

A WONDROUS AND TERRIFYING WORLD
OF SUPERHUMAN BEINGS BROUGHT MAGICALLY
ALIVE IN THIS INCREDIBLY
EXCITING TELLING OF GREAT ADVENTURES

**HEROES,
GODS
AND
MONSTERS
OF THE
GREEK
MYTHS**

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PERMA-BOUND
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swallowed his children as they were born. First three daughters—Hestia, Demeter, and Hera; then two sons—Hades and Poseidon. One by one, he swallowed them all.

Rhea was furious. She was determined that he should not eat her next child who she felt sure would be a son. When her time came, she crept down the slope of Olympus to a dark place to have her baby. It was a son, and she named him Zeus. She hung a golden cradle from the branches of an olive tree and put him to sleep there. Then she went back to the top of the mountain. She took a rock and wrapped it in swaddling clothes and held it to her breast, humming a lullaby. Cronos came snorting and bellowing out of his great bed, snatched the bundle from her and swallowed it, clothes and all.

Rhea stole down the mountainside to the swinging golden cradle and took her son down into the fields. She gave him to a shepherd family to raise, promising that their sheep would never be eaten by wolves.

Here Zeus grew to be a beautiful young boy, and Cronos, his father, knew nothing about him. Finally, however, Rhea became lonely for him and brought him back to the court of the gods, introducing him to Cronos as the new cupbearer. Cronos was pleased because the boy was beautiful.

One night Rhea and Zeus prepared a special drink. They mixed mustard and salt with the nectar. Next morning, after a mighty swallow, Cronos vomited up first a stone, and then Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon—who, being gods, were still undigested, still alive. They thanked Zeus and immediately chose him to be their leader.

Then a mighty battle raged. Cronos was joined by the Titans, his half-brothers, huge, twisted, dark creatures taller than trees, whom he kept pent up in the mountains until there was fighting to be done. They at-



Zeus

Cronos, father of the gods, who gave his name to time, married his sister Rhea, goddess of earth. Now, Cronos had become king of the gods by killing his father, Uranus, the First One. The dying Uranus had prophesied, saying, "You murder me now and steal my throne—but one of your own sons will dethrone you, for crime begets crime."

So Cronos was very careful. One by one, he

tacked the young gods furiously. But Zeus had allies too. He had gone to darker caverns—caves under caves under caves, deep in the mountainside—formed by the first bubbles of the cooling earth. Here Cronos thousands of centuries before (a short time in the life of a god) had pent up other monsters, the one-eye Cyclopes and the Hundred-handed Ones. Zeus unshackled these ugly cousins and led them against the Titans.

There was a great rushing and tumult in the skies. The people on earth heard mighty thunder and saw mountains shatter. The earth quaked and tidal waves rolled as the gods fought. The Titans were tall as trees, and old Cronos was a crafty leader. He attacked fiercely, driving the young gods before him. But Zeus had laid a trap. Halfway up the slope of Olympus, he whistled for his cousins, the Hundred-handed Ones, who had been lying in ambush. They took up huge boulders, a hundred each, and hurled them downhill at the Titans. The Titans thought the mountain itself was falling on them. They broke ranks and fled.

The young goat-god Pan was shouting with joy. Later he said that it was his shout that made the Titans flee. That is where we get the word "panic."

Now the young gods climbed to Olympus, took over the castle, and Zeus became their king. No one knows what happened to Cronos and his Titans. But sometimes mountains still explode in fire and the earth still quakes, and no one knows exactly why.

against him. She drugged his drink; they surrounded him as he slept and bound him with rawhide thongs. He raged and roared and swore to destroy them, but they had stolen his thunderbolt, and he could not break the thongs.

But his faithful cousin, the Hundred-handed Briareus, who had helped him against the Titans, was working as his gardener. He heard the quarreling under the palace window, looked in, and saw his master bound to the couch. He reached through with his hundred long arms and unbound the hundred knots.

Zeus jumped from the couch and seized his thunderbolt. The terrified plotters fell to their knees, weeping and pleading. He seized Hera and hung her in the sky, binding her with golden chains. And the others did not dare to rescue her, although her voice was like the wind sobbing. But her weeping kept Zeus awake. In the morning he said he would free her if she swore never to rebel again. She promised, and Zeus promised to mend his ways too. But they kept watching each other.

Zeus was king of the gods, lord of the sky. His sister Demeter was the earth-goddess, lady of growing things. His sister Hera, queen of the gods, was also his wife. His brother Poseidon was god of the sea. His other brother, Hades, ruled a dark domain, the underworld, the land beyond death.

The other gods in the Pantheon were Zeus's children; three of them were also Hera's. These were Ares, the god of war; Hephaestus, the smith-god, forger of weapons; and Eris, goddess of discord, who shrieks beside Ares in his battle chariot. The rest of Zeus's children were born out of wedlock. Three of them entered the Pantheon.

The first was Athene, and the story of how she was born is told in the next chapter.



Hera

Now, these gods reigned for some three thousand years. There were many of them, but twelve chief ones. Zeus married his sister Hera—a family habit. They were always quarreling. He angered her by his infidelities; she enraged him with her suspicions. She was the queen of intriguers and always found it easy to outwit Zeus, who was busy with many things.

Once she persuaded the other gods into a plot

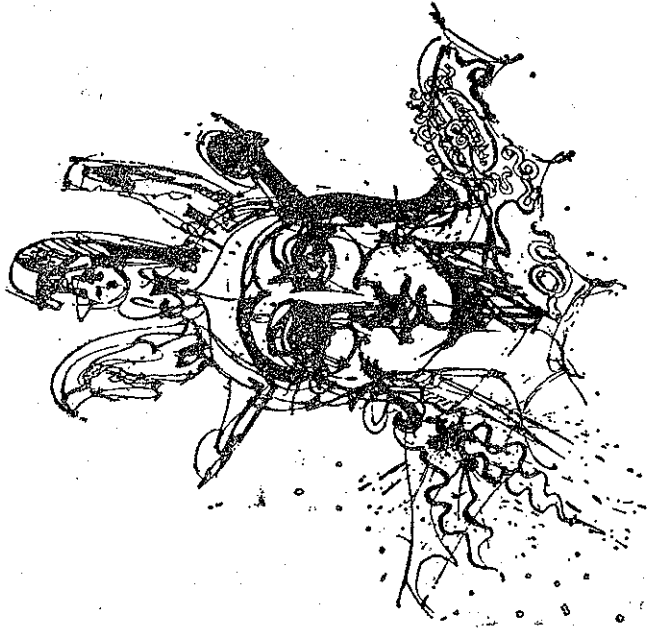
swam after her. She climbed on the bank and became a serpent and wriggled away. He changed himself into a serpent and wriggled after her and caught her. And the two serpents plaited themselves into beautiful loops.

After he left her, he heard a bird cry and a fish leap, and those wild sounds combined to become a prophecy, which the rattling leaves echoed: "Oh, Zeus, Metis will bear a child, a girl child. But if she bears again, it will be a son who will depose you as you deposed Cronos."

The next day Zeus walked in his garden again and found Metis there. This time she did not flee. He spoke softly to her and smiled. She came to him. Suddenly he opened his mouth and swallowed her.

That afternoon he suffered a headache—the worst headache that anyone, god or mortal, had suffered since the beginning of time. It was exactly as if someone were inside him with a spear, thrusting at all the soft places in his head. He shouted for Hephaestus, who came rushing up with hammer and wedge. Zeus put his head on the anvil, and Hephaestus split the mighty skull. Then Hephaestus leaped back, frightened, because out of the head sprang a tall maiden in armor, holding a long spear.

This was Athene, the gray-eyed, the wide-browed. The manner of her birth gave her domain over intellectual activities. It was she who taught man how to use tools. She taught him to invent the ax, the plough, the ox-yoke, the wheel, and the sail. She taught his wife to spin and weave. She concocted the science of numbers and taught it to man—but never to woman. She hated Ares and took great pleasure in thwarting him on the field of battle. For all his mighty strength, she often beat him, because she was a mistress of strategy. Before battle, captains prayed to her for tactics. Before trial, judges prayed to her for wisdom. It was she who stated that compassion was the best part



Athene

Zeus was strolling on Olympus one morning and noticed a new maiden walking in his garden. She was Metis, a Titaness, daughter of one of his old enemies. But the war was long ago, and she was beautiful. He charged down the slope after her.

She turned into a hawk and flew away. He turned into a hawk and flew after her. She flew over the lake and dived in and became a fish. He became a fish and

of wisdom. The other gods didn't know what she meant by this. But some men understood and were grateful. All in all, she was perhaps the best-loved god in the Pantheon. The people of Athens named their beautiful city after her.

There are many stories about Athene—about her skill in battle, her wisdom, and her kindness. But, like the other gods, she was also very jealous. One of the best stories is that of Arachne.

Arachne was a young girl who lived in Lydia, famous for its purple dye. Her joy was weaving, and she wove the most beautiful things anyone had ever seen: cloaks so light you could not feel them about your shoulders, but warmer than fur; tapestries wrought with pictures so marvelous that birds would fly through the window and try to eat the cherries off the woven bough. She was a very young girl, and everyone praised her—and soon she began to praise herself. She said:

"I, I am the greatest weaver in all the world. The greatest since the world began, no doubt. In fact, I can weave better than Athene herself."

Athene heard this, of course. The gods are very quick to hear criticism and very swift to act. So she came to earth, to the little village where Arachne lived.

The girl was inside, spinning. She heard a knock at the door and opened it. There stood a lady so tall, so sternly beautiful that Arachne knew she must be a goddess, and she was afraid she knew which one. She fell on her knees. Far above her head she heard a voice speaking softly, saying terrible things.

"Yes, miserable girl, I am Athene. I am the goddess you have mocked. Is there any reason I should not kill you?"

Arachne shook her head, weeping. She could not answer.

"Very well," said Athene. "Prepare yourself for death. You have defied the gods and must die."

Then Arachne stood up and said, "Before I die, great Athene, let me give you a present." She went in and took a lovely cloak she had woven and gave it to her. And said: "Take this cloak. It must often get cold up high on Olympus. This will shield you from the wind. Please take it. I am sure you have nothing so fine."

Athene shook her head and said, "Poor child. You are being destroyed by your own worth. Your talent has poisoned you with pride like the sting of a scorpion. So that which makes beauty brings death. But it is a handsome cloak, and I appreciate the gift. I will give you one chance. You have boasted that you can spin and weave better than I—than I, who invented the loom, the distaff and the spindle, and out of the fleece of the clouds wove the first counterpane for my father, Zeus, who likes to sleep warm, and dyed it with the colors of the sunset. But you say you can weave better than I. Very well, you shall have a chance to prove it. And your own villagers shall judge. Seven days from today, we shall meet. You will set your spindle in that meadow, and I shall be in my place, and we shall have a contest. You will weave what you will, and I shall do so too. Then we will show what we have done, and the people will judge. If you win, I shall withdraw the punishment. If you lose, it is your life. Do you agree?"

