophrenia."

"What did you think when this first started?"

Zoe shrugged. "I don't know. I was a little kid. My parents thought I had a vivid imagination. As I got older, I thought I was going mad. But sometimes my hallucinations feel so real. Like I could walk down the street the next day and see the same thing." She wasn't far off. The girl bit her lip. "It isn't schizophrenia, is it? Or any disorder." Her eyes were wide, pleading, but also determined. I felt as if she looked through my disguise, glimpsing the real me beneath.

"What if I were to tell you that you aren't sick, but blessed? And cursed." I had promised myself that I'd help her, and this was the only way I knew how. Besides, she claimed to see visions. Something in them could help me understand the prophecy and find Artemis.

"I'd say, what are you selling?" Zoe was skeptical, but I could tell part of her was willing to take a leap of faith, so I continued.

"I'm sure you've learned about history and religion, like in school, right?" She nodded. "Do you remember the ancient gods? The Olympians. Well, when I said my name was Apollo..."

She raised her eyebrows high. "You meant the real Apollo? The sun god? You're crazier than me."

I shook my head. "You're not crazy. You're an oracle. The spirit of Delphi lives inside you. Your episodes are prophecies, glimpses of potential future events."

"Why should I believe you? None of this makes sense."

"I'm guessing that some of it does. And something inside of you is telling you this is right." In ancient times, once I'd met with an oracle and confirmed that the spirit of prophecy was within them, their understanding was unlocked as they bonded with the spirit. It was easy then, when mortals more readily accepted things like the gods and magic and divining the future. I hadn't met with an oracle personally in decades.

Slowly, Zoe nodded. "I don't understand what's happening to me."

"You're an oracle of Apollo. Of me. You can see the future, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes when prompted with a question. It won't happen often, but this is your life now, until you're no longer a maiden." I hesitated. "I'm...sorry."

"So, it will go away?"

"Eventually. Like I said—"

"Yeah, I got that part." She blushed. "And, just now, I saw the future? You asked me a question. You made me see a vision, didn't you?" She sounded accusatory, but also a little in awe, as if the truth was settling on her that her world just turned on its head. I have that effect on mortals.

To be continued...

Anthology contains fourteen original stories

The Immortal Anden Pierce:
“Origin Story?”

The first time I died, obviously I didn't expect to wake up from it. The car came rushing at me too fast, a blur of screeching sound and cobalt blue metal. I just stood there in the middle of the street, headphones half hanging from my ears, staring death in the face like an idiot. Moving didn't even occur to me.

I don't remember the impact. No pain either. One second, I was crossing the street and the next, nothing. Nothing but darkness, like going to sleep. Like a dream I couldn't quite recall. And then I opened my eyes.

The first thing I saw was the blindingly bright fluorescent light overhead. Blinking black spots away, I shifted my focus to the room around me. Everything was very clean and orderly. Beside me was a long, lumpy shape covered in a white sheet on a metal table. On the other side was a tray holding several delicate instruments. A scalpel, a pair of tweezers, a rounded saw.

I shivered and for the first time realized I was naked. A white sheet covered me too, from the waist down, but other than that, I wasn't wearing anything. Black marks dotted a vague Y shape over my bare chest. The metal table beneath me was just starting to warm up, as though I'd laid back on it only moments ago.

I'd seen enough crime shows to know where I was, and it made me want to throw up. I was just glad I'd woken up before they started the autopsy. Again, the scalpel drew my gaze. I had to get out of there. Gathering the sheet around me, I searched for my clothes but to no avail. I would've settled for scrubs, even a hospital gown, but all I had was the sheet.

My bare feet slapped against the linoleum floor as I staggered out of the morgue. Bare all except for a tag around my left big toe that read: *Pierce, Anden, J.* My legs felt tingly, like they'd fallen asleep and blood was just starting to flow back into them. The sheet kept slipping off my shoulders where I'd bunched the excess so I could walk without tripping. I held it tightly against me, the only thing that was solid, that I was sure of in what I prayed was the trippiest, most messed up nightmare my weak imagination could come up with. Of course, I wasn't that lucky.

The hallway outside the morgue was empty. There was a set of double doors about halfway down the hall and a sign indicating a staff locker room at the end. I wasn't sure if I was relieved or more distressed. Some irrational part of my brain screamed that if I was found, they'd insist I was dead. They'd drag me right back to that room to cut me open. It was crazy, but I couldn't completely shove away the fear of being discovered. The rest of me was desperate to find someone, anyone, who could tell me what the hell was going on.

Maybe I hadn't died after all. At least, not for more than a minute or two. Like Nikki Sixx. He was pronounced dead, wheeled down to the morgue, and then sat up, right as rain. Well, aside from the heroin addiction, that is. But waiting around long enough for them to prepare an autopsy to start

breathing again seemed pretty unlikely. At this, I became acutely aware of the rhythmic whoosh of air every time I inhaled. I studied it, maybe worshiped it, for a few moments.

I was also very aware that I had no injuries. I checked my arms, legs, chest, head. Nothing, not even a scratch. That pretty much ruled out the “hadn’t actually died” hope once and for all. Being miraculously resuscitated was one thing. Walking away from being hit by a car unscathed was quite another. Add waking up in the morgue, and I was pretty sure something beyond the ordinary was going on here. I just didn’t know what.

Before I could ponder my own mortality (literally) any further, a nurse finally entered the hall where’d I’d at some point stopped walking. I looked back and realized I’d only made it a few yards from the doors to the morgue.

“What are you doing down here?” she asked briskly. Apparently, teens wandering around the basement wrapped in sheets wasn’t a daily occurrence.

“I, uh, I don’t...” What could I tell her? That I’d risen from the dead. She’d think I belonged in the mental ward, even without the sheet. *Risen from the dead* sounded so horror movie. God, I hoped I wasn’t a zombie or something. When I’d checked myself for wounds, my skin looked normal, tan rather than pale and decomposing.

“Young man, which room are you supposed to be in? And why did you take your bed’s sheet?” The nurse clearly didn’t feel like waiting for me to give a more coherent answer, provided I could have actually come up with one.

“I’m uh, here for my appendix,” I made up. It was the first medical procedure I could think of. “I think I got a little lost. I don’t know my room number.” I said it slowly, like I was confused and maybe a little high on pain-killers. Hopefully that would excuse my odd behavior and wandering where I wasn’t supposed to. It wasn’t that hard to fake, as I was barely refraining from freaking out about everything that had transpired in the last few minutes. Or days? How long had I been “out”?

To be continued...

Anthology contains fourteen original stories

[End of Sample]