

Time and time again, He was made a fool.

The fire was so warm, drowning His rage, the bitter, frigid rage. Him— the great thunderer, father of all, was being played the fool? Impossible. With enormous vigor, He struck a fist towards the sky, electrifying the very air and blackening every horizon. He of indiscernible form, of unspeakable power, howled in madness. From his shout, violent gusts lashed out with mythical prowess. Hear the devout anger. See how the heavens itself rip apart. Witness clouds dark as night sprawl in every direction with Him at the violent epicenter. Feel entire continents quake; fissures vaster than ever before gouged the once beautiful terrain. Finally came the great cracking of the sky. Bolts of divine light fractured the gloomy sky, crescendoing and writhing to strike the ground in beautiful wrath.

Such rage befitted a king, one with the right to mold the universe, one who ruled with pious judgment. He with the power to command Gods, the power to kill them, was above all. Every living being knew to appease him lest they catch aflame from holy punishment. Every man's action and every breath was permitted by his word.

His name: Zeus. His mission: absolute rule.

Despite the carnage, for humanity, it was the beginning. For the Titan, however, it was the start of a trial. The fire, oh the mellow fire, burned beyond recognition, beyond what any mortal could have imagined. How humanity had missed this warmth. With every heart's beating waves of heat swept throughout humanity and history. It was too late. What was stolen could not be returned.

Zeus pointed but a single finger. There was one being to blame for this humiliation. Who was accused of such blasphemy, such outrage as to incur the King's wrath? What halfwit threw out his immortal life for the sake of lesser beings?

At the tip of His finger stood a man, a Titan, donning a beard of flowing brown and eyes of mighty defiance. This man stood immovable. In spite of both mangled sky and divine judgment, he was detached.

“Liar, thief, unholy specimen tainted by humanity’s touch.” The King’s voice was deafening. The claps of thunder were comparable to a mouse’s squeaks under its overwhelming volume. “You, a Titan blessed with immortal life, with vast, eternal wisdom, stole from me. For what reason? To appease those humans— those of weaker mind and body than us? Those fickle beings of frail physique serve as puppets, playthings! For those decrepit servants, you turned to thievery?”

The Titan remained steady in the face of biblical temper with a challenging gleam in his eyes. His ageless wisdom told him that to answer meant certain death. Logic dictated that he reply forthright, direct enough to pierce Olympus itself. Thus, with an unflinching demeanor, his pursed lips loosened to speak.

“To thief what belongs to all is not thievery in the slightest,” the accused spoke, a finger to his lips and his brow furrowed. “To thief, meaning to pilfer, or to steal. In other words: I am no more a thief than I am a blasphemer.”

What insolence. The attitude, the conduct, the very manner in which he conducted himself, it was all so disgusting.

“Not once,” Zeus’s booming voice spat, “not once have I encountered such ignorance.”

A storm brewed wild and feral within His all-seeing eyes. With these eyes, He bore witness to both birth and death. His eyes watched, while His hands shaped the very earth beneath their feet. His mere presence was godly in itself. Yet here stood someone standing to defy his shining brilliance.

“Do you not understand?” The Titan spoke again. “You may be the king of gods, but I am no god. I am Prometheus. You do not influence me.”

At once, lightning struck. The whole world went pitch dark. Buried under an eclipse of clouds, there was complete darkness, aside from the stolen fire. Around the overworld, wisps of light began to emerge, thrashing threads of orange and flailing locks of yellow whipped back the dark. In these sinful flames, we found security and solidarity. A faint ember glowed as His voice blared around the globe.

“That is where you are wrong, foolish Prometheus.” His tone was hollow but carried an incomprehensible rage. “You, just like every flower’s decay, every cloud’s rain, beckon to my call.”

Zeus clapped his hands once, and from the sky, a bolt of pure electricity formed the vessel of an eagle. Feathers of splendid gold and eyes of raw electricity donned its devout figure. This eagle screeched, echoing Zeus’s already blaring voice. “You, obstinate creature, agonize for eternity. For your crimes, be stranded atop heights unreachable, be shackled by chains unbreakable, be plunged into trauma unfathomable. Let it be forever known, even the wisest jester can not sit on the throne of a king.”

With that, the Titan was banished from Zeus’s Earth.

At once, the terrain transformed around his very feet. Lush grass gave away into jagged stone. The sky extended beyond the clouds, beyond the known galaxy. The air grew so tight as if Zeus’s own hands were wrung around his throat. Not a single word could be uttered before mountains sprawled across the horizon, not a single living creature in sight. Once crashing thunder and Zeus’s all-mighty judgment resulted in stones of unfathomable height reaching the stars. These newborn cliffs were quiet, eerily so. There were no winds breathing, not even the

slightest indication of life. In truth, this no-man's-land was incomplete; life could not thrive here, and where there was no life, Zeus turned a blind eye. With even the King away, the Titan was alone. The place abandoned by God was now the place he would call home for the rest of his immortal life. There was only him, his breath, and the clanging of shatterproof chains. Or so it should have been.