"Oh, yes," said Arachne. "Thank you, dear goddess, for sparing my life."

"It is not yet spared," said Athene.

The word flashed from village to village. When the time came, not only Arachne's neighbors but all the people in the land had gathered in the great meadow to watch the contest. Arachne's house was the last in the village and faced the great meadow. She had set up her loom outside the door. Athene sat on a low flat hill overlooking the field. Her loom was as large as Arachne's cottage.

The girl went first. At the sight of her sitting spinning there in the sunlight, the crowd pushed in so close she hardly had room to work. Her white hands danced among the flax, and she worked so quickly, so deftly, that she seemed to have forgotten the loom and to be weaving in the air. Swiftly and more swiftly she tapped on the wool with her fingers, making it billow and curl, then rolling it quickly into a ball, then shaking it out again, straining the wool into long shining threads with quick little pokes of her thumb at her spindle. It was said that her working was as beautiful as her work, and when she was told that, she always smiled and said, "It is the same thing." So she wove, and the people watched. Then the finished cloth began to come from the loom, and everybody laughed to see. For they were joyous scenes. Morning scenes: a little boy and a little girl running in a green field among yellow flowers, chased by a black dog; a maiden at a window dreamily combing her hair; a young man watching the sea, counting the waves. And, later, in a purple dusk, that same young man and girl standing under a tree looking at each other. Swiftly and more swiftly the white hands danced between loom and spindle. She wove bouquets of flowers for the wedding, and a wedding gown for the bride, and a gorgeous cloak for the young husband. And, remembering what Athene had said before, she spun a counterpane for their bed. Each square not a block of color, but a little picture—one from the childhood of the man, one from the childhood of the bride, all together, mixing, as their memories would mix now.

The counterpane was last. When she arose and snapped it out, the people gasped and laughed and wept with joy. And Arachne curtsied toward the low hill, and Athene began to spin.

The goddess had conjured up a flock of plump white woolly clouds about her hilltop. So she did not

have to comb fleece or draw thread; she used cloud-wool, the finest stuff in all the world. And she dyed it with the colors of the dawn and the colors of the sunset and the colors of sleep and the colors of storm. Now the whole western part of the sky was her loom. She flung great tapestries across the horizon. Scenes from Olympus—things that mortal man had never hoped to see. Almost too terrible to see . . . Cronos cutting up Oranos with a scythe . . . Zeus charging across the firmament with his Hundred-handed Ones, shattering the Titans . . . the binding of Zeus . . . the punishment of Heta. Zeus chasing Metis as hawk and fish and snake. Then the birth of Athene herself, springing from Zeus's broken head. Then more quiet scenes: Athene teaching the arts to man; teaching him to plough, to sail, to ride in chariots; teaching the women to spin. Then, finally—muddling it all up, poking her long spindle among the woven clouds, and mixing them and stirring up a dark strange picture—the future of man. Man growing huge and monstrous, his trees turning to spikes, his fields to stone. Swollen and dropsical with pride, building something so loathsome he had to look away while he was making it.

This was too much for the multitude. The vast crowd fell on its knees and wept. Arachne was watching. She had never moved from the time Athene had started to work, but stood there straight with pale face and glittering eyes, watching. And when the people fell on their knees, she turned and went away. She walked quietly to a grove of trees and there took a rope and hanged herself.

Athene came down from the hill and spoke no word to the people, who dispersed. Then she went to the grove and saw Arachne hanging there. The girl's face was black, her eyes were bulging, her hair was streaming. Athene reached her long arm and touched the girl on the shoulder. The face grew blacker, and

the eyes bulged more. The body shrank; the arms and legs dwindled and multiplied. Then Athene touched the rope. It shriveled, growing thinner and thinner, until it was a frail shining strand. And there at the end of this shining silken hair swung a small hairy creature with many legs.

It looked at Athene, then turned and scuttled up its thread, drawing it up as it climbed. It floated away over the grass until it came to a low bush, cast another loop, and sat there practicing, for it knew that now it was meant to spin without rivalry until the end of time.

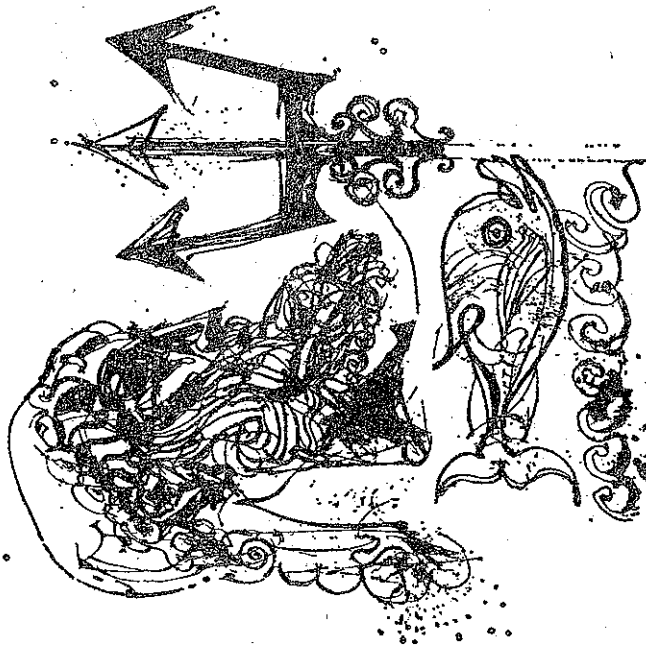
That is why spiders are called Arachnids by those who know them best.

makes claim on land and sky. Hades, who was always unlucky, had to take the underworld. The earth was held as a commonwealth and left to the goddesses to manage.

Poseidon left Olympus and came to his kingdom. He immediately set about building a huge underwater palace with a great pearl and coral throne. He needed a queen and chose Thetis, a beautiful Nereid, or water nymph. But it was prophesied that any son born to Thetis would be greater than his father, so Poseidon decided to fry elsewhere. The prophecy came true. The son of Thetis was Achilles.

Poseidon chose another Nereid named Amphitrite. But like his brother Zeus, he was a great traveler and had hundreds of children in different places. He was a very difficult god, changeful and quarrelsome. He did bear grudges; but he could be pleased, and then his smile was radiant. He liked jokes and thought up very curious forms for his creatures. He liked to startle nymphs with monsters, and concocted the octopus, the squid, the sea-polyp or jellyfish, the swordfish, blowfish, sea cow, and many others. Once, trying to appease Amphitrite's jealous rage, he thought up the dolphin and gave it to her as a gift.

He was greedy and aggressive, always trying to add to his kingdom. Once he claimed Attica as his own and stabbed his trident into the hillside where the Acropolis still stands, and a spring of salt water spouted. Now, the people of Athens did not want to belong to the kingdom of the sea. They were afraid of Poseidon, who had a habit of seizing all the youth of a town when he was in the mood. So they prayed to be put under the protection of another god. Athene heard their prayers. She came down and planted an olive tree by the side of the spring. Poseidon was enraged. His face darkened, and he roared with fury, raising a storm. A fishing fleet was blown off the sea and never came



Poseidon

After Cronos was deposed, the three sons threw dice for his empire. Zeus, the youngest, won and chose the sky. Poseidon smiled to himself because the sky was empty, and he knew that the impulsive Zeus had chosen it because it looked so high. And now, he, Poseidon, could choose as he would have done if he had won. He chose the sea. He had always wanted it; it is the best place for adventures and secrets and

to port. He challenged Athene to single combat and threatened to stir up a tidal wave to break over the city if she refused. She accepted. But Zeus heard the sound of this quarreling and came down and decreed a truce. Then all the gods sat in council to hear the rival claims. After hearing both Athene and Poseidon, they voted to award the city to Athene because her olive tree was the better gift. After that, Athenians had to be very careful when they went to sea, and were often unfortunate in their naval battles.

Poseidon was very fond of Demeter and pursued her hotly whenever he thought about it. He cornered her finally one hot afternoon in a mountain pass, and demanded that she love him. She didn't know what to do—he was so huge, so implacable, so persistent.

Finally Demeter said, "Give me a gift. You have made creatures for the sea; now make me a land animal. But a beautiful one, the most beautiful ever seen."

She thought she was safe, because she believed he could make only monsters. She was amazed when he made her a horse, and gasped with delight when she saw it. And Poseidon was so struck by his handiwork that he swiftly made a herd of horses that began to gallop about the meadow, tossing their heads, flirting their tails, kicking up their back legs, and neighing joyously. And he was so fascinated by the horses that he forgot all about Demeter and leaped on one and rode off. Later he made another herd of green ones for his undersea stables. But Demeter kept the first herd; from that all the horses in the world have descended.

Another story says it took Poseidon a full week to make the horse. During that time he made and cast aside many other creatures that didn't come out right. But he simply threw them away without killing them, and they made their way into the world. From them have come the camel, the hippopotamus, the giraffe, the donkey, and the zebra.

In another story, Demeter turned herself into a mare to escape Poseidon. But he immediately changed himself into a stallion, galloped after her, and caught her. From this courtship came a wild horse, Arion, and the nymph named Despoena.

Demeter was also a moon goddess. And all through mythology there is a connection between horse and moon and sea. The she-horse is given a sea-name, "mare"; the moon swings the tides, the waves have white manes, the dripping horses stamp on the beach, and their hooves leave moon-shaped marks. An old, old thing that has not entirely disappeared.

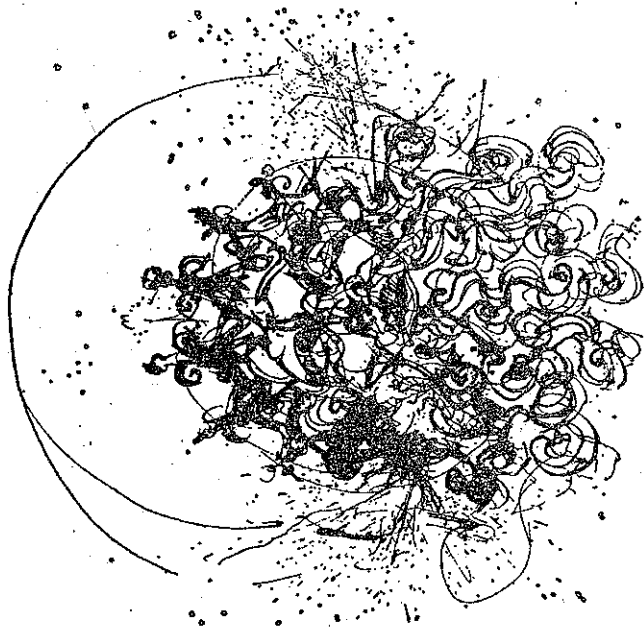
gate was guarded by Cerberus, a three-headed dog who had an appetite for live meat and attacked everyone but spirits. Beyond the gate, in Tartarus, was a great wide field shaded by black poplars. Here lived the dead—heroes and cowards, soldiers, shepherds, priests, minstrels, slaves. They wandered back and forth aimlessly. When they spoke, they twittered like bats. Here they awaited trial by three judges—Minos, Rhadamantius, and Aeacus.

