

# THE ETERNAL SONG OF TITHONUS





*The Eternal Song of Tithonus*

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### ***Prelude:***

This story is a reimagining inspired by the poem *Tithonus* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and the myths surrounding Tithonus, Prince of Troy, and Eos, Goddess of the Dawn. While their tale has been told through poetry and legend, I have expanded upon their tragedy by introducing Callista, a daimon scholar whose quest for truth brings their forgotten sorrow into the light. Through her, we witness the weight of immortality, the endurance of love, and the search for release from fate neither mortal nor divine should suffer.

### ***The Poem:***

#### ***Tithonus***

***by Alfred, Lord Tennyson 1859***

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,  
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,  
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,  
And after many a summer dies the swan.  
Me only cruel immortality  
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,  
Here at the quiet limit of the world,  
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream  
The ever-silent spaces of the East,  
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—  
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,  
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd  
To his great heart none other than a God!  
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'  
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,  
Like wealthy men, who care not how they give.

But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,  
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,  
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd  
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,  
Immortal age beside immortal youth,  
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,  
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,  
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,  
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears  
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:  
Why should a man desire in any way  
To vary from the kindly race of men  
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance  
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes  
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.  
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals  
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,  
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.  
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,  
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,  
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team  
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,  
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,  
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful  
In silence, then before thine answer given

Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,  
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,  
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?  
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart  
In days far-off, and with what other eyes  
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—  
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw  
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;  
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood  
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all  
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,  
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm  
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds  
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd  
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,  
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,  
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:  
How can my nature longer mix with thine?  
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold  
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet  
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam  
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes  
Of happy men that have the power to die,

And grassy barrows of the happier dead.  
Release me, and restore me to the ground;  
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:  
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;  
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,  
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

## The Eternal Song of Tithonus

*"There are fates worse than death, and I—Tithonus, once favored by the gods—have long since learned this truth. I have forgotten the taste of youth, the warmth of a lover's breath, the thrill of sleep. The sun rises, but I do not feel its light. The goddess who once held me in her arms still comes with the dawn, her touch as warm as ever, yet heavy with sorrow. And so, I linger in the half-light, waiting... waiting for the morning when even she will no longer appear."*



# Chapter 1

## THE WEIGHT OF FOREVER

A fierce wind whipped through the ancient ruins, threading its way among broken stones and abandoned corridors. It carried the damp scent of earth and dust, brushing past the collapsed remains of what had once been a magnificent temple. High atop the mountain, beyond the reach of any mortal realm, sat Tithonus: a man once proud and strong, a prince draped in luxurious finery, a beloved companion of a goddess. Now he was but the husk of that man, his limbs gaunt and weak, his skin stretched tightly over fragile bones. Once dark and full, his hair had turned a dull silver that barely stirred in the gusts. The hands that had once been steady and powerful now trembled on the cold edge of a stone ledge, his gaze fixed on the valley below, an unrelenting reminder of the cruel contrast between who he had been and who he had become.

He no longer bothered counting the years, whether they were decades or centuries. It scarcely mattered. Each day blurred into the next. Dawn would come, painting the sky with fiery pinks and reds; still, he would remain. In earlier times, that brilliant display had sparked hope within him, but now it pressed down on him like an unbearable weight, a fresh reminder that another day of endless torment lay ahead.

\* \* \*

### **The Days of Radiance**

In his earlier years, Tithonus had looked forward to the dawn with open arms, counting each moment until he could see her again, Eos, the goddess of the morning light, the very center of his world. She was the embodiment of radiance, and her laughter rang like music that never failed to set his heart alight. Their bond was the stuff of legend, something he had been certain would endure for all time.

In a way, it did, just not in any way he had ever imagined.

One dawn, as the night gave way to a gentle glow, Tithonus held Eos close, his fingers weaving through her luminous hair. "I never want to leave your side," he murmured. "Grant me immortality. Let me remain with you forever."

Eos hesitated, an unfamiliar flicker of worry casting a faint shadow on her flawless face. "Tithonus," she began softly, "even I must obey the greater gods. I can love you. I can treasure you. But granting you eternal life is not within my power alone."

"There must be a way," he insisted. "If you truly love me, you'll find it."

Blinded by devotion, she did. Eos climbed Mount Olympus and knelt before Zeus himself, pleading with him to bless her beloved with unending existence. The king of the gods, indifferent at best and vindictive at worst, waved his hand and fulfilled her plea. Yet, in the nature of Zeus, the blessing came with a cruel twist: Tithonus would indeed live forever, but his youth would slip away, leaving him to age without end.

