



THE CAVE ON MOUNT DIKTI

A wretched shell of a man sat crumpled, slouched up against the damp, moss covered wall of the cave. Strands of tangled gray hair hung lifelessly over his still, weather-beaten face, merging into his full gray beard. The dim light of a single oil lamp cast a warm glow on his haggard form, gently coaxing him from his slumber, when suddenly, at the mouth of the cave, loud clanging castanets roused him awake.

“Aauugh,” he cried, trying to raise his once thundering voice. “Cease that infernal noise and be gone! Oh, how my head has ached these many a thousand years...”

The music abruptly stopped, and he relaxed a little, slumping back against the rocks. He ripped a tattered piece of cloth from his once fine tunic, and wiped his perspiring brow. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw something move in the depths of the cave. A goat emerged from the darkness, and much to his surprise, addressed him.

“Ala-a-a-s, long suffering Zeus of the Aegis, who once possessed the wide Heavens, do you not recognize those fine musicians?”

Startled by the familiar voice of the handsome goat, he was unable to answer.



“Indeed, you owe your life to them,” she went on. “For, do you not remember, that without their music to conceal your crying, your father, Kronos, would have swallowed you up at a sweet, tender young a-a-age.”

Zeus stared at her, wide-eyed, and then it dawned on him. “Of course, they are the Kouretes.”

“Indeed,” affirmed the goat, chomping her cud slyly off to the side of her mouth.

He squinted. “Is it *you*, Amalthea, the blessed one whose milk sustained me as an infant?”

“Yes. It is I.”

“Then, this is the place of my birth, on Mount Díkti, in my dear homeland of Kríti.”

“You are correct.”

He scrambled unsteadily to his feet. “But how did I come to be here? I had been wandering long in a great wilderness, cold, with a limited supply of meat and no sweet wine.” He leaned on the cave wall, and shook his head. “I do not know how this has come to pass.”

“Rest easy, Zeus, you will find the answers you seek,” Amalthea said, as she turned away and disappeared into a dark recess.

“Surely this must be the work of the Gods,” Zeus said, now to himself. “But we have been scattered on the wild winds for so long, even I, Greatest of the Immortals, cannot recognize the spinner of this web.

“Could it be that ignoble son of mine? The one who stole my precious thunderbolts and cast me from my rightful throne, winning favor with those wretched, puny mortals. The great Apollo, Lord of Light and Reason, hah. He denies my power and influence, but he is a fool.

“Or perhaps it is Athena. My once favorite and most loyal child, who has long since abandoned me...

“...or Hera, *most* wretched one. Yes, of course, it is you who must be the source of this villainous plot, no doubt in revenge



for the many lovers I conquered in my blessed youth. Oh, sweet Memory recall the joyous time, when I could take any woman I desired – whether in my form as a magnificent bull or delicate swan, or as any creature which might have fancied my delight.” He closed his eyes and dreamed of his former vigor.

“Zeus, Son of Rhea and Kronos, our parents,” a female voice said, interrupting his vision.

“Hera?” he questioned, startled.

“No, dear brother, it is I, Demeter,” the elder Goddess answered, stepping out from behind a cluster of stalactites and into the lamplight. “For many ages I have had great concern for you, since Typhon carried you away in that frightful cyclone of wind and rain. Alas, it looks as though you’ve not fared well in the hinterlands. Poor brother.”

“Do not pity *me*, Demeter! Reserve that condemnation for yourself. Demeter of the Bountiful Harvest, yet look at you. You’re an old woman, a crone.”

“Yes, it is true. I am old, and I have suffered greatly. These last 5,000 years have taken a terrible toll. The Mortals held powerful dominion over me, held me in their clutches until I was close to death. Though, since the time of the Reawakening, I have again tasted the sparkling water from the spring of eternal youth. The lines which crease my weathered face are receding, and daily, more of my strength returns.”

Zeus considered her diminished being and softened his manner. “I look with anticipation to the day when your countenance is fully restored, sister.”

“And I wonder what the future holds for you, Zeus. You who were once called Lordliest of the Mighty by Mortal and Immortal alike. The world has changed much in the ages since you ruled from snow-capped Olympos, omnipotent and unchallenged. Indeed, the Reawakening has transformed the world of the Mortals, as well as that of the Gods, has it not? Tell me, Zeus, have you yourself partaken of the nectar of transformation?”