Those who had particularly displeased the gods were given special punishment. Sisyphus must always push a huge rock uphill. Each time he gets it halfway up, it breaks loose and rolls down to the bottom, and he must begin again. And this he will do for all time. Tantalus has been given a burning thirst and set chin-deep in a cool, clear stream of water. But every time he bends to put his lips to the water, it shrinks away, and he can never drink. Here he will stand as long as Sisyphus rolls his stone.

But these are special cases. Most of the souls were judged to be not too good and not too bad, but simply dead. They went back to the field, which is called the Field of Asphodel, to wait—for nothing.

Those judged to be of unusual virtue went to the Elysian Fields close by. Here it was always holiday. The air was full of music. The shades danced and played all day long—all night long too—for the dead need no sleep. Also, these happy spirits had the option of being reborn on earth. Only the bravest accepted. There was a special part of Elysium called the Isles of the Blest. Here lived those who had been three times born and three times gained Elysium.

Hades and his queen lived in a great palace made of black rock. He was very jealous of his brothers and scarcely ever left his domain. He was fiercely possessive, gloated over every new arrival, and demanded a headcount from Charon at the close of each day. Never



Hades

When the Greeks buried their dead, they put a coin under the corpse's tongue so that his soul could pay the fare on the ferry that crossed the river Styx. It was Charon who rowed the boat; he was a miser. Souls who couldn't pay for the ride had to wait on this side of the river. Sometimes they came back to haunt those who hadn't given them the fare.

On the other side of the river was a great wall. Its

did he allow any of his subjects to escape. Nor did he allow a mortal to visit Tartarus and return. There were only two exceptions to this rule, and those are other stories.

The palace grounds and the surrounding fields were called Erebus; this was the deepest part of the underworld. No birds flew here, but the sound of wings was heard; for here lived the Erinyes, or Furies, who were older than the gods. Their names were Tisiphone, Alecto, and Megaera. They were hags, with snaky hair, red-hot eyes, and yellow teeth. They slashed the air with metal-studded whips, and when they found a victim, they whipped the flesh from his bones. Their task was to visit earth and punish evil-doers, especially those who had escaped other punishment. They were greatly feared; no one dared say their name. But they were referred to as the "Eumenides," or Kindly Ones. Hades valued them. They enriched his kingdom, for their attentions persuaded people to suicide. He enjoyed their conversation. When they returned to Erebus after their work was done, they circled low over the palace grounds, screaming their tale, and the latest gossip.

Hades was well-cast to rule the dead. He was violent, loathed change, and was given to slow black rage. His most dramatic hour was when he kidnaped Persephone and made her his queen. But that belongs to the next story.

Apollo

Apollo was the most beautiful of the gods. His hair was dark gold, his eyes stormy blue. He wore a tunic of golden panther skin, carried his golden bow, and wore a quiver of golden arrows. His chariot was beaten gold; its horses were white with golden manes and flame-colored eyes. He was god of the sun always. Later he became patron of music, poetry, mathematics, and medicine. And, later, when he was a mature god, he preached moderation. He bade his worshippers to look first into their own hearts and find there the beginnings of wisdom and to conduct themselves prudently in all things. But in his youth he did many cruel and wanton deeds. Several times he was almost expelled from the company of the gods by Zeus whom he had angered with his wild folly.

As soon as he was given his bow and arrows, he raced down from Olympus to hunt the Python who had hunted his mother. Dryads, who are tattle-tales, told him he could find his enemy at Mount Parnassus. There he sped. As he stood on a hill, he saw the great serpent weaving its dusty coils far below. He notched an arrow, drew his bow, and let fly. It darted like light; he saw it strike, saw the huge coils flail in agony. Shouting with savage glee, he raced down the slope, but when he got there he found the serpent gone. It had left a trail of blood which he followed to the oracle of Mother Earth at Delphi. Python was hiding in a cave, where he could not be followed. Apollo breathed on his arrowheads and shot them into the cave as fast as he could. They broke into flames when they hit. Smoke filled the cave, and the serpent had to crawl out. Apollo, standing on a rock, shot him so full of arrows he looked like a porcupine. He skinned the great snake and saved the hide for a gift.

Now, it was a sacred place where he had done his killing; here lived the oracles of Mother Earth, whom the gods themselves consulted. They were priestesses,

trained from infancy. They chewed laurel, built fire of magic herbs, and sat in the smoke, which threw them into a trance wherein they saw—and told in riddles—what was to come. Knowing that he had already violated a shrine, Apollo thought he might as well make his deed as large as possible, and claimed the oracles for his own—bidding them to prophesy in his name.

When Mother Earth complained to Zeus about the killing of her Python, Apollo smoothly promised to make amends. He instituted annual games at Delphi in celebration of his victory, and these he graciously named after his enemy, calling them the Pythian games. And he named the oracles Pythonesses.

Less excusable was Apollo's treatment of a satyr named Marsyas. This happy fellow had the misfortune to be an excellent musician—a realm Apollo considered his own—and where he would brook no rivalry. Hearing the satyr praised too often, Apollo invited him to a contest. The winner was to choose a penalty to which the loser would have to submit, and the Muses were to judge. So Marsyas played his flute, and Apollo played his lyre. They played exquisitely; the Muses could not choose between them. Then Apollo shouted, "Now you must turn your instrument upside down, and play and sing at the same time. That is the rule. I go first." Thereupon the god turned his lyre upside down, and played and sang a hymn praising the gods, and especially their beautiful daughters, the Muses. But you cannot play a flute upside down, and certainly cannot sing while playing it, so Marsyas was declared the loser. Apollo collected his price. He flayed Marsyas alive and nailed his skin to a tree. A stream gushed from the tree's roots and became a river. On the banks of that river grew reeds which sang softly when the wind blew. People called the river Marsyas, and that is still its name.

Apollo . . . 'pollo . . ." but he paid them no heed. He plaited grass into shoes for the cows and fitted them over their hooves and drove them away.

When Apollo returned, he was furious to see his cows gone, and even more furious when he searched for tracks and found none—only odd sweeping marks on the ground. The crows chattered, "A baby stole them . . . your brother, your brother . . ." But this made no sense to Apollo; besides he did not trust crows. He did not know where to begin looking; he searched far and wide, but could find no clue.

Then one morning he passed a cave he had passed a hundred times before. But this time he heard strange beautiful sounds coming out of it—sounds unlike anything he had ever heard before—and he looked inside. There, drowsing by the fire, was a tall lovely Titaness named Maia, whom he had seen before in the garden on Olympus. Sitting in her lap was a little baby boy doing something to a large tortoise shell from which the strange sounds seemed to be coming.

"Good day, cousin," said Apollo. "Are you to be congratulated on a new son?"

"Hail, bright Phoebus," said Maia. "May I have the honor of presenting your half-brother, young Hermes?"

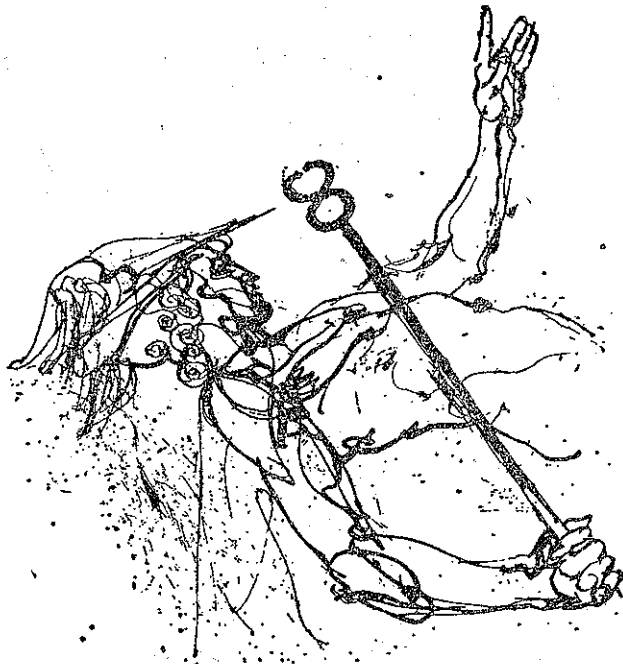
"Half-brother, eh? Well, that's an honor without being a distinction. What's that he's playing with?"

"He makes his own toys," said Maia proudly. "He's so clever, you can't imagine. He made this out of an old shell that he strung with cowgut, and from it he draws the most ravishing sounds. Listen—"

"Cowgut? May I ask what cow he persuaded to contribute her vital cords for his pastime?"

"I do not understand your question, cousin."

"Understand this, cousin. I have had a herd of cows stolen recently. The crows told me they had been



Hermes

Young gods were often precocious, but no one so much as Hermes who, five minutes after his birth, sneaked out of his crib and went searching for adventure. He toddled swiftly down the slope of Mount Cylene until he came to a meadow where he saw a herd of beautiful white cows grazing. He saw no cowherd and decided to steal them. A treeful of crows began to see the and whistle, "They belong to Apollo . . . to

taken by some baby, my brother, but I didn't believe them. I seem to owe them an apology."

"What?" cried Maia. "Are you accusing the innocent babe of being a cattle thief? For shame!"

"Mother, if you don't mind," said a clear little voice, "perhaps you'd better let me handle this." The baby stood on his mother's knee and bowed to Apollo. "I did take your cows, brother. But I didn't know they were yours. How could I have? And they are quite safe, except for one. Wishing to begin my life with an act of piety, I sacrificed her to the twelve gods."

"Twelve gods?" said Apollo haughtily. "I am acquainted with but eleven."

"Yes, sir," said Hermes. "But I have the honor to be the twelfth. Above all things, I wish your good will, fair brother. So, in return for this cow, allow me to make you a present—this instrument. I call it a lyre. I'll be glad to teach you to play."

Apollo was enchanted with the trade. He stayed in the cave all that afternoon practicing his scales. As he was strumming his new toy, he noticed Hermes cutting reeds, which the child swiftly tied together, notched in a certain way, then put to his lips, and began to make other sounds, even more beautiful than the lyre could produce.

"What's that?" cried Apollo. "What do you call that? I want that too."

"I don't need any more cows," said Hermes.

"I must have it. What else of mine do you wish?"

"Your golden staff."

"But this is my herdsman's staff. Do you not know that I am the god of herdsmen, and that this is the rod of authority?"

"A minor office," said Hermes. "Unworthy of the lord of the sun. Perhaps you would allow me to take over the chore. Give me your golden staff, and I will give you these pipes."

"Agreed! Agreed!"