\* \* \*

### **The Bliss of Ignorance**

In the beginning, nothing seemed amiss. Those early years passed in serene joy. Every morning, Tithonus woke to the warmth of Eos at his side, her golden radiance lighting the sky. They journeyed through the heavens together, watching great realms rise and fall, listening to the quiet music of distant stars. Tithonus marveled at how they seemed untouched by the world's troubles, never once pausing to think that time might still be creeping forward.

Then, one morning, he noticed a single silver hair. He laughed it off, teasing Eos that it must be a mere trick of the light. Yet by the following day, there were more. His reflection shifted into something unfamiliar, with faint lines around his eyes, his once strong limbs feeling weaker, and each step losing its former grace. At first, he dismissed it, blaming restless nights or the changing seasons. But as time continued, his laughter grew less frequent, his steps grew heavier, and he could no longer pretend nothing was wrong.

Eos tried to soothe him. "It is nothing," she whispered. "You are only tired." But even her comforting words held no power against what was happening. The years marched forward, and Tithonus's transformation became undeniable. His stride slowed, his laughter faded, and his eyes lost their vibrant glow under the weight of exhaustion. No matter how tightly she held him each morning or how often she declared her love, she could not will back the youth slipping from his body. That harsh truth settled between them like a silent curse, growing heavier with each passing year.

Tithonus was aging. And the process would never end.

Chapter 2  
The decorative initial 'C' is ornate, featuring a classical column on the left and a woman's head in profile on the right, surrounded by intricate floral and scrollwork patterns.

## THE GODDESS AND HER SORROW

The first pale streaks of morning stretched across the sky, announcing Eos's approach. She stepped into view at the horizon, cloaked in shimmering light, her robes drifting like gold-tinted clouds that welcomed the break of day. Once, she had arrived with laughter, her presence radiating warmth throughout the world. Now, she moved carefully, each step weighted by sorrow, her gaze reflecting a grief she could no longer hide.

Tithonus did not raise his head. He did not need to. He sensed her presence before she spoke, the same blend of beauty and despair he felt each day. This was their ritual. She would come to sit beside him, say a few gentle words of remorse, then leave. And he would remain, as always.

"Tithonus," she murmured, lowering herself at his side.

She slid her fingers over his hand, her warmth palpable against his cold skin. Once, he would have basked in her touch. Now, it only reminded him how their paths had diverged. She remained unchanged, and he was withering.

He drew a rasping breath that sounded like dry leaves rustling on stone. "I'm still here," he said softly. "Still waiting."

She closed her eyes, her grip tightening. "I curse Zeus for this," she whispered. "For what he has done to you. If I could undo it, I would."

A hollow chuckle escaped Tithonus. "Would you? Even if it meant I would leave you sooner?"

She winced at the question, giving no reply. They had returned to this moment countless times over the years, always circling the same pain. It was a wound that never closed, an ache that lingered in every unspoken moment between them.

Eos cupped his face, leaning her forehead against his. He felt the warmth of her tears as they fell against his skin. "I do not know what to do," she breathed. "It breaks my heart to see you like this."

He knew the feeling all too well. There was no escape, no relief from the curse he had once begged for. He had believed their love would make an eternity worthwhile, and he had been wrong.

Eos combed her fingers gently through his thinning hair. "Is there anything I can do?" she pleaded. "Any way to lessen your suffering?"

He hesitated, the words he had guarded for so long finally pushing past his lips. "Let me go."

She drew in a sharp breath and eased back, searching his face. "You know I cannot grant you death," she said, her voice trembling. "That is beyond my power."

"Then help me find another way," he replied, his voice cracking like parched timber. "I cannot keep going like this. I cannot face another morning knowing it will only bring more pain."

Her eyes glistened in the early light, revealing a battle she could not hide. She had never refused him anything, but this was beyond even her divine reach.

The silence between them stretched until she finally inclined her head in a small nod. "I will try."

The words should have soothed him, but instead they settled heavily on his heart. He knew what "try" meant. More waiting. More dawns spent watching the horizon, hoping she would return with an answer, or fearing she would return with none.

Eos's form grew faint as the sun rose higher, merging with the morning light. She lingered for a breath, as if willing herself to remain. But the world called, and she had to answer.