Before he could answer, the sound of a thundering chariot drew them to the mouth of the cave, where a set of four black stallions pulled a marvelous golden coach to a stop. Out stepped Zeus' three daughters, Athena, Aphrodite and Artemis, each magnificent in her own right, and together shining with radiance so brilliant it momentarily overwhelmed him.

Confident and strong they entered the cave, and Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, stepped forward and addressed them.

"My sisters and I bring you blessed greetings, dear Aunt," she said, taking Demeter's hands in her own. "Your health is returning swiftly and it pleases me to see it!"

"Thank you, my nieces," she replied, embracing each of them. "You, most lovely of Goddesses, as luminescent as polished gold under a mid-day Sun."

Athena turned to Zeus. "Greetings, father. It has been some time since last we were together. I'm sorry to see that you are not well."

"So, now my neglectful daughter is showing concern for me."

"You attribute to me a quality which should be reserved for yourself, Zeus, but I do not care to discuss that further. Instead, I will question you on a different matter. Was it you who bade Hermes to ask us here, to the glorious island of Kríti?"

He glared at her with contempt. "No. It was not. I have spent many torturous years in the wilderness, and it is only by the sheer greatness of my own will that I have found my way here to this sacred cave. Not one of my ungrateful daughters came to my aid during my terrible desolation. Not one of you championed me, as I had done for you so many times before. And especially you, grey-eyed Athena. For this you shall pay dearly."

"You are in no position to threaten me, Zeus, but you are partially correct. While I have not abandoned you, I have most certainly abandoned your philosophy. I have learned the futility and danger of the way of the warrior hero. In light of recent events, I have found diplomacy and discussion to be far more effective in meeting



an opposing view. Domination and violence are merely the crude and ineffective weapons of a less creative mind.”

“How *dare* you, insolent child!”

Athena laughed gently. “It has been so many Moons since last we ate the fruit of the Sacred Tree, has it not, my sisters? The Ancient Wisdom has been returned to us, and the world has changed. You have obviously not yet accepted this, gray-haired Zeus.”

He grunted in reply, and was about to berate Athena further, when his splendid daughter, Aphrodite, the eternal Goddess of Love, sauntered toward him. Her perfume filled his wide nostrils, sending a spiral of wooziness about his diminished form. She danced in a circle around him, her sheer skirts encasing him in a bubble of resplendent warmth, effervescent like the sea foam from which she had sprung – when suddenly, she thrust her fist before his face. Around her delicate wrist a metal cuff was tightly bound, and at the end of its well-wrought chain an empty shackle dangled.

“You speak of how you *championed* us, dear father, yet so many centuries ago, you cruelly bound me to my loathsome brother Ares, god of war.” She shook the chain, then withdrew her arm and continued flowing illustratively around the room.

“Surely you recall how, at the time of our last meeting, you ordered my own husband, Hephaistos of the Magic Forge, to construct these wicked bonds, condemning me for all time to the iron grasp of Ares! For millennia, he dragged me through bordellos and battlefields from here to lands most distant and back again. For what seemed like an eternity, I was subject to his evil will, but as you can see, I have cast him off!” She twirled around.

“The Great Reawakening has brought me some freedom from your maniac son, yet I still wear the demon chains,” she shook the manacles again. “Once Mighty Zeus of Olympos, I demand you now remove them.”

“I, I will not be spoken to in this manner. I am your Father, and it is *you* who should be obeying me!”



Aphrodite smiled sadly, almost apologetically. “It is beyond your power. Alas, I believed that to be true. No matter, I will rid myself of it with or without your help.”

Zeus turned away from Aphrodite and approached his third daughter, Artemis, who appeared in her youthful form as a tall and graceful child of about 13. He placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, and spoke more softly. “My dear Artemis, Goddess of the Wild Earth, why did I not see you in the wilderness?”

“I now live in the land of Gaia, who is grandmother to you, my father. You left that land of harmony and balance long ago and journeyed into another realm, a wilderness where domination, fear and violence are the natural order of things. I admit, I too once dwelt there, with my silver bow and arrows at the ready, but I will venture there no more.” She shuddered at the thought of it. “It is a shrinking wilderness, and I pray soon there will be no space left for it at all.”

Zeus was taken aback. “Why do you threaten me with your evil charms, my daughter, so young and pleasing to my eye?”

“I speak no evil charm against you, Zeus, I merely speak my truth. You have come partway back from your desolate exile, and I can only hope you will choose to walk further. The opportunity to complete the crossing is upon you.”