"But since pipes and lyre together will make you god of music, I must have something to boot. Teach me augury."

"You drive a hard bargain for a nursling," said Apollo. "I think you belong on Olympus, brother. This cave will not long offer scope for your talents."

"Oh, yes, take me there!" cried Hermes. "I am eager to meet Father Zeus."

So Apollo took Hermes to Olympus and introduced him to his father. Zeus was intrigued by the wit and impudence of the child. He hid him away from Hera and spent hours conversing with him.

"You say you wish to enter the Pantheon," said Zeus. "But really—all the realms and powers seem to have been parceled out."

"Father, I am of modest nature," said Hermes. "I require no vast dignities. Only a chance to be useful, to serve you, and to dwell in your benign and potent presence. Let me be your herald. Let me carry your tidings. You will find me quick and resourceful, and what I can't remember I will make up. And, I guarantee, your subjects will get the message."

"Very well," said Zeus. "I will give you a trial."

So Hermes became the messenger god and accomplished his duties with such swiftness, ingenuity, and cheerfulness that he became a favorite of his father, who soon rewarded him with other posts. Hermes became patron of liars and thieves and gamblers, god of commerce, framer of treaties, and guardian of travelers. Hades became his client foe and called upon him to usher the newly dead from earth to Tartarus.

He kept a workshop on Olympus and there invented the alphabet, astronomy, and the scales; also, playing cards and card games. He carried Apollo's golden staff decorated with white ribbons, wore a pot-

shaped hat, and winged sandals which carried him through the air more swiftly than any bird could fly.

It was he who gave Zeus the idea of disguising himself and mingling with mortals when bored with Olympus. He joined his father in this, and they had many adventures together . . . which will be told in their place.

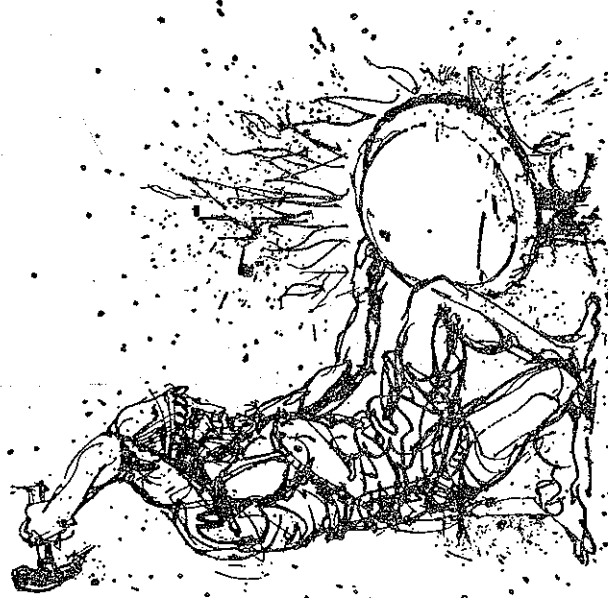
For a night and a day he fell, and hit the ground at the edge of the sea with such force that both of his legs were broken. He lay there on the beach mewing piteously, unable to crawl, wracked with pain, but unable to die because he was immortal. Finally the tide came up. A huge wave curled him under its arm and carried him off to sea. And there he sank like a stone, and was caught by the playful Thetis, a naiad, who thought he was a tadpole.

When Thetis understood it was a baby she had caught, she made a pet of him and kept him in her grotto. She was amazed at the way the crippled child worked shells and bright pebbles into jewelry. One day she appeared at a great festival of the gods, wearing a necklace he had made. Hera noticed the ornament and praised it and asked her how she had come by it. Thetis told her of the strange twisted child whom someone had dropped into the ocean, and who lived now in her cave making wonderful jewels. Hera divined that it was her own son and demanded him back.

Hephaestus returned to Olympus. There Hera presented him with a broken mountain nearby, where he could set up forges and bellows. She gave him the brawny Cyclopes to be his helpers, and promised him Aphrodite as a bride if he would labor in the mountain and make her fine things. Hephaestus agreed because he loved her and excused her cruelty to him.

"I know that I am ugly, Mother," he said, "but the fates would have it so. And I will make you gems so beautiful for your tapering arms and white throat and black hair that you will forget my ugliness sometimes, and rejoice that you have taken me back from the sea."

He became the smith-god, the great artificer, lord of mechanics. And the mountain always smoked and rumbled with his toil, and he has always been very ugly and very useful.



Hephaestus

No one celebrated the birth of Hephaestus. His mother, Hera, had awaited him with great eagerness, hoping for a child so beautiful, so gifted, that it would make Zeus forget his heroic swarm of children from lesser consorts. But when the baby was born, she was appalled to see that he was shriveled and ugly, with an irritating bleating wail. She did not wait for Zeus to see him, but snatched the infant up and hurled him off Olympus.

But all the tales agree that she is the goddess of desire, and, unlike other Olympians, is never distracted from her duties. Her work is her pleasure; her profession, her hobby. She thinks of nothing but love, and nobody expects more of her.

She was born out of the primal murder. When Cronos butchered his father, Oranos, with the scythe his mother had given him, he flung the dismembered body off Olympus into the sea, where it floated, spouting blood and seed which drifted, whitening in the sun. From the foam rose a tall beautiful maiden, naked and dripping. Waves attended her. Poseidon's white horses brought her to the island of Cythera. Wherever she stepped, the sand turned to grass and flowers bloomed. Then she went to Cyprus. Hill-sides burst into flowers, and the air was full of birds.

Zeus brought her to Olympus. She was still dripping from the sea. She wore nothing but the bright tunic of her hair, which fell to mid-thigh and was yellow as daffodils. She looked about the great throne room where the gods were assembled to meet her, arched her throat, and laughed with joy.

Hera was watching Zeus narrowly. "You must marry her off," she whispered. "At once—without delay!"

"Yes," said Zeus. "Some sort of marriage would seem to be indicated."

And he said, "Brothers, sons, cousins, Aphrodite is to be married. She will choose her own husband. So make your suit."

The gods closed around her, shouting promises, pressing their claims. Earth-shaking Poseidon swung his mighty trident to clear a space about himself. "I claim you for the sea," he said. "You are sea-born, foam-born, and belong to me. I offer you grottoes, ridges, gems, fair surfaces, dark surroundings. I offer you variety. Drowned sailors, typhoons, sunsets. I offer you



Aphrodite

Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty; so there are more stories told about her than anyone else, god or mortal. Being what she is, she enters other stories; and such is the power of her magic girdle that he who even speaks her name falls under her spell, and seems to glimpse her white shoulders and catch the perfume of her golden hair. And he loses his wits and begins to babble and tells the same story in many ways.

secrets. I offer you riches that the earth does not know—power more subtle, more fluid than the dull fixed land. Come with me—be queen of the sea.”

He slammed his trident on the floor, and a huge green tidal wave swelled out of the sea—high, high as Olympus, curling its mighty green tongue as if to lick up the mountain—and poised there, quivering, not breaking, as the gods gaped. Then Poseidon raised his trident, and the mighty wave subsided like a ripple. He bowed to Aphrodite. She smiled at him, but said nothing.

Then the gods spoke in turn, offering her great gifts. Apollo offered her a throne and a crown made of hottest sun-gold, a golden chariot drawn by white swans, and the Muses for her handmaids. Hermes offered to make her queen of the crossways where all must come—where she would hear every story, see every traveler, know each deed—a rich pageant of adventure and gossip so that she would never grow bored.

She smiled at Apollo and Hermes and made no answer.

Then Hera, scowling, reached her long white arm and dragged Hephaestus, the lame smith-god, from where he had been hiding behind the others, ashamed to be seen. And she hissed into his ear, “Speak, fool. Say exactly what I told you to say.”

He limped forward with great embarrassment and stood before the radiant goddess, eyes cast down, not daring to look at her. He said, “I would make a good husband for a girl like you. I work late.”

Aphrodite smiled. She said nothing, but put her finger under the chin of the grimy little smith, raised his face, leaned down, and kissed him on the lips.

That night they were married. And at the wedding party she finally spoke—whispering to each of her suitors—telling each one when he might come with his gift.

"Perhaps you had better leave the race of man to me," said Zeus. "What you call ignorance is innocence. What you call darkness is the shadow of my decree. Man is happy now. And he is so framed that he will remain happy unless someone persuades him that he is unhappy. Let us not speak of this again."

But Prometheus said, "Look at him. Look below. He crouches in caves. He is at the mercy of beast and weather. He eats his meat raw. If you mean something by this, enlighten me with your wisdom. Tell me why you refuse to give man the gift of fire."

Zeus answered, "Do you not know, Prometheus, that every gift brings a penalty? This is the way the Fates weave destiny—by which gods also must abide. Man does not have fire, true, nor the crafts which fire teaches. On the other hand, he does not know disease, warfare, old age, or that inward pest called worry. He is happy, I say, happy without fire. And so he shall remain."

"Happy as beasts are happy," said Prometheus. "Of what use to make a separate race called man and endow him with little fur, some wit, and a curious charm of unpredictability? If he must live like this, why separate him from the beasts at all?"

"He has another quality," said Zeus, "the capacity for worship. An aptitude for admiring our power, being puzzled by our riddles and amazed by our caprice. That is why he was made."

"Would not fire, and the graces he can put on with fire, make him more interesting?"

"More interesting, perhaps, but infinitely more dangerous. For there is this in man too: a vaunting pride that needs little sustenance to make it swell to giant size. Improve his lot, and he will forget that which makes him pleasing—his sense of worship, his humility. He will grow big and poisoned with pride and fancy himself a god, and before we know it, we shall see him



Prometheus

Prometheus was a young Titan, no great admirer of Zeus. Although he knew the great lord of the sky hated explicit questions, he did not hesitate to beard him when there was something he wanted to know.

One morning he came to Zeus, and said, "O Thunderer, I do not understand your design. You have caused the race of man to appear on earth, but you keep him in ignorance and darkness."

storming Olympus. Enough, Prometheus! I have been patient with you, but do not try me too far. Go now and trouble me no more with your speculations."

Prometheus was not satisfied. All that night he lay awake making plans. Then he left his couch at dawn, and standing tiptoe on Olympus, stretched his arm to the eastern horizon where the first faint flames of the sun were flickering. In his hand he held a reed filled with a dry fiber; he thrust it into the sunrise until a spark smoldered. Then he put the reed in his tunic and came down from the mountain.

At first men were frightened by the gift. It was so hot, so quick; it bit sharply when you touched it, and for pure spite, made the shadows dance. They thanked Prometheus and asked him to take it away. But he took the haunch of a newly killed deer and held it over the fire. And when the meat began to sear and sputter, filling the cave with its rich smells, the people felt themselves melting with hunger and flung themselves on the meat and devoured it greedily, burning their tongues.