Just before disappearing completely, she whispered, "I'm sorry."

Tithonus did not speak. He only watched as she faded into the sky, leaving him once more to endure the long hours of daylight alone.



# Chapter 3

## THE MORTAL SCHOLAR

The day had passed in stillness by the time I reached the ruins, the air heavy with the quiet weight of something that had endured far too long. Overhead, the sky moved through its usual course, from the soft gold of morning to the hushed blue of twilight. It felt unchanged, untouched, while everything beneath it carried the slow erosion of time.

I heard him before I saw him.

Not movement. Not breath.

Stillness.

It pressed against the space, as if the world itself had settled around him and refused to move further.

I stepped carefully through the broken stone, my footsteps echoing through the ancient corridors. The sound carried farther than I expected. For a moment, I wondered if I had made a mistake coming here at all. The stories had led me, but stories often shifted with time.

Then I saw him.

He sat at the edge of the ruins, motionless, as though he had become part of the stone itself. The last light of the sun framed him in a fading glow, but it did nothing to soften what time had done to him.

For a moment, I did not speak.

The stories had not prepared me for this.

"My name is Callista," I said at last, stepping closer. "I came looking for you."

He turned slowly, the movement deliberate, as though even that small act carried weight. When his eyes found me, I felt it immediately, the distance of years that had never ended.

"Why?" he asked.

His voice was thin, worn from disuse, but it held.

I met his gaze, steady. "Because I wanted to see if the stories were true," I said. I let my eyes take in what stood before me, the fragile shape of what had once been something far greater. "And now that I have found you, I cannot decide whether I am awed or horrified."

A dry laugh escaped him. "Both," he said. "That would be fitting."

I lowered myself onto a fallen column a short distance away. I did not rush. I did not speak. I studied him, taking in every detail, committing it to memory. He did not resist it. Whatever vanity he had once held was long gone.

"You're the mortal the dawn goddess loved," I said, breaking the silence. "The one given immortality."

He exhaled slowly. "Yes. A gift, or so I believed, until it became a curse."

"Do you regret it?" I asked.

He did not answer at once. His gaze shifted past me, toward the horizon where the last light clung to the sky.

"I regret not understanding what I was asking for," he said. "And I regret the pain it causes her to watch me suffer."

That answer did not surprise me.

"I've read many accounts of you," I said, adjusting the strap of my satchel. "Some call you a fool. Others say you are the saddest of mortals."

A faint breath left him, close to a sigh. "Once more, both might be true."

I let my gaze move over the ruins, the broken remains of something that had once held purpose.

"Why stay here?" I asked.

He hesitated, as though the answer required more strength than he wished to give. "Where else would I go?" he said at last. "This place is as much my prison as it is my refuge. And I no longer have the strength to seek another."

We sat in silence for a time.

Then I reached into my satchel.

"I do not believe the gods intended any being to suffer without end," I said, choosing my words with care. "There may be a way to help you."

He studied me then, more closely than before. I could feel the weight of it, the comparison, the memory of promises that had come before me.

"What do you think you can do that even a goddess could not?" he asked. "Others have come. None succeeded."

I did not look away.

"Let me be the first."

He searched for doubt in my face. I did not give it to him.

Still, I felt it, beneath the surface. Not uncertainty, but the weight of what I had stepped into. Stories were one thing. Living within them was another.

Yet something in him shifted.

It was small. Barely there.

But I saw it.

Hope.

Faint, buried, and unwanted.

And for the first time since I had arrived, he listened.



# Chapter 4

## THE TALE OF LOVE AND LOSS

I lowered myself beside the fallen stones, brushing a thin layer of dust from my satchel as my gaze settled on the frail figure before me. The wind stirred my hair, but I remained still, as though I had stepped onto hallowed ground. Something about the place, and about him, demanded quiet reverence.

"Tell me," I said at last, my voice soft but steady. "How did all of this come to be?"

He did not answer immediately. His eyes drifted shut, each breath shallow, strained. I sensed he had been asked this before, many times, by voices long gone. But I had not come out of idle curiosity. I needed to understand.

At last, he drew in a slow, rattling breath.

"I was once a prince of Troy," he began, his voice brittle, worn thin by time. "Proud, strong... foolish enough to think I stood beyond tragedy. I had everything. Power. Youth. The favor of the gods."

His pale, clouded eyes opened again.

"Then she found me."

I leaned forward slightly, hands clasped together, careful not to interrupt.