As he started to respond, a cocoon of golden light suddenly materialized beside them. Inside it, magnificent Hera, luminous Goddess of the Sacred Marriage, coalesced and then emerged in her full grandeur. She courteously greeted each of her family members, but when her eye came upon her husband, her demeanor hardened.

“Well, look at you, Zeus. I see you have retained little of your former splendor.”

“Do not be deceived by my appearance, oh despicable Hera. I can call upon my powers at will, and let me assure you, they are still formidable. But I will not be provoked by you, jealous wife, or by my unruly daughters.”



“Same old story, tired Zeus,” Hera sighed. “Still, you do not understand that the source of my emotion is not jealousy, but rather a painful broken heart. I loved you once, and our marriage held such promise when first we were united. But you honored not our sacred vows, and were unfaithful to me in matters of the heart. You used your mighty power to spread your seed through violence and conquest, while I was ridiculed and blamed as jealous wife. True, in my anger I struck out against those you victimized, but I see now it was a desperate attempt to regain my stature. I was a fool to try to vindicate myself using your brutal means.

“And woe, when I dared question your deplorable actions, you cast your cloak of fear upon my body, and threatened me with bolts of lightning. Those fearsome, painful strikes which severed me from my heritage. But now I have rediscovered that distant ancestor, whose identity you worked so long and hard to conceal.”

“Of what nonsense are you trying hopelessly to speak?” Zeus questioned, straining not to show his fatigue.

“Since the Reawakening, I have been reunited with our great, great Grandmother. The one you hid from me. The one you continue to fear. She is the Minoa, and she has told me of my true past, unobscured by your lens of domination. I am far, far older than you, Zeus, both in age and in tradition. I am a daughter of the Early Ways, from which you have severed your own connection. You still fear this tradition, Son-Lover Zeus, I can see it in your weary eyes, but you need not. For, at its root it is not the way of fear, but the path of life’s beloved celebration.”

Somehow, Zeus mustered a voice which surprised even himself. “Time indeed may have changed some things, but Destiny has not yet sung her final song.”

Just then, he noticed a harsh, mechanical sound coming from outside the cave, growing louder and louder, becoming a deafening roar. He felt compelled to go see what it was, and the others followed him outside.

A helicopter circled overhead, and as it landed nearby, Zeus



stood defiantly, with arms crossed and head shaking. The hatch clicked open and unfolded into a shining stairway, then out stepped magnificent Apollo, in the prime of his life, in robes of glistening gold.

Zeus immediately stepped forward and accosted him. “Well my far-famed son, do you not look fine, all golden and glowing and brilliant. Apollo, Lord of Light, favored by mortals since ancient times, do not forget this I say to you: you may now feel confident in your royal place, but do not be too arrogant. Be wary of your *own* successor, for his triumph may soon be at hand.”

“That’s good advice, Zeus. It is a shame you didn’t follow it yourself when you ruled the Heavens,” Apollo retorted, as he brushed his father aside and approached the others.

“Greetings Goddesses of the Panthaeon! I am pleased to see you, each with your unique and startling splendor. Ahh, and my dear sister, Artemis, allow me to step closer and embrace you, for it has been far too long. How I have ached to see you again.”

Artemis opened her arms to Apollo, and the children of Leto and Zeus embraced. When they released each other, it was Artemis who spoke. “I am pleased to hear this, brother. Perhaps now the balance and harmony we once enjoyed can be restored, as I have been restored since the Muses returned to my company.”

“And so I have come to understand their proper place is with you,” Apollo replied hesitantly, “though I do miss their companionship.”

“They are your handmaidens no more, Apollo, but perhaps in time they will visit you again of their own accord.”

Suddenly, a galloping bull, fast approaching, drew their attention away. The wondrous beast had fiery eyes and gilded horns, and on his back rode glorious Dionysos, God of Ecstasy, with a crown of ivy and a flowing indigo robe, carrying his staff high overhead. Satyrs and Maenads appeared, sounding castanets, drums and reed pipes as they danced amongst the Immortals. Flowers and ivy sprang up from the Earth, twisting and curling their way



around the mouth of the cave. Bunches of grapes burst forth from new vines and a nearby spring transformed into a fountain of ambrosia, shooting up from the ground.

Dionysos dismounted the bull and cast off his robe, revealing his beautiful bronze body, clad only in a small red wrap around his slim waist. “My dear family, so good to see you. It has been so long since we have all come together, and to help us celebrate this momentous occasion, I have taken the liberty of bringing sweet ambrosia in limitless quantities. Please, lovely nymphs, go now amidst my distinguished family and share with them the good things we have brought.”

“Dionysos!