

THE GODS OF ETHAN HOLLOWAY

by

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INT. INMATE ROOM - MORNING

A tiny plastic cup holding half a dozen PILLS - different colors and shapes - is shoved forward across a table.

On the edge of his bed near the table sits ETHAN HOLLOWAY (35). He's built like a bear. His face is slack and vacant. He stares at the pills, then looks up at the brawny ORDERLY who brought them.

ORDERLY

Let's go, Holloway.

Ethan returns his gaze to the pills. Slowly, he dumps them into his mouth and washes them down with a gulp of water.

The MEDICATION CART stands in the hall just outside the room. JOHN GARTY (65), another inmate, shuffles into view and looks in. He calls to the orderly.

GARTY

Need my stuff.

ORDERLY

Wait in your room, Garty.

GARTY

Gotta move. Red fella came in.

The orderly spins to face him.

ORDERLY

We gonna have a problem?

Garty backs off and shuffles out of sight, muttering. With a glance back at Ethan, the orderly exits and locks the door.

Ethan looks around his room. His eyes come to rest on the narrow Plexiglas window behind him. It can't be opened.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Ethan sits in a chair facing the desk. The PSYCHIATRIST (40), anchorman-handsome in a white lab coat, is reading through Ethan's file.

Ethan's eyes are fixed on a FRAMED FAMILY PHOTO hanging on the wall behind the desk. There's a small crack in the glass.

PSYCHIATRIST  
Headaches?

ETHAN  
What?

PSYCHIATRIST  
Have you been having headaches?

ETHAN  
No.

The psychiatrist makes a note in the file. Then he leans back, his face softening as he shifts into therapist mode.

PSYCHIATRIST  
So, Ethan, how do you feel?

ETHAN  
Okay, I guess.

PSYCHIATRIST  
Still keeping a journal?

ETHAN  
Yeah.

PSYCHIATRIST  
Doctor Chandra told me you've been reading. What do you like to read?

ETHAN  
I don't know. Stories.

The psychiatrist ponders, then scribbles a note in the file.

PSYCHIATRIST  
I'm going to reduce your meds. I think you're making real progress, Ethan, and I want to see where we can go with it. Okay?

ETHAN  
Sure.

The psychiatrist stands, flashes a programmed smile.

PSYCHIATRIST  
Good to see you, Ethan.

Ethan stands, and they shake hands. The psychiatrist sits: a dismissal.

ETHAN

Will I ever get out of here?

The doc doesn't want to have this conversation.

PSYCHIATRIST

Ethan, when you came here ten years ago, you were very sick. You remember that?

ETHAN

Yeah.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you remember what you did, Ethan? In the church? Those nine people?

ETHAN

Yeah.

PSYCHIATRIST

Well, we can't let you leave until we're sure you won't ever hurt anyone again. You're getting better, but you're not well yet. You understand that, don't you?

ETHAN

I understand.

Ethan turns his head, looks out the window: another narrow, shatterproof panel that doesn't open.

INT. INMATE ROOM - DAY

A tiny plastic cup of PILLS is shoved forward across a table, but fewer pills than before. Ethan looks up at the orderly.

ORDERLY

For Christ's sake, come on.

Ethan swallows the pills.

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

A few dozen INMATES - all men, various ages - dot the large, pastoral yard like cattle in a field. They're all dressed alike. Some stand, some sit on the ground or pace aimlessly.

Ethan walks into a grove of trees, stopping in a patch of dappled shade. He leans his head back. A breeze ruffles the leaves, and the sound whispers over him. He shuts his eyes.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

Ethan sits in the bare, institutional room with other inmates, watching TV: a sitcom with aggressive canned laughter. The TV is bolted into a built-in shelving unit.

Across the room from Ethan sits A SNAKE-LIKE MAN WITH RED HAIR. He's staring at the floor with wild eyes, fists clenched. Angry tatoos run down both arms. On the left arm, a swarm of bats spirals toward the hand, the last one biting the wrist, blood spurting.

