

## **The Lament of Cahhmon**

**By: Douglas Bain**

**I** am Cahhmon, the god of impatience. I ran the Race to the Blackened Nevers and I . . . No, on second thought, you can wait to find out if I won or lost. Let's see who among you worships at my altar.

You should know that I arrived early to the feast in the Lomhar Pass. I was the first to know the menu. I was the first to taste the wine. I was the first to sniff the simmering pots. I was the first to take my seat, as well. Woe that I ever did. For the god who would come to sit next to me was none other than my nemesis, my eternal antipode. But more on that later. Look at that! Here again, the god of impatience has the gall to ask you to wait. Well? Do you have it in you? I know I don't. Lucky for me, I already know this story.

I also want the record to be clear on one more point, before we go any further. I arrived at the feast *cheery*. Not that it mattered. Have you ever spent a minute in idle chatter with the gods? No? Well, it isn't a series of luminous revelations on truth, justice, and the divine machinery. It is nothing like that. Most gods are bores, windbags, and fools. Don't believe me? Behold this list of radiant lights that I was forced to engage with as they took their seats.

The first: the god of sticks in the mud, who took the seat opposite me. I was thrust his filthy branches so he could bend to tie his shoe. Three minutes of argument with him and you too will soon feel gloomy.

The second: the god of growing grass, who took the seat to my right. Like a proud father, he updated me on the inching progress of his favorite field. My gloom turned to churlishness.

The third: the god of unyielding lids, who took the seat to the right of growing grass. She leaned forward and offered me a riddle, one whose answer was sealed as tightly as a pickle jar. I soon gave up, and so did the rest of my sunny disposition. My churlishness now turned sullen.

A sullen impatient is a monster to avoid at all costs. Our feet tap like caffeinated woodpeckers. Our fingers drum like a pianist in a spasm. It wasn't long before I had the cutlery in such a rattle that the table moved a full six inches.

As it jangled and clattered, much to the horror of the other guests, two things happened. The first was I suddenly felt my knee come to rest by a power not of my

own. The second was the god of time reappearing from beneath the table. He was holding something in his hand and looking about as though to find something to tie it to.

It did occur to me to look below the table. But you forget who I am. I am Cahhmon, the god of impatience. My attention is a fickle, drifting thing. What I *think* of doing and what I do don't often overlap. And here those suspicions stood no chance when I suddenly felt my nemesis take his seat beside me.

I heard him first. He creaks like an old tree. The plate of oysters arrived just as he pushed his chair in. Naturally, I offered him some. And what do you think that bastard did? That's right. He examined that tray of squishy delicacies cautiously, judiciously, unhurriedly! What else could we expect from the god of patience?

All along, he knew I wanted them. I could tell. Here, dear reader, is the first of the revelations that I have for you about that virtue known as patience. More often than not, it is a veneer for a far more mischievous impulse lurking beneath, as it plainly was here. Patience was not in sober reflection on whether to eat an oyster; he was torturing me. Nothing burns an impatient like waiting for what they desperately want. If we offer it to you, we offer it through fires of mental anguish.

My knee began to bounce. The table began to quiver. And, once again, the god of time disappeared beneath the table cloth. This time, I felt a strange pinch at my ankle, another hint perhaps that should have called upon me to investigate. But here, I think

even you, dear reader, would have had your attention fractured, for the Race to the Blackened Nevers suddenly exploded all around us.

I am not without a quick wit. One has to hone such a skill if one is to survive being impetuous. So, as the gods around me disengaged from the table and set to the sprint, I leaned into Patience's ear and whispered, "I hear this race will last a hundred years. You should pace yourself."

It had the desired effect; his vaunted equanimity bloomed. He sat still as the other gods rocketed to their feet. But the god of revenge, seated beside him, bolted to her feet with such thunderous energy, a sprinkling of her dust must have fallen upon Patience, for his eyes narrowed and he leaned in for a whisper of his own.

"I hear a double crown awaits the victor who stands on one foot and sticks a finger up his nose."

My rashness engaged. I bolted to my feet and stuck my finger up my nose, only to suffer two revelations. The first: his words were nothing more than a ruse. The surrounding noses were clean of fingers. I know this because I scanned the whole crowd as I teetered to the ground.

The second revelation concerned the pinch I'd felt earlier around my ankle. As I tried to lift my right leg as instructed, it halted as if snagged on a vine. I tumbled over, and as I reached for my ankle, I saw around it a chain—a gleaming, golden chain made of Time's, well, *time*. And this chain did not bind me alone. To my horror, I saw that Patience and I had been tied together at the ankle. Patience offered me his hand,

making it quite clear what his patience was now aimed at: my stupidity. Fates, how I loathed him then.

As the gods raced off all around us, we were like two rocks wedged into a crevice, going nowhere. I dashed forward, forgetting my tether. He plodded like a lame mule. And the platitudes he offered as we struggled to walk! “All will be revealed in the fullness of time,” “Good things come to those who wait,” “One step at a time.” If you actually believe any of that, try running a race tied to the one who inspires that garbage.

We finally made it off the mountain and down into the valley below. It was then we came upon a broken rock. One half of the boulder had been pulverized, but the other was intact and presented a lovely sharp edge.

“Look!” I said. “Our liberation is at hand. Let us cut ourselves free of one another.” I dragged him to the boulder and put my foot on one side of the split rock. I gestured for him to do the same on the other. The chain of time was now over that sharp edge and taught. I scraped at the ground like a bull about to charge, while Patience looked on bemused.