"Eos," he said, and even now, the name unsettled him. "The dawn made flesh. The first time she spoke to me, she called me beautiful. Said I reminded her of the first light of day. And I..." His voice faltered, then steadied. "I loved her. I loved her as mortals do, without restraint, without thought for what it might cost."

A faint glow began to gather along the eastern horizon.

For the first time since I had arrived, he did not turn away from it.

"Those early days," he continued, "there was no sorrow in them. No fear. I woke each morning in her arms. Her laughter carried across the sky. We wandered where no mortal had ever walked. I believed that was enough. That her love made me eternal."

My vision blurred for a moment, though I did not look away.

"But time," he said, his voice turning hollow, "is not deceived. It moves forward. For gods. For men."

He drew another uneven breath.

"One evening, I begged her to let me live forever. I could not bear the thought of leaving her. She warned me. Told me even she was bound by powers greater than herself. But I would not listen. I told her that if she loved me, she would find a way."

He fell quiet for a moment.

"She did."

The words carried no relief.

"She went to Olympus. She knelt before Zeus. She asked for my immortality."

I held my breath without realizing it.

"He granted it," Tithonus said. "But he did not grant me youth."

The weight of it settled between us.

"I would never die. But I would never stop aging."

The dawn light strengthened, touching the ruins with pale gold.

"In the beginning, we did not notice," he continued. "I still felt strong. Still looked as I had before. But then came the first signs. A single silver hair. A stiffness that did not leave. Lines that deepened where none had been."

His mouth trembled slightly.

"She did not change. She could not. She remained what she had always been. And I..." He let the thought fade.

I pressed my hand lightly against my lips.

"I tried to hide it," he said. "Told myself it meant nothing. But she saw. Every morning, she watched me slip further away from what I had been. And every morning, she stayed beside me through it. She grieved each piece of me that vanished."

He lifted his hands, thin and trembling, showing me what remained.

"There is no worse fate," he said quietly, "than being loved by someone who cannot save you."

The words settled into me, deeper than I expected.

For a time, neither of us spoke. The light of dawn spread slowly across the broken stone.

When he spoke again, his voice was barely more than breath.

"I begged her to undo it. She could not. I begged the gods to end it. They would not. And so I remained. Watching the years pass without measure. Waking to the same pain. Waiting for something that would not come."

I realized then that tears had already fallen. The wind cooled them against my skin.

"There must be a way to help you," I said quietly.

He shook his head, the movement almost imperceptible. "There is not."

I knew what I would do.

"Then we will find one," I said. "Even the gods cannot close every path."

He looked at me then, searching for something, perhaps weakness, perhaps uncertainty.

I gave him neither.

Still, I saw it.

Not hope.

Not yet.

But something close to its memory, stirring where it had long been buried.



# Chapter 5

## THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

As the night's last stars faded and a gentle glow lit the horizon, I stood in the heart of the ancient ruins. The air held a quiet stillness, the kind that lingers before something is spoken aloud. I did not prepare a ritual. I did not need one.

I carried only what had been given to me.

The book rested in my hand, its weight slight, its pages still and waiting. Aedon's story remained the only one written within it. The golden quill lay against its spine, catching the faintest trace of early light.

I stepped forward and spoke.

"Great Eos," I said, lifting my gaze to the pale sky. "Goddess of the dawn, hear me. Your beloved suffers beyond any mortal's endurance, bound to a failing body that betrays him each day. I ask you, bring him peace. Grant him release."

The ruins fell silent.

It was not the silence of absence, but of attention. Even the wind seemed to draw back, as though the world itself had paused to listen.

I did not move.

The horizon warmed, light gathering slowly, steadily, until the first trace of gold broke across the sky.

Then she appeared.

Eos stood at the edge of the ruins, radiant as ever, her form wrapped in the shifting colors of sunrise, her hair like living fire. Yet something in her presence had changed. She did not arrive with ease. She hesitated, her gaze settling on me, then drifting to the book in my hand.

"I heard you," she said, her voice quiet, carrying both warmth and sorrow. "You speak with purpose. But you ask for something I cannot give."

Tithonus turned toward her. For centuries, he had greeted her at every dawn, but never had she come at another's call. He searched her face, not expecting change, only holding to what remained.

Eos knelt beside him, her expression breaking. "I know your pain," she said, reaching toward him. Her hands trembled before they touched him, as though she feared what time had done. "I have watched the years take everything from you while I remained unchanged. I grieve for you with every dawn."