"This that I have brought you is called 'fire,'" Prometheus said. "It is an ill-natured spirit, a little brother of the sun, but if you handle it carefully, it can change your whole life. It is very greedy; you must feed it twigs, but only until it becomes a proper size. Then you must stop, or it will eat everything in sight—and you too. If it escapes, use this magic: water. It fears the water spirit, and if you touch it with water, it will fly away until you need it again."

He left the fire burning in the first cave, with children staring at it wide-eyed, and then went to every cave in the land.

Then one day Zeus looked down from the mountain and was amazed. Everything had changed. Man had come out of his cave. Zeus saw woodmen's huts, farm houses, villages, walled towns, even a castle or two. He saw men cooking their food, carrying torches

to light their way at night. He saw forges blazing, men beating out ploughs, keels, swords, spears. They were making ships and raising white wings of sails and daring to use the fury of the winds for their journeys. They were wearing helmets, riding out in chariots to do battle, like the gods themselves.

Zeus was full of rage. He seized his largest thunderbolt. "So they want fire," he said to himself. "I'll give them fire—more than they can use. I'll turn their miserable little ball of earth into a cinder." But then another thought came to him, and he lowered his arm. "No," he said to himself, "I shall have vengeance—and entertainment too. Let them destroy themselves with their new skills. This will make a long twisted game, interesting to watch. I'll attend to them later. My first business is with Prometheus."

He called his giant guards and had them seize Prometheus, drag him off to the Caucasus, and there bind him to a mountain peak with great chains specially forged by Hephaestus—chains which even a Titan in agony could not break. And when the friend of man was bound to the mountain, Zeus sent two vultures to hover about him forever, tearing at his belly and eating his liver.

Men knew a terrible thing was happening on the mountain, but they did not know what. But the wind shrieked like a giant in torment and sometimes like fierce birds.

Many centuries he lay there—until another hero was born brave enough to defy the gods. He climbed to the peak in the Caucasus and struck the shackles from Prometheus and killed the vultures. His name was Heracles.

moned the gods and asked them each to give her a gift.

Apollo taught her to sing and play the lyre. Athene taught her to spin, Demeter to tend a garden. Aphrodite taught her how to look at a man without moving her eyes and how to dance without moving her legs. Poseidon gave her a pearl necklace and promised she would never drown. And finally Hermes gave her a beautiful golden box, which, he told her, she must never, never open. And then Hera gave her curiosity.

Hermes took her by the hand and led her down the slope of Olympus. He led her to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus, and said, "Father Zeus grieves at the disgrace which has fallen upon your family. And to show you that he holds you blameless in your brother's offense, he makes you this gift—this girl, fairest in all the world. She is to be your wife. Her name is Pandora, the all-gifted."

So Epimetheus and Pandora were married. Pandora spun and baked and tended her garden, and played the lyre and danced for her husband, and thought herself the happiest young bride in all the world. Only one thing bothered her—the golden box. First she kept it on the table and polished it every day so that all might admire it. But the sunlight lanced through the window, and the box sparkled and seemed to be winking at her.

She found herself thinking, "Hermes must have been teasing. He's always making jokes; everyone knows that. Yes, he was teasing, telling me never to open his gift. For if it is so beautiful outside, what must it be inside? Why, he has hidden a surprise for me there. Gems more lovely than have ever been seen, no doubt. If the box is so rich, the gift inside must be even more splendid—for that is the way of gifts. Perhaps Hermes is *waiting* for me to open the box and see what is inside and be delighted and thank him. Perhaps he thinks me ungrateful. . . ."

But even as she was telling herself this, she knew



Pandora

After Zeus had condemned Prometheus for giving fire to man, he began to plan how to punish man for accepting it.

Finally he hit upon a scheme. He ordered Hephaestus to mold a girl out of clay and to have Aphrodite pose for it to make sure it was beautiful. He breathed life into the clay figure; the clay turned to flesh, and she lay sleeping, all new. Then he sum-

it was not so—that the box must not be opened, that she must keep her promise.

Finally she took the box from the table and hid it in a dusty little storeroom. But it seemed to be burning there in the shadows. Its heat seemed to scorch her thoughts wherever she went. She kept passing that room and stepping into it, making excuses to dawdle there. Sometimes she took the box from its hiding place and stroked it, then quickly shoved it out of sight, and rushed out of the room.

She took it then, locked it in a heavy oaken chest, put great shackles on the chest, and dug a hole in her garden. She put the chest in, covered it over, and rolled a boulder on top of it. When Epimetheus came home that night, her hair was wild and her hands were bloody, her tunic torn and stained. But all she would tell him was that she had been working in the garden.

That night the moonlight blazed into the room. She could not sleep. The light pressed her eyes open. She sat up in bed and looked around. All the room was swimming in moonlight. Everything was different. There were deep shadows and swaths of silver, all mixed, all moving. She arose quietly and tiptoed from the room.

She went out into the garden. The flowers were blowing, the trees were swaying. The whole world was adance in the magic white fire of that moonlight. She walked to the rock and pushed it. It rolled away as lightly as a pebble. And she felt herself full of wild strength.

She took a shovel and dug down to the chest. She unshackled it and drew out the golden box. It was cold, cold; coldness burned her hand to the bone. She trembled. What was inside that box seemed to her now the very secret of life, which she must look upon or die.

She took the little golden key from her tunic, fitted it into the keyhole, and gently opened the lid. There was a swarming, a hot throbbing, a wild meaty rustling,

and a foul smell. Out of the box, as she held it up in the moonlight, swarmed small scaly lizardlike creatures with bat wings and burning red eyes.

They flew out of the box, circled her head once, clapping their wings and screaming thin little jeering screams—and then flew off into the night, hissing and cackling.

Then, half-fainting, sinking to her knees, Pandora, with her last bit of strength, clutched the box and slammed down the lid—catching the last little monster just as it was wriggling free. It shrieked and spat and clawed her hand, but she thrust it back into the box and locked it in. Then she dropped the box and fainted away.

What were those deathly creatures that flew out of the golden box? They were the ills that beset mankind: the spites, disease in its thousand shapes, old age, famine, insanity, and all their foul kin. After they flew out of the box, they scattered—flew into every home and swung from the rafters—waiting. And when their time comes, they fly and sting—and bring pain and sorrow and death.

At that, things could have been much worse. For the creature that Pandora shut into the box was the most dangerous of all. It was Foreboding, the final spite. If it had flown free, everyone in the world would have been told exactly what misfortune was to happen every day of his life. No hope would have been possible. And so there would have been an end to man. For though he can bear endless trouble, he cannot live with no hope at all.

Narcissus and Echo

Of all the nymphs of river and wood, a dryad named Echo was the best beloved. She was not only very beautiful and very kind, but had a haunting musical voice. The other dryads and naiads and creatures of the wood begged her to sing to them and tell them stories—and she did. She was a great favorite of Aphrodite, who used to come all the way from Olympus to chat with Echo and listen to her tales. Being goddess of love, she was especially concerned with gossip—which is mostly about who loves whom and what they are doing about it. And Echo kept her entertained as no one else could.

Aphrodite said, "All the world asks me for favors, Echo. But not you. Tell me, is there not someone you would wish to love you? Some man, boy, god? Just name him, and I will send my son Eros, who will shoot him with his arrow and make him fall madly in love with you."

But Echo laughed and said, "Alas, sweet Aphrodite, I have seen no man who pleases me. And gods are too fickle. Man and boy—I look at them all very carefully—but none seems beautiful enough to match my secret dream. When the time comes, I shall ask your help—if it ever comes."

"Well, you are lovely enough to demand the best," said Aphrodite. "On the other hand, the best happens only once. And who can wait so long? However, I am always at your service."

Now Echo did not know this, but at that moment the most beautiful boy in the whole world was lost in

that very wood, trying to find his way out. His name was Narcissus, and he was so handsome that he had never been able to speak to any woman except his mother. For any girl who saw him immediately fainted. Of course this also gave him a very high opinion of himself. And as he went through the woods, he thought:

"Oh, how I wish I could find someone as beautiful as I. I will not be friends with anyone less perfect in face or form. Why should I? This leaves me lonely, true, but it's better than lowering myself."

So he walked along the path, but he was going the wrong way, getting more and more lost. In the other part of the wood Echo had just said farewell to Aphrodite, and was coming back to the hollow tree in which she lived. She came to a glade in the forest and there saw something that made her stop in astonishment and hide behind a tree. For whom did she see but Zeus himself—king of the gods, lord of the sky. He was leaning on his volt-blue lightning shaft, holding a river nymph by the shoulder, and she was smiling up at him.

"Well," said Echo. "He's at it again. Won't Aphrodite enjoy hearing about *this*!"

But then her attention was caught by something else. She turned to see a tall purple-clad figure moving through the trees toward the glade. She recognized Hera, queen of the gods, jealous wife of Zeus, and she realized that Hera must have heard of what Zeus was doing, and was coming to catch him. And so the kind-hearted nymph hurried forward and curtsied low before Hera, saying, "Greetings, great queen. Welcome to the wood."

"Hush, fool!" whispered Hera. "Don't say a word! I am trying to take someone by surprise."

"This is a proud day for us," said Echo, thinking swiftly, "to be visited by so many gods. Just two minutes ago, Zeus was here looking for you."

"Zeus? Looking for *me*? Are you sure?"

"The great Zeus. Your husband. He asked me whether I had seen you. Said he had heard you were coming this way, and he wished very much to meet you. When I told him I had not seen you, he flew off looking very disappointed."

"Really? Can it be so? Zeus looking for me? Disappointed? Well—miracles never cease. Which way did he go?"

"Oh—toward Olympus."

"Thank you, child," said Hera. "I'll be going too." And she disappeared.

In the meantime Zeus, hearing voices, had hidden himself and the river nymph in the underbrush. When Hera left, he came out, and to thank Echo he gave her a shining blue sapphire ring from his own finger.

Hera, having returned to Olympus, found that Zeus was not there. She realized that something was wrong and sped back to the forest. The first thing she saw was Echo admiring a large sapphire ring that burned on her finger like a fallen star. Hera recognized the ring and immediately understood that the nymph had tricked her in some way and had been given the ring as a reward.

"Wretched creature!" she cried. "I know what you have done. I see the gift you have been given. And I would not have it said that my husband is more generous than I. So I too shall reward you for what you have done. Because you have used your voice for lying, you shall never be able to say anything to anyone again—except the last words that have been said to you. Now try lying."

"Try lying," said Echo.

"No more shall you meddle in high concerns—no more shall you gossip and tell stories and sing songs—but endure this punishment evermore. . . ."

"Evermore. . ." said Echo, sobbing.

And Hera went away to search for Zeus. And the

nymph, weeping, rushed toward her home in the hollow tree. As she was going she saw once again the dazzling brightness that was the face of a god and she stopped to see. It was no god, but a lad about her own age, with yellow hair and eyes the color of the sapphire Zeus had given her. When she saw him, all the grief of her punishment dissolved and she was full of a great laughing joy. For here was the boy she had been looking for all her life, as beautiful as her secret dream—a boy she could love.

