

CHIMERA

BY RECKLESSFICTION & ILLUSTRATION BY MAD BRAKE

Across the shores of Lycia, atop its sprawling cliffs, something stalks. Divine in birth and magnificent in its deific grotesquerie, she has made her home within the grand and decaying ruins of the city, prowling its borders well into the night, her six eyes ever vigilant. What men have come back from that place, whether brought there by the gods or in the service of kings, speak of her form, the proud slope of her back and gleam of her claws. Her fore part, they say, is that of a great lioness with a hide like spun gold and paws that shake the very earth beneath her feet.

The head of a she-goat rises from her back and white wool is said to spill over her golden mane. There is an ancient wisdom in those eyes and on dark nights when the sky above Lycia is bright with stars and constellations, men have heard the she-goat speak with a throaty, braying voice. Whether she speaks only to herself or to her other halves, no one has dared to ask.

The hindmost share of this exalted beast is said to be a great winged serpent with scales as green as weathered bronze. She breathes no fire, as one might expect, for that is left to the goat, but many a man has returned with wounds that weep poison, their bodies curled in unimaginable pain.

The gods speak not of her, her parentage is uncertain, and the stories told of her speak only of her claws, like great daggers, and the strange white eyes that will catch you even before you set foot on shore.

Lycia is a sprawling kingdom and the great Chimera keeps it well. She must be contented, one might think, because despite the warnings and terrifying tales, there are many who have ventured to those shores and who have returned unharmed, and there are others, though few in number, who have returned wiser indeed than they left.

Though her reasoning is alien, her wisdom is infallible, god given, and true. Such is the mystery of the Chimera; a god, a monster, a guardian, a queen.