A faint smile touched Tithonus's lips. "And yet, all this time, you could do nothing."

Eos closed her eyes. "I tried," she said softly. "But Zeus's decree binds me as well. This is beyond my power to undo."

My fingers tightened slightly around the book.

"Then why answer me?" I asked. "If you cannot break the curse, what remains for him?"

Eos lifted her gaze. Something within it had shifted.

"I cannot grant him the rest he seeks," she said. "But there is another way."

Silence settled between us.

Tithonus watched her closely. For so long, there had been nothing but the slow weight of time. Now something unfamiliar stirred, faint and unwelcome.

"I can change you, Tithonus," Eos said, her voice gentler now. "Not into nothing. Your spirit will remain. I can release you from this failing form and give you another, one bound to the earth, one that greets each morning with its voice. A cicada, whose song will carry beyond the reach of time."

Tithonus drew in a shallow breath. The thought unsettled him. For centuries, he had longed for an end, not another form, not another existence. But the man he had been was already gone.

"This is not punishment," I said quietly. "It is release. You will not endure this suffering any longer."

Eos extended her hands, light gathering in her palms. "You will remain part of this world," she said. "Your song will carry your memory. You will not be lost."

Tithonus closed his eyes.

He had waited for death. He had prayed for it. Now something else stood before him. Not an ending, but a release from what he had become.

After a long moment, he nodded.

Eos's hands trembled as she held his face. "Thank you," she whispered, and her light flowed into him.

A soft golden glow surrounded him, warm as the first light of dawn. There was no pain. Only a lightness, as though something long held had loosened its grip. The weight of years fell away. The decay that had bound him dissolved.

His form began to change. His body grew smaller, shifting, reshaping, until nothing of the man remained.

When the light faded, Tithonus was gone.

In his place, a single cicada clung to the stone, its wings catching the rising sun. For a moment, there was only silence.

Then came the sound.

A thin, steady song, rising into the morning air.

I held the book close without thinking. The sound settled within me, not as memory alone, but as something that would not be lost.

Eos did not move. She watched as the cicada spread its wings and lifted into the light, its song carrying across the ruins.

It did not fade.

It endured.

Chapter 6  
The decorative initial 'C' is ornate, featuring a classical column on the left and a woman's head in profile on the right, surrounded by intricate floral and scrollwork patterns.

## THE ETERNAL SONG

I lowered myself to the ground, pressing my palms against the cool stone where Tithonus had dissolved into radiant light. Above me, the cicada hovered, its delicate wings catching the early glow. Its call filled the ruins, not sorrowful, not joyful, but something that endured beyond either.

Eos stood in stillness; her gaze fixed on the small creature that had once been the man she loved. There was no undoing what had been done, but she had freed him from the prison his body had become. She reached toward him, then paused, her hand suspended, as though even the slightest touch might break the quiet peace she had given him.

"May your voice remind those who hear it of the splendor and sorrow carried by a life untouched by time," she said, her voice steady, though softened by what remained unspoken.

I brushed away the tears on my cheeks, only then aware they had fallen. I had come here seeking truth, expecting a story shaped by time and retelling. What I found was something far deeper. Not only a mortal bound to endless existence, but a love that had endured beyond suffering.

I turned to her. "What happens now?"

She lifted her gaze to the horizon, where the sky had begun to bloom with pink and gold. "Now the world continues," she said. "And so must we."

I remained where I was, watching as the cicada stirred. Its wings trembled, then carried it upward into the morning air. Its song rose with it, clear and steady, weaving itself into the light of the new day.

"I will remember him," I said quietly. "I will not let his story fade."

Eos regarded me for a long moment, then inclined her head. "That is all that is needed."

Silence returned to the mountain, broken only by the steady echo of his song. As the light strengthened, she turned and moved toward the edge of the ruins, drawn once more to where the dawn called her. She had lingered as long as she could. The day would not wait.

I rose and watched her go, her form dissolving into the light until she became part of the rising sun itself. For the first time in centuries, Tithonus was not there to greet her in human form.

But he was not gone.

I held the book close at my side, feeling its quiet weight as I turned toward the path down the mountain. I had come in search of a legend. I left carrying something else entirely. A truth that would not easily be believed, and a song that would follow every dawn I would ever witness.

As I descended, the cicada's voice carried on the wind behind me, steady and unbroken, an echo that would not fade.