She danced toward him. He stopped and said, "Pardon me, but can you show me the path out of the wood?"

"Out of the wood. . ." said Echo.

"Yes," he said. "I'm lost. I've been wandering here for hours, and I can't seem to find my way out of the wood."

"Out of the wood. . ."

"Yes. I've told you twice. I'm lost. Can you help me find the way?"

"The way. . ."

"Are you deaf, perhaps? Why must I repeat everything?"

"Repeat everything. . ."

"No, I will not! It's a bore! I won't do it!"

"Do it. . ."

"Look, I can't stand here arguing with you. If you don't want to show me the way, well then, I'll just try to find someone who can."

"Who can. . ."

Narcissus glared at her and started away. But she came to him and put her arms around him and tried to kiss his face.

"Oh, no—none of that!" said Narcissus, shoving her away. "You're just like all the rest of them, aren't you? They faint, and you say stupid things. Stop it! You can't kiss me."

"Kiss me . . ."

"No!"

"No . . ."

And she tried to kiss him again. Again he pushed her aside. She fell on her knees on the path and hugged his legs and lifted her lovely tear-streaked face to his, trying to speak. But she could not.

"No!" he said. "Let go! You can't hold me here. I will not love you."

"Love you . . ."

He tore himself from her grip and strode away. "Farewell," he called.

"Farewell . . ."

She looked after him until he disappeared. And when he was gone, she felt such sadness, such terrible tearing grief, such pain in every part of her, that it seemed she was being torn apart by white-hot little pincers, torn flesh from bone. And since she could not speak, she said this prayer to herself:

"Oh, Aphrodite, fair goddess, you promised me a favor. Do me one now. Hear me though I am voiceless. My love has disappeared, and I must disappear too, for I cannot bear the pain."

And Aphrodite, in the garden on Olympus, heard this prayer—for prayers do not have to be spoken to be heard. She looked down upon the grieving nymph and pitied her and made her disappear. Her body melted into thin cool air, so that the pain was gone. All was gone . . . except her voice, for Aphrodite could not bear to lose the sound of that lovely story-telling voice. The goddess said, "I grant you your wish—and one thing more. You have not asked vengeance upon the love that has betrayed you. You are too sweet and kind. But I shall take vengeance, nevertheless. I decree now that whoever has caused you this pain will know the same terrible longing. He will fall in love with

someone who cannot return his love—and will forever desire and never achieve."

But Narcissus knew nothing of this—of Echo's grief nor Aphrodite's vow. He wandered the forest path, thinking, "All these girls who love me on sight—it's too bad I cannot find one as beautiful as I. For until I do, I shall not love. And all their loving will be only vexation to me."

He sat down on the bank of a river to rest. Not a river really, but a finger of the river—a clear little stream moving slowly through rocks. The sun shone on it; it became a mirror, holding the trees and the sky upside down, and a small silver trembling sun. And Narcissus, looking into the stream, saw a face.

He blinked his eyes and looked again. It was still there—the most beautiful face he had ever seen. As beautiful, he knew, as his own, but with a nimbus of light behind it so that the hair was blurred and looked long—like a girl's. He gazed and gazed and could not have enough of it. He knew that he could look upon this face forever and still not be satisfied. He put out his hand to touch her. The water trembled and she disappeared.

"A water nymph," he thought. "A lovely dryad—daughter of the river god, no doubt. The loveliest of his daughters. She is shy. Like me, she can't bear to be touched. Ah—here she is again."

The face looked at him out of the stream. Again, very timidly, he reached his hand. Again the water trembled and the face disappeared.

"I will stay here until she loves me," he said to himself. "She may hide now, but presently she will recognize me too. And come out." And he said aloud: "Come out, lovely one."

And the voice of Echo, who had followed him to the stream, said, "Lovely one . . ."

"Hear that, hear that!" cried Narcissus, overjoyed. "She cares for me too. You do, don't you? You love me."

"I love me . . ."

"I do—I do— Finally I have found someone to love. Come out, come out— Oh, will you never come out?"

"Never come out . . ." said Echo.

"Don't say that, please don't say that. Because I will stay here till you do. This, I vow."

"I vow . . ."

"Your voice is as beautiful as your face. And I will stay here, adoring you forever."

"Forever . . ."

And Narcissus stayed there, leaning over the stream, watching the face in the water, watching, watching . . . sometimes pleading with it to come out, hearing its voice answer. Coaxing, begging, looking. . . . Day after day he stayed there, night after night, never moving, never eating, never looking away from the face. He stayed there so long that his legs grew into the bank of the river and became roots. His hair grew long, tangled, leafy. And his pale face and yellow hair became delicate yellow and white petals—the flower Narcissus, which lives on the riverbank and leans over watching its reflection in the water.

And there you can find it till this day. And in the woods too, when all is still, you will sometimes come upon Echo. And if you call to her in a certain way, she will answer your call.

peasant, on merchant, shepherd, warrior? This is an evil thing, oh wastrel god, for only kings should have gold; only the rich know what to do with it."

After a while these words of complaint, uttered each dawn, came to Apollo, and he was angry. He appeared to Midas in a dream and said, "Other gods would punish you, Midas, but I am famous for my even temper. Instead of doing you violence, I will show you how gracious I can be by granting you a wish. What is it to be?"

Midas cried, "Let everything I touch turn to gold!" He shouted this out of his sleep in a strangling greedy voice, and the guards in the doorway nodded to each other and said, "The king calls out. He must be dreaming of gold again."

Wearied by the dream, Midas slept past sunrise; when he awoke it was full morning. He went out into his garden. The sun was high, the sky was blue. A soft breeze played among the trees. It was a glorious morning. He was still half asleep. Tatters of the dream were in his head.

"Can it be true?" he said to himself. "They say the gods appear in dreams. That's how men know them. On the other hand I know that dreams are false, teasing things. You can't believe them. Let us put it to the test."

He reached out his hand and touched a rose. It turned to gold—petals and stalk, it turned to gold and stood there rigid, heavy, gleaming. A bee buzzed out of its stiff folds, furious; it lit on Midas' hand to sting him. The king looked at the heavy golden bee on the back of his hand and moved it to his finger.

"I shall wear it as a ring," he said.

Midas went about touching all his roses, seeing them stiffen and gleam. They lost their odor. The disappointed bees rose in swarms and buzzed angrily away. Butterflies departed. The hard flowers tinkled like little bells when the breeze moved among them, and the king was well pleased.



Midas

There was a king named Midas, and what he loved best in the world was gold. He had plenty of his own, but he could not bear the thought of anyone else having any. Each morning he awoke very early to watch the sunrise and said, "Of all the gods, if gods there be, I like you least, Apollo. How dare you ride so unthriftily in your sun-chariot scattering golden sheaves of light on rich and poor alike—on king and

His little daughter, the princess, who had been playing in the garden, ran to him and said, "Father, Father, what has happened to the roses?"

"Are they not pretty, my dear?"

"No! They're ugly! They're horrid and sharp and I can't smell them anymore. What happened?"

"A magical thing."

"Who did the magic?"

"I did."

"Unmagic it, then! I hate these roses."

She began to cry.

"Don't cry," he said, stroking her head. "Stop crying, and I will give you a golden doll with a gold-leaf dress and tiny golden shoes."

She stopped crying. He felt the hair grow spiky under his fingers. Her eyes stiffened and froze into place. The little blue vein in her neck stopped pulsing. She was a statue, a figure of pale gold standing in the garden path with lifted face. Her tears were tiny golden beads on her golden cheeks. He looked at her and said, "This is unfortunate. I'm sorry it happened. I have no time to be sad this morning. I shall be busy turning things into gold. But, when I have a moment, I shall think about this problem; I promise." He hurried out of the garden which had become unpleasant to him.

On Midas' way back to the castle he amused himself by kicking up gravel in the path and watching it tinkle down as tiny nuggets. The door he opened became golden; the chair he sat upon became solid gold like his throne. The plates turned into gold, and the cups became gold cups before the amazed eyes of the servants, whom he was careful not to touch. He wanted them to continue being able to serve him; he was very hungry.

With great relish Midas picked up a piece of bread and honey. His teeth bit metal; his mouth was full of metal. He felt himself choking. He reached into his

mouth and pulled out a golden slab of bread, all bloody now, and flung it through the window. Very lightly now he touched the other food to see what would happen. Meat . . . apples . . . walnuts . . . they all turned to gold even when he touched them with only the tip of his finger . . . and when he did not touch them with his fingers, when he lifted them on his fork, they became gold as soon as they touched his lips, and he had to put them back onto the plate. He was savagely hungry. Worse than hunger, when he thought about drinking, he realized that wine, or water, or milk would turn to gold in his mouth and choke him if he drank. As he thought that he could not drink, thirst began to burn in his belly. He felt himself full of hot dry sand, felt that the lining of his head was on fire.

"What good is all my gold?" he cried, "if I cannot eat and cannot drink?"

He shrieked with rage, pounded on the table, and flung the plates about. All the servants ran from the room in fright. Then Midas raced out of the castle, across the bridge that spanned the moat, along the golden gravel path into the garden where the stiff flowers chimed hatefully, and the statue of his daughter looked at him with scooped and empty eyes. There in the garden, in the blaze of the sun, he raised his arms heavenward, and cried, "You, Apollo, false god, traitor! You pretended to forgive me, but you punished me with a gift!"

Then it seemed to him that the sun grew brighter, that the light thickened, that the sun-god stood before him in the path, tall, stern, clad in burning gold. A voice said, "On your knees, wretch!"

He fell to his knees.

"Do you repent?"

"I repent. I will never desire gold again. I will never accuse the gods. Pray, revoke the fatal wish."

Apollo reached his hand and touched the roses. The tinkling stopped, they softened, swayed, blushed. Fragrance grew on the air. The bees returned, and the butterflies. He touched the statue's cheek. She lost her stiffness, her metallic gleam. She ran to the roses, knelt among them, and cried, "Oh, thank you, Father. You've changed them back again." Then she ran off, shouting and laughing.

Apollo said, "I take back my gift. I remove the golden taint from your touch, but you are not to escape without punishment. Because you have been the most foolish of men, you shall wear always a pair of donkey's ears."

Midas touched his ears. They were long and furry. He said, "I thank you for your forgiveness, Apollo . . . even though it comes with a punishment."

"Go now," said Apollo. "Eat and drink. Enjoy the roses. Watch your child grow. Life is the only wealth, man. In your great thrift, you have been wasteful of life, and that is the sign you wear on your head. Farewell."

Midas put a tall pointed hat on his head so that no one would see his ears. Then he went in to eat and drink his fill.