INT. INMATE ROOM - DAY

Ethan sits on the bed, eating lunch from a plastic tray. Reaching for a package of crackers, he knocks his cup of juice off the tray - then catches it before it falls out of reach. He stares at the cup...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ethan paces down the hall. His energy and mood are more elevated, his posture a bit straighter, eyes more alert.

He hears an unfamiliar voice speaking in the common room. He can't make out the words, but the cadence has a ritual quality. Curious, Ethan steps to the common room doorway.

INT. COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A MINISTER is holding a generic religious service for some inmates. A crucifix, star of David, and an Islamic star and crescent adorn a folding table in front of the TV.

Four ORDERLIES stand at the back, watching the inmates.

The minister is reading from the Psalms.

MINISTER

Hear my cry, God. Listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth, I will call to you, when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy.

(MORE)

## MINISTER (CONT'D)

I will dwell in your tent forever.  
I will take refuge in the shelter  
of your wings.

Taking in this scene, Ethan's mood plummets. His eyes well up; he hugs himself. He surrenders to some private grief, then turns and rushes away.

## INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Struggling to hold back tears, Ethan heads toward his room. He passes an open inmate room, just as an ORDERLY goes in with the occupant's meds. The med cart stands unattended.

Ethan glances down at the med cart and stops. Next to the rows of tiny cups containing pills, there's a small collection of FIRST AID SUPPLIES.

## INT. INMATE ROOM - NIGHT

The door to Ethan's room is closed. The only light comes from an armored overhead fixture.

Ethan stands near the window. From a pocket, he produces a ROLL OF SURGICAL TAPE. With careful purpose, he tears off strips and sticks them on the window. He steps back.

On the window, Ethan has created an odd outline from strips of tape. It resembles a distorted hour-glass on its side.

He adds more strips of tape to the top of the window, making the rectangular panel come to a point. With this change, it now suggests a church window.

Ethan sits on the edge of his bed, eyes on the window. His face is almost hopeful.

The light goes out.

## INT. INMATE ROOM - MORNING

Ethan lies in bed, asleep.

## ORDERLY (O.S.)

What the hell is this?

Ethan wakes with a start, looks around. The orderly stands in his room, holding a cup of pills and staring at the tape on the window. He shoots a glance at Ethan, then backs out of the room. Ethan hears the door lock.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The roll of surgical tape sits on the psychiatrist's desk. He stares down at it. The orderly stands near the door.

Ethan, sitting in a chair facing the desk, notices a blank space on the wall where the family photo used to be.

ETHAN

Where's your family?

PSYCHIATRIST

What?

ETHAN

You had a picture.

The psychiatrist glances around, then back to Ethan.

PSYCHIATRIST

I'm having it reframed. Ethan, what's this about?

Ethan squirms, shrugs.

ETHAN

Just... just making a picture. Just a picture.

PSYCHIATRIST

We have markers for that, Ethan. You stole this. You remember the rules, don't you?

ETHAN

I remember.

PSYCHIATRIST

Are you going to follow those rules, Ethan?

ETHAN

Yes.

PSYCHIATRIST

Okay. No TV, no books for one week. You can work on your journal.

The doc turns his attention to some paperwork. Ethan stands.

ETHAN

Will I ever--

PSYCHIATRIST  
Goodbye, Ethan.

Ethan turns, locks eyes with the orderly for a moment, and exits.

INT. INMATE ROOM - DAY

Ethan walks in. The orderly closes and locks the door.

All the tape is gone from Ethan's window. Seeing this, his sorrow returns. He rushes to the window, pressing his face to the Plexiglas, looking left and right. The window is so hazed over he can barely see anything, but the grove of trees is just visible in the distance.

Ethan gives in to his grief. He slumps onto the bed and weeps.

INT. INMATE ROOM - NIGHT

Ethan sits at the small table in front of his window. He writes in his JOURNAL: a dog-eared marble notebook.

The overhead light goes off. Now Ethan sits in a shaft of moonlight pouring through the window. He sighs, puts down his pencil and looks up.