“Why do you not stand still?” he asked.

“Stand still? Why on earth would we *stand still*?”

“To allow for the slow, inexorable comingling of time with purpose, of course. Eventually, it will prevail upon the chain. It will weaken at the point anointed, and the bond between us will break. As nature intends.”

“Eventually?” I shrieked. “We’re in a race, you bloody fool! What good is *eventually*? No, if we both do as I am doing, friction will arise. That is the power of things that cannot sit still. With it, we will cut through the chain like a saw!”

“The chain that binds us is made of time, Cahhmon.”

“What of it?”

“Has the god of impatience not learned anything? Time cannot be harried.”

I closed on him. “And has the god of patience not learned anything? Time wasted is nothing but a feast for failure.”

“Well, I do not trust your method,” he replied, closing the distance between us even further.

“Nor do I trust yours!” I snarled, closing what remained of it.

A stalemate arrived, one that was utterly to his advantage, of course, for an impatient cannot tolerate a stalemate. He will always relent just to get the bloody world moving again.

“Fine!” I screamed. “We do it your way. But I warn you, nothing will come of this. The chain will not break. And there will be consequences for letting time fritter away. There always is.”

Two days. Two days and one night, we stood like gawky flamingoes over that broken rock, and nothing happened. I could countenance the farce no longer.

“It isn’t working.”

“Give it time,” he replied with his signature composure.

“It isn’t working! We need to change course!”

Patience stared down at the chain. “But only a fool abandons his work. Ideas must be seen through to their conclusion, or they aren’t worth pursuing at all.”

I snorted. “It is a fool who remains loyal to a failed idea.”

“Haste makes waste,” he reminded me in a shrill, instructive voice.

“But lost time is never found again,” I shot back, matching his condescending tone.

“Trees slow to grow bear the best fruit!” he parried, his voice rising even higher.

“Yes, but time waits for no man!”

I thought I had him there, for a wistful expression overcame Patience. It sparked my essence.

“What? What is it you’re thinking? Tell me!”

He looked up at the clouds. “I am wondering if the season is right; perhaps the chain will only break in winter? I say we wait.”

The chain didn’t break, that is true, but I did. I grabbed his collar and drew him close.

“Listen to me. You will run your foot on your side of the rock. And I will run my foot on my side of the rock. The consequence will be friction upon this chain—glorious agitation! That friction will cause it to weaken. Do you hear me? This is what we will do now, or so help me, I will stuff you in a bog.”

“I fear this is folly.”

“Well, folly is better than staring at our navels!”

I set the chain over the rock once again, and I nodded for us to begin. We ran our feet on our respective sides of the stone, and before long, the chain began to glow.

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” he asked.

I turned to him wide-eyed and screamed, “Faster!!”

The chain smoked. It burst into flame. That only goaded me further. I ran my foot with abandon now, eyes closed, panting from the effort. But instead of breaking, that chain did something completely different from what I had intended.

It was when our heads clanged together that I opened my eyes to find new chains had grown from the original links. They had snaked up our legs. They now bound our hands together, our waists, our arms, and our necks. We were now like two books on a cramped bookcase. We were tasting each other’s breath and blowing each other’s hair from our noses.

But I was still unwilling to concede.

“I hate you,” I whispered.

“I hate you,” he replied. “And I can do so longer.”

I was tied to that imbecile for seven days and seven nights. You might ask me what Impatience learned from Patience during this horrible ordeal. Well, fair enough. You have waited a long while, haven’t you? Let me end your torture.

Imagine being tied to a man who refuses to drink from the stream right in front of you, preferring instead to wait for the dew to form on the trees in the morning. Imagine



wanting to scratch an itch on your nose, and having to seek the consent of a man who mulls the action for so long, the itch recedes of its own course.

I'll tell you what Patience is, though you might not want to hear it. Patience pretends to be a virtue, but he is nothing more than a glamorized, sexed-up version of sloth. There, I said it.

His arse-dragging—let's call it what it is—is not drawn from some wellspring of wise discernment. It is pure laziness, through and through. He's fat for one, did you know that? And he dresses like a slob. He cannot bring himself to wipe his nose when it runs. Are these indicators of virtue? Does a being like this deserve statues in his name?

No, it is me—Impatience!—who should be designated the virtue. The laudable results of my essence can be seen everywhere. Look no further than the passionate indiscretions I spark in you mortuants, more in number and type than you can ever know. But I know. It is me who prompts history. *I* start wars, not cold intellect. *I* cause inventions, not ingenuity.

But let's get to the heart of the matter, shall we? Patience is just a fancy word for waiting. No, no, it's worse than waiting. Patience demands that you *agree* to let time slip away. Well, that's easy for him. His time is infinite. Is yours?

I am not so callous. Rather than goad you into wasting away your life, I am that essential bell ringing in your head reminding you that time is slipping away and you must act. Act, act, act! Act as if your life depended on it. For it does. Time is ever

draining away, and being patient is merely helping it down the drain. Where is the virtue in that?



*The Lament of Cahhmon* is a bonus chapter to *The Vulgar Victory*, the second book in the award-winning dark fantasy series *The Race to the Blackened Nevers* by Douglas Bain. For more information, please visit [www.blackenednevers.com](http://www.blackenednevers.com).