For years he wore the cap so that no one would know of his disgrace. But the servant who cut his hair had to know so Midas swore him to secrecy, warning that it would cost him his head if he spoke of the king's ears. But the servant who was a coward was also a gossip. He could not bear to keep a secret, especially a secret so mischievous. Although he was afraid to tell it, he felt that he would burst if he didn't.

One night he went out to the banks of the river, dug a little hole, put his mouth to it, and whispered, "Midas

has donkey's ears, Midas has donkey's ears . . ." and quickly filled up the hole again, and ran back to the castle, feeling better.

But the river-reeds heard him, and they always whisper to each other when the wind seethes among them. They were heard whispering, "Midas has donkey's ears . . . donkey's ears . . ." and soon the whole country was whispering, "Have you heard about Midas? Have you heard about his ears?"

When the king heard, he knew who had told the secret and ordered the man's head cut off; but then he thought, "The god forgave me, perhaps I had better forgive this blabbermouth." Therefore he let the treacherous man keep his head.

Then Apollo appeared again and said, "Midas, you have learned the final lesson, mercy. As you have done, so shall you be done by."

And Midas felt his long hairy ears dwindling back to normal.

He was an old man now. His daughter, the princess, was grown. He had grandchildren. Sometimes he tells his smallest granddaughter the story of how her mother was turned into a golden statue, and he says, "See, I'm changing you too. Look, your hair is all gold."

And she pretends to be frightened.

Classical Mythology
and Its Relevance
to Today's World

YOU
AND
GOTO
MYTH

1 The Rule of Uranus

THE MYTH

In the beginning there was only emptiness, and the emptiness was called Chaos. From Chaos emerged the first three immortal beings: Gaea, the earth mother; Tartarus, the deathless being who ruled the darkest depths of the earth called the Underworld; and Eros, the handsome god of love and desire, whose presence enabled much of creation to occur.

Without any partner, Gaea gave birth to the starry sky called Uranus. By herself, Gaea also brought forth the mountains and Pontus, the sea. Then Gaea married her son, Uranus, and together, they became the parents of three monstrous children called the Hundred-handed giants.¹ These were the largest, strongest, and most frightening of all the children Gaea would bear Uranus. Each giant had fifty heads and one hundred incredibly strong arms. From the moment of their birth, Uranus feared their potential power. Therefore, he confined them to the Underworld, decreeing that they live forever in darkness. Consequently, the Hundred-handed giants hated their father Uranus with a passionate, implacable hatred.

Next Gaea bore Uranus the three Cyclopes.² Their appearance was also unique in that each Cyclops had only one huge wheel-shaped eye set in the middle of his forehead.³ The Cyclopes were skillful as well as strong, so that they became the first immortal craftsmen. Uranus became jealous of their strength and beauty and afraid of their potential power. Therefore, he bound them with the strongest chains and hurled them deep within their mother, Gaea's, body. They fell for nine days and nine nights, finally reaching, on the tenth day, the dismal Underworld, which was as far beneath the surface of the earth as the sky was above it. There they remained imprisoned with their three brothers, the Hundred-handed giants. Thus, the Cyclopes also detested Uranus, their tyrannical father.

Gaea then bore Uranus the first generation of immortal gods. Later, Uranus named them Titans ("Stretchers") because they had stretched their power and had overthrown his rule. With the exception of Crius, whose role was insignificant, these thirteen Titans either controlled the major functions in the universe, or they became the parents of powerful children who did. Oceanus became the god of the Oceanus River, which encircled the earth. He married his sister Tethys and, together, they

became the parents of all the river gods and sea goddesses. The Titan Coeus married his sister Phoebe, and they became the parents of Leto, later the mother of Artemis and Apollo.⁴ Hyperion became the god of the sun. After he married his sister Theia, he became the father of Eos (Dawn), Helios (Sun), and Selene (Moon). The Titan, Iapetus, married a sea goddess and became the father of Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus.⁵

Themis, an earth goddess and prophet like her mother Gaea, taught mortal men to obey laws, to live in peace, and to sacrifice to their deathless gods. Mnemosyne originated the use of reason and memory and applied names to all existing objects and ideas. Themis, Mnemosyne, Rhea, and Dione all became the mothers of famous children.⁶ The youngest and shrewdest of Gaea's thirteen Titan children was Cronus. Although he helped mortals become more civilized by introducing the concept of justice, his personal ambition terrified the deathless gods. Cronus hated his father, Uranus. He coveted Uranus's tremendous power, but was clever enough to hide his true emotions.

Uranus ruled his Titan children without fear of rebellion. He was convinced that he had permanently secured his position of power by banishing the Hundred-handed giants and the Cyclopes to the Underworld. He did not care that the fate of the Hundred-handed and the Cyclopes caused his wife great pain and anguish. He did not care that many of his children hated him. He was all-powerful, and that was all that mattered.

Gaea, however, was not as docile as she appeared. Beneath her loving exterior, she seethed with rage and resolved to free her children in the Underworld. When she felt that her Titan children would support her, she planned a devious retaliation for Uranus's cruelty. First she created the great tool-making stone, flint, which she shaped into a huge sickle. Then, when it was finished, she approached the Titans and encouraged their revenge.

"My children," she began. "You know that your father is an evil being. If you have the necessary courage, at last we have the means to avenge his wicked deeds."

Gaea's suggestion met with silence. Her children were too terrified of their father to reply. Finally, Cronus, her most cunning child, summoned enough courage to respond.

"Mother," he announced, "I will promise to help you punish cruel Uranus, because, indeed, he alone is to blame for his evil deeds, and I have no love for him in my heart."

Gaea's eyes sparkled and her spirits lifted as she listened to her fearless son. His self-confidence also inspired a willingness to help among his brothers and sisters, making Gaea jubilant.

As daylight faded into dusk, Gaea concealed Cronus in a secret place

by the sea. There she presented him with the flint weapon she had made, warning him to respect its curved edge of sharp teeth. Then she confided to him her violent plan.

Before long, Uranus arrived, bringing with him the blanket of night. Desiring Gaea's comfort and love, he lay down upon the shore and embraced his wife, unaware that he lay within an arm's reach of treachery and doom. The gathering darkness concealed the long black arm that reached out and grabbed Uranus in its hand. The reclining god could not see the huge, black, sickle-shaped shadow waving menacingly above his body. Quicker than thought, Cronos mutilated his father and threw the severed parts into the sea. Uranus screamed in agony, for immortality provides no shield against pain and suffering. The excruciating pain wiped out every thought except the most significant realization. With all of his children and his wife against him, Uranus recognized that his rule had come to an abrupt end.

The sea carried the pieces of Uranus's body away, and Gaea's body absorbed the blood he had shed. From this blood, Gaea, in time, gave birth to more monstrous beings: the three Furies⁷ and a new group of powerful Giants.⁸ The Furies were fierce and intimidating, but just. Disgusting in their appearance, these female creatures were wingless, black, creatures whose eyes dripped poisonous tears and whose fiery breath scorched their victims with a bloody venom. They would destroy any mortal child who killed a parent or blood relative because they would pursue the murderer until he became insane.

1. The Hundred-handed giants were named Briareüs (strong), Gyes (earthborn), and Cottus.
 2. The Cyclopes were early bronze-working metalsmiths named Arges (brightness), Steropes (lightning), and Brontes (thunder).
 3. Ancient metalsmiths covered one of their eyes with a patch for protection against flying sparks, leaving only one eye visible.
 4. The myths of Artemis and Apollo are told in Section II, The Olympian Family, and in Section III, The World of Man (in Niobe, and in The Calydonian Boar Hunt).
 5. The myths of Prometheus and Epimetheus are told in Section III, The World of Man.
 6. The myths of the children of Themis, Rhea, Mnemosyne, and Dione are told in Section II, The Olympian Family.
 7. Meleager's mother calls upon the Furies in The Calydonian Boar Hunt (Section III, The World of Man).
 8. Orestes is pursued by the Furies in the *Oresteia* trilogy by Aeschylus.
8. Heracles and the gods fight these Giants in the myth of Heracles (Section IV, The Heroes).

2 The Rule of Cronus

THE MYTH

As soon as they were in control of the universe, the Titans rescued their six brothers from Tartarus and made Cronus their king. Cronus, however, immediately imprisoned the Hundred-handed giants and the Cyclopes in Tartarus once again, thus indicating that he would be as cruel a tyrant as his father Uranus had been.

Cronus was doomed to rule with suspicion and doubt continually gnawing upon his sense of security. Gaea, who as an earth goddess had the gift of prophecy, informed Cronus, in his father's presence, that one day he, too, would be overthrown by his son. When Cronus protested that his great strength would protect him, his parents reminded him that no one can escape his or her fate.¹

Cronus, however, determined to try. He married his fair-haired sister, Rhea, whom he loved. Unfortunately, in the course of time, she bore him the children he feared. Their first child was a lovely daughter, Hestia. When Rhea dutifully brought the baby to her husband, his parents' prophecy burned within his head, obliterating any other thoughts. While Cronus appeared calm and loving as he reached out for his child, as soon as he held her in his arms, his eyes gleamed with a wild fire. A malicious grin of victory darkened his face. He quickly opened his gigantic mouth and swallowed his infant daughter whole: head, arms, legs, and all. Rhea could not believe her eyes. Then, without a word, Cronus turned his back on his wife and left the room.

In the next three years, Rhea bore her husband three more children: the beautiful daughters, Demeter and Hera, and a mighty son, Hades. Each time Rhea presented her husband with his newborn child, she hoped that he would share her joy. However, each time he beheld one of his children, the fearful prophecy roared through his mind, making his head throb and his flesh cold. Would this child grow up to threaten his power? Cronus could not take that risk. Calmly and lovingly, he would reach out for his child, but as soon as he felt its life in his arms, his eyes would display that wild gleam of fire, and the malicious grin of victory again would darken his face. He quickly would open his gigantic mouth and swallow the infant whole. Then, without a word, he would turn his back on his despondent wife and leave the room.

Rhea's sorrow and anger became intolerable. She decided that, from this time forth, she would protect her newborn children from their mad father. Then, when they were fully grown, they would help her avenge their father's crimes against their sisters and brother.

Consequently, Rhea was well-prepared for the birth of her fifth child the following year. She was determined to pit all of her cunning skills against her husband's crazed mind. As soon as this child was born, she rejoiced to find that she had a healthy, strong son. Naming the infant Poseidon, she secretly stole away from the palace and hid the baby among the lambs in the sheepfold. When she returned, she told Cronus that she had given birth to a horse and showed him a newborn foal. Calmly and lovingly Cronus accepted the foal as he had welcomed his other children. With the old prophecy raging through his mind, the gleam of wild fire shone from his eyes, and the malicious grin darkened his face. He opened his gigantic mouth and swallowed the foal whole. Then, without a word, he turned his back upon his wife and left the room. Meanwhile, Poseidon was reared by immortal sea deities on the island of Rhodes. Here he grew to maturity in safety.²

The following year, when Rhea discovered that she would give birth to her sixth child, she became frantic with fear. Could she deceive her husband successfully a second time? She ran to her parents, Gaea and Uranus, and asked them to help her think of a new plan whereby she could secretly give birth to this baby. When Gaea remembered that Cronus had imprisoned her other children, the Hundred-handed giants and the Cyclopes, and when Uranus remembered Cronus's attack upon him, they willingly helped their daughter conspire against their son. They revealed to Rhea the prophecy that Cronus was destined to be overthrown by his son, and they sent her to the fertile island of Crete for her next childbirth.