ETHAN GASPS, HIS FACE FILLED WITH AWE - HE DROPS TO HIS KNEES, EYES LOCKED ON THE WINDOW - HIS HANDS DRIFT TOGETHER IN AN ATTITUDE OF PRAYER--

A LUNA MOTH CLINGS TO THE WINDOW OUTSIDE - it's six inches across, with large feathery antennae. The wings are pale green bordered in deep red. It's utterly alien and painfully beautiful, translucent in the moonlight.

The shape of the moth roughly matches the outline Ethan had created with tape.

Ethan is overcome. He reaches up and touches the window under the moth.

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - SUNSET

Ethan walks alone in the grove of trees. Behind him, other inmates are walking back into the building.

He approaches the tree where he'd listened to the leaves, and looks up into the branches. Again, a breeze stirs the leaves. He stops, closes his eyes, prays. He opens his eyes...

A LUNA MOTH is clinging to the tree.

Ethan drops to his knees, eyes fixed on the moth. He begins to carry on one side of a conversation.

ETHAN

Yes... Yes... Yes... I  
understand... Yes... Always...  
Oh... Oh... Thank you... I am your  
servant, thank you...

ORDERLY (O.S.)

Hey Holloway! Back inside!

ETHAN

(he breaks down in tears)  
Bless the redeemer and all her  
works, bless the coming and the  
going of her, bless the perfection  
of her loveliness, bless her grove  
and the beating of her wings, bless  
her messenger and her avenger.  
Thank you, thank you. I will watch.  
I will be ready.

INT. COMMON ROOM - DAY

Ethan and a collection of other inmates are watching TV. The red haired man is again sitting across the room, staring at the floor. Garty sits next to Ethan.

The TV image flickers a few times, and the colors get strange. Then the screen changes to a solid field of red. The inmates shift around, unsure what to do. Garty gets up and approaches the TV.

GARTY

It supposed to do that?

ETHAN

(to himself)  
Red...

He shoots a glance at the red haired man.

The psychiatrist steps into the common room, accompanied by a young BLONDE WOMAN - a tour is in progress. The doc talks quietly, nodding at different inmates.

Tucked under the psychiatrist's arm is the NEWLY FRAMED FAMILY PHOTO. Light glints off the glass.

The red haired man glances up.

ETHAN SEES THE WOMAN... HE STANDS...

She wears a pale green dress with red piping on the shoulders and arms: luna moth colors. Her glasses have curved upper rims, suggesting antennae. Ethan speaks a challenge.

ETHAN

Who are you?

All eyes turn to Ethan. He walks toward the woman.

ETHAN

I AM THE AVENGER!

The doc pulls out a radio.

PSYCHIATRIST

Code blue, common room, code blue.

The other inmates are getting twitchy. One begins pounding on the arms of a chair. Others pick up the rhythm. Garty never takes his eyes off Ethan.

ETHAN

I HAVE MADE THE NINE OFFERINGS! I AM BLESSED BY THE REDEEMER! THE MESSENGER CALLED ME! ME! WHO ARE YOU? YOU ARE NOT WANTED HERE! GET OUT!

PSYCHIATRIST

Ethan, you have to calm down. We can talk about this later, but you--

ETHAN

Don't you understand? This is my chance! She doesn't need it...

SIX ORDERLIES RUN INTO THE ROOM.

PSYCHIATRIST

Ethan, are you going to calm down?

ETHAN

SHE LEAVES NOW!

PSYCHIATRIST

(to the orderlies)  
S and R. Five migs haloperidol.

ETHAN

NOOOOO!

The orderlies tackle Ethan. In moments, all six of them are carrying him from the room, ignoring his screams.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ethan struggles like a landed hammerhead, but the six orderlies are pros. With one gripping each shoulder, each foot and each knee, they continue to move him down the hall.

ORDERLY

Time-out for Ethan. Been a bad boy.

They arrive at a blue door; an orderly opens it. Inside: a padded table with 4-point restraints. They wrestle Ethan in.

FROM THE COMMON ROOM: BREAKING GLASS

A SCREAM - RUNNING FOOTSTEPS

Everyone freezes. A few inmates run past the open door.