Then came Zeus's eagle of thunder. With talons so horrible and a beak so sharp. These demonic devices had no hesitation to bore into his side's flesh. The endless mountains echoed and trembled with Prometheus's screaming as if they too felt his pain. Insufferable minutes passed laden with this torture most dreadful before the eagle was satisfied with its stomach full of the liver. Off it flew into the distance. Though, the chained Prometheus still felt its chilling gaze watching from afar. As a semblance of Zeus, it too was all-seeing.

Prometheus's immortal body was no stranger to wounds. It took but a single night to regenerate even the worst of injuries. This proved to be his ultimate curse, however. Every time, at the same crack of dawn without missing a single day, as his body reassembled, the eagle was waiting. Days passed, and Prometheus no longer screamed. Weeks passed, and Prometheus no longer felt. Years passed, and Prometheus no longer kept track of time's passage.

Zeus was right in one regard. Prometheus was suffering a great deal, for what felt like an eternity. This was evident to be the only thing true. Every day, what came to Prometheus's mind as his physical body was eviscerated and toyed with was his single pride and joy: humanity. He was confidently certain that humanity bore the mark of success and power rivaling even Zeus. He would not have resorted to reclaiming fire if he didn't believe in their capability.

He shut his eyes. He could recall the first humans. Indeed, they were feeble and delicate, having just been forged and thrown into the world. Despite it, in a matter of seconds, they proved

worthy of his attention. Adorned with the crude pelts of animals they slaughtered with their rudimentary weapons of sticks and stones, humanity's first steps were actually massive strides. It was for this potential, for these rising stars, that he stole Zeus's sacred fire. If he ever felt remorse for this decision, humanity's potential reignited his passion and vindication.

As centuries passed, he could only comfort himself with dreams of how humanity progressed. How did the fire he gifted them progress their evolution? Did they remember him? Did they remember his sacrifice? No, it did not matter either way. If the fire meant even the slightest bit of progression, then Prometheus worried not about his legacy.

The eagle was here again. This eternal punishment had left the mountain stained a hideous red, leaving Prometheus a withered shell of the once powerful titan he was. Though, as the now familiar beak again grazed his intestines, Prometheus kept his head high. There was no thrashing. No screaming, only acceptance.

The only thing keeping Prometheus's body from falling apart was the chains bound to his ankles and wrists. Oh how he missed the gift of walking, the ability to stretch or turn in any direction so pleased. What a peaceful sky. How he yearned to reach for it. In this empty atmosphere, there were no stars, no winds, no eagle. No eagle?

Prometheus's eyes fell to the ground. There he saw the wicked eagle, though torn asunder. Its head was some meters separated from its body, plump from the centuries gorging upon his liver. The mountain was now stained not only by Prometheus's blood. But how could this be? An enforcer of Zeus, so easily slain?

"Who are you?" an abrupt voice cut the silence. The question echoed Prometheus' own inquiry.

Prometheus stared at his savior. He now resembled a ragged old man instead of the immortal being he truly was.

“State your name,” the Hero repeated. At their side, a shield of sword iron shone in the sun. The Hero’s form was so familiar, yet their aura was so different.

“You... you are human?” Prometheus’s voice was weak and coarse.

“But of course.”

“I...,” Prometheus stammered. Who was he now? The once proud Prometheus had lost everything. His once chestnut-colored beard turned a lifeless gray, and the defiance that once shone in his eyes ebbed away into lethargy. He more resembled a husk than a man. His name bore no meaning anymore, not in the modern century. “I am He Who Stole the Fire.”

The Hero paused, flummoxed. Then, their face slackened, as if they suddenly understood everything. All he saw in front of him was an enfeebled old man with chains of impeccable form and a mountain soiled by an impossibly ugly hue of red.

“Do you regret it?” the Hero asked.

Prometheus glanced again at the Hero again. The luxurious mantle of a lion’s mane outlined their grander-than-life form. In the hilt of the Hero’s sword, Prometheus saw a hint of civilization’s progression from sticks and stones to forge and smithy. How far, he thought, that these humans walked beyond their primitive era of stones. Lastly, Prometheus stared into the truest and most pure window of one’s nature— the eyes. In these eyes gleamed a fire incredibly bright.

At this moment, Prometheus’s heart twinged and a semblance of his first smile reached his eyes.

“Nay, I regret not.”