When Rhea's sixth and last child was born, an awesome radiance emanated from the powerful infant's body. Rhea named the newborn child Zeus (the shining one), and put Gaea in charge of his care. Gaea first hid the infant Zeus in a deep cave beneath the earth on Mount Dicte,³ on the island of Crete, where immortal nymphs nourished and reared him. The goat, Amaltheia, provided him with milk, nectar, and ambrosia. His nurses hung his cradle from a tree branch so that Cronus would not be able to find him on land, on the sea, or in the heavens. Cretan youths called Curetes⁴ guarded him by marching around the tree from which his cradle hung. They banged their spears against their small brass shields so that their clatter would shield his cries from Cronus's ears.

Meanwhile, Rhea had returned to her husband's palace. There, she took a great stone, about the size and weight of a newborn child and tightly encased it in long, narrow bands of cloth just as she would have wrapped the infant Zeus himself. When Cronus asked to hold his newborn child, Rhea obediently put this bundle into her husband's arms. Again, upon holding what he thought was his infant son, the frightening thought that this might be the child who would cause his death plunged Cronus into madness. Calmly and lovingly, Cronus rocked the well-wrapped bundle, while his lowered head concealed the gleam of wild

torment in his eyes. With the familiar malicious grin of victory, Cronus suddenly opened his gigantic mouth and swallowed the rock just as he had swallowed his other children. Then, without a word, he turned his back upon his relieved wife and left the room.

Rhea kept her secret, but the prophecy made Cronus wonder whether his wife had deceived him. However, no matter where he searched, he could not find any child of his. Therefore, he did not realize that, on the island of Crete, the son he had so feared was actually alive and growing to manhood.

When Zeus had reached maturity, Gaea and Rhea knew that the time had come to avenge their children. They confided the prophecy about Cronus's destiny to Zeus, who prepared to become the instrument of his father's fate. Zeus went to Metis, a daughter of the Titans, Oceanus and Tethys, for help because she was reputed to be the wisest of all the immortals. Metis tricked Cronus into swallowing a tasty, drugged drink, which gave him excruciating stomach pains. While Rhea looked on with long-awaited satisfaction, Cronus's stomach became so upset that it disgorged its contents, one after the other. First Cronus vomited up the rock which he had swallowed last. Then, one by one, he spewed up his four children, each of whom emerged from Cronus's belly alive and filled with implacable hatred for Cronus. Before Cronus had recovered, Poseidon and Zeus had joined their brother and sisters.

Together, the children of Cronus confronted their father and asked him if he would relinquish his power peacefully. The prophecy that he would be overthrown by his son thundered through Cronus's head, obliterating their words. "Never!" he roared. Then Cronus turned his back on his enemies and proudly stalked out of the room.

1. One definition of fate: the inevitable replacement of one generation by the succeeding generation.
2. Some writers say that Cronus swallowed Poseidon as he had swallowed his first four children.
3. Other writers say Mount Ida, on Crete.
4. On Crete, the Curetes were companions of the sacred king. They clashed their weapons during religious rituals in order to frighten off evil spirits.

3 War Between the Titans and the Gods

THE MYTH

For ten long years the children of Cronus, called the "gods," fought Cronus and many of the other immortal Titans for control of the universe, without success for either side. The gods and Titans were so evenly matched that the gods feared the war might never end. Fortunately for the children of Cronus, Gaea decided to help them. Concerned as always about her many children, Gaea wanted her Hundred-handed giants and her Cyclopes to enjoy the freedom the other immortals had. Since Cronus had imprisoned them, she asked Zeus and his brothers to set them free. To motivate her grandchildren to obey her request, she explained that they would be able to win their war against the Titans if these six immortals fought on their side. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were delighted to help her since they would be helping themselves at the same time.

The three gods descended into the kingdom of Tartarus where they killed the guard and released their uncles from their chains. The Cyclopes were so grateful for their freedom that they rewarded their three liberators with spectacular gifts. To Zeus they gave the thunderbolt and lightning, which they had created secretly and which Gaea had kept hidden from the other immortals. Since these were invincible weapons, they would enable Zeus to rule immortals and mortals with absolute authority. To Hades they gave the helmet of invisibility, which would make him invisible whenever he chose to wear it. To Poseidon they gave the three-pronged fishing spear called the trident. With it, Poseidon would be able to cause storms at sea and earthquakes upon land.

In order to renew their strength, Zeus gave the Cyclopes and the Hundred-handed giants nectar to drink and ambrosia to eat. When they were ready to return to the world of sunlight, Zeus addressed them with great seriousness:

"Children of Gaea and Uranus," he began. "We children of Cronus have been fighting the Titans for many years without prospect of victory for either side. We ask you to join your strength with ours in order to help us achieve victory and power."

To this, the Hundred-handed Cottus replied: "Immortal Zeus, son of Cronus and Rhea, because you have freed us from eternal bondage in this sunless land, we certainly shall help you defeat the Titans."

Cronus resumed their battle against the Titans. The Hundred-handed giants took the offensive against the Titans, bombarding them with immense rocks that they broke off the cliffs with their multitudinous hands. The Titans, however, were not intimidated by their monstrous brothers. As they met the latest challenge to their power, their counterattack shook the earth, the mountains, and even the land of Tartarus.

The titanic rampage provoked Zeus to exercise his full power. Becoming violent in his rage, Zeus left his stronghold on Mount Olympus, gathered the clouds, and repeatedly hurled his thunderbolts and lightning upon his enemies. His weapons transformed the earth's surface into a sheet of flames which consumed forests, rivers, and seas. Meanwhile, the Hundred-handed giants hurled thousands of rocks upon the Titans, who, being immortal, could not die but felt the agony of injury. Between the onslaught of fire and the deluge of rocks, the Titans could not summon sufficient power to retaliate. Overpowered at last, they retreated into the depths of the earth, where, in the land of Tartarus, the victors bound them in heavy chains for eternity.

The gods then transformed the region of Tartarus into an inescapable prison. Poseidon placed bronze gates in a bronze wall surrounding the dark land, and Zeus gave the Hundred-handed giants the honor of guarding their great enemies. So consuming was their hatred of the Titans that they were willing to obey Zeus's wishes and dwell eternally in this dark land, isolated from the other immortals.

Zeus selected a special, eternal punishment for the strongest Titan, Atlas, who had been Cronus's principal ally. He condemned his enemy to stand erect with his feet firmly planted at the earth's edge and hold the sky upon his raised hands and head forever in order to keep it from falling upon the earth.

With the imprisonment of the Titans, the first war was over, and a new age began.

The contestants immediately settled into their preparations. Carefully they set up their looms, tying the long, fine, vertical warp threads to their loom beams and dividing these threads with reeds. When they had completed this task, they tucked up their skirts in order to permit quick, unhampered movements, picked up their threaded shuttles, and began to work. Each weaver moved her shuttle swiftly and skillfully through the threads, enjoying the labor she performed so well. Each wove wispy clouds shimmering with sunlight and a magnificent rainbow shining in a thousand blending colors. Finally, each weaver artistically wove into her tapestry golden threads which accentuated brilliantly the stories she portrayed.

The grey-eyed daughter of Zeus depicted the twelve Olympian gods enthroned above the Areopagus¹ in Athens. There the immortals debated the merits of the argument between Athena and Poseidon over which of them should be considered the city's patron god. In her tapestry, the Lord of the Sea had just struck a rock with his three-pronged fish spear, the trident, splitting it and causing a fountain of salty waters to spring forth from the fissure. He based his claim to the area upon the value of this miraculous gift. The goddess Athena pictured herself armed with her crested golden helmet, her breastplate and shield, and her shining spear. She had just struck the earth with her spear, causing a leafy green tree, completely covered with olives, to emerge fully grown. She based her claim to the area upon the value of her miraculous gift. Although the deathless gods admired both gifts, they decided that Athena's gift was more useful than Poseidon's and, consequently, awarded the city to her.²

The goddess decorated the four corners of her tapestry with four miniature scenes, each depicting the terrifying fate of arrogant women who had been disrespectful to the gods. In one corner, the gods punished two women by transforming them into snow-covered mountains. In the second corner, golden-throned Hera transformed another woman into a crane, while in the third corner, Hera, again, punished a female by transforming her into a stork. In the fourth corner, the gods punished a man's daughters by turning them into marble steps leading up to a temple. With these illustrations of divine retribution, Zeus's great daughter Athena hoped to warn Arachne about what she could expect for her pride and presumption.

Meanwhile, Arachne used her great talent to ridicule the immortal gods. With dazzling artistry, she depicted Olympian Zeus's many love affairs. Among them were his transformation into a bull for Europa, into a swan for Leda, into a golden shower for Danaë, and into the husband, Amphitryon, for Alcmena. As if this were not enough to document her point, Arachne also illustrated the romantic exploits of Poseidon, the Earthshaker, and those of far-shooting Apollo and of loud-roaring Dionysus.

When each had completed her tapestry, Athena inwardly appreciated

Arachne's remarkable skill, but she could not tolerate the mortal woman's disrespect. Because Arachne had taunted the gods with her scornful sense of humor, Zeus's grey-eyed daughter tore apart her tapestry and struck her three times upon her forehead with the shuttle.

Arachne, in defeat and despair, knit a rope around her neck and tried to hang herself. However, the Great Goddess took pity upon her and prevented her suicide by catching her falling body. Yet she did not release Arachne from further punishment. "Live, wicked wretch," grey-eyed Athena commanded, "but hang forevermore. Let my curse remain even upon your children and their children to the end of all your race."

As she left, Zeus's great daughter sprinkled Arachne with juice taken from the leaves of a poisonous aconite plant. As the drops touched Arachne, they completely altered her appearance. Her flowing hair shed and fell to the ground. Her nose and her ears vanished. Her head shrank, and the rest of her body diminished also, until all that remained of her was a large belly with spiny, jointed fingers where her legs and arms had been.

Thus, like the other mortal women who had offended the gods, Arachne found herself transformed. As a spider,³ she would weave eternally.

1. A rocky hill near the Acropolis in Athens, which became the location of the first Athenian court, composed of an aristocratic council of elders.
2. Poseidon flooded the region of Attica in his rage over his decision, and the Athenians continued to honor both gods.
3. Arachne has donated her name to the family to which spiders belong: the arachnids.