ORDERLY

Tony, Cesar, check it out.

The two holding Ethan's feet run back toward the Common Room, the other four push Ethan onto the table.

He looks up - there's a LUNA MOTH on the overhead light.

ETHAN

IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME!

ETHAN PULLS ONE LEG FREE - KICKS AN ORDERLY IN THE FACE--

HE SWINGS THE LEG AT THE MAN ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE - HE GOES DOWN--

ETHAN WINDMILLS HIS LEGS AND ROLLS ONTO THE FLOOR, DRAGGING THE LAST TWO MEN DOWN--

HE GETS TO HIS FEET, KNOCKS THE MEN BACK, AND RUNS OUT--

HE SLAMS THE DOOR, BOLTS IT--

HE RUNS--

INT. COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ethan runs in--

Most of the inmates have fled - one still watches the broken TV - another sobs in his chair. Garty cowers in a corner.

The broken picture frame lies on the floor amid fragments of glass.

One orderly is crumpled in a pool of blood.

The other is bleeding from a slashed arm, as the psychiatrist tries to compress an open artery.

The red haired man stands nearby, grinning, holding a long shard of glass in a hand running with blood.

He turns toward the blonde woman standing against a wall. He walks toward her. She's frozen: a deer in the headlights.

The psychiatrist looks around helplessly.

Ethan approaches Red.

ETHAN

Since before the light, I have been appointed.

Red ignores Ethan. He raises his hand, is about to slice open the woman's face. SHE SCREAMS.

ETHAN CHARGES, THROWS RED TO THE FLOOR--

RED ROLLS ONTO HIS BACK--

ETHAN DROPS ONTO HIS CHEST--

RED SLASHES OPEN THE LEFT SIDE OF ETHAN'S NECK - BLOOD SPRAYS, BUT ETHAN IGNORES IT - HIS HANDS CLOSE ON RED'S NECK, SQUEEZING--

ETHAN

Since my birth, I have dreamed of her airy spaces. Since my sacred promise, I have been reared in the shelter of her wings. All for now.

RED STRUGGLES LIKE A DEMON - HE SLASHES THE RIGHT SIDE OF ETHAN'S NECK--

ETHAN

All for you.

ETHAN SNAPS RED'S NECK--

Ethan relaxes, blood running down his shoulders. He leans his head back, eyes closed. He raises his arms.

ETHAN

And I shall be borne on her  
wings... borne away on her wings...

Ethan collapses onto a floor awash with blood. His eyes go blank, lifeless. The young woman sinks to her knees, sobbing.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DUSK

Ethan's body lies on a gurney, as two MORGUE ATTENDANTS roll it toward the exit. The psychiatrist walks behind them.

EXT. HOSPITAL DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

They roll the gurney up to the Medical Examiner's van.

MORGUE MAN

Got the release?

PSYCHIATRIST

Uh, shit. Sorry.

He walks back inside. The attendants wait. One lights a cigarette.

INT. GARTY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Garty is looking out his second floor window, overlooking the driveway and the Medical Examiner's van. In the fading light, he sees a flicker of motion above the gurney.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HOSPITAL DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

A LUNA MOTH flutters down and lands on Ethan's chest. The smoking man glances at it, then looks up into the darkening sky. His face goes slack. He takes a step back.

EXT. HOSPITAL DRIVEWAY - LATER

The psychiatrist walks out with his paperwork... and stops cold. He looks off...

The smoking man's cigarette hangs motionless at his side: three inches of ash.

ETHAN'S BODY IS HIDDEN UNDER A BLANKET OF LUNA MOTHS--

Garty still watches from his window.

GARTY

They're seein him on his way. Seein  
him home.

One moth flies off. And another. And they all begin to  
flutter away...

Ethan's body is gone.

The morgue men and the doc are silent, beyond words.

In his room, Garty offers a prayer.

GARTY

Bless her grove and the beating of  
her wings. Bless her messenger and  
her avenger. In the name of the  
light, and the shadow, and the  
rising wind. Amen.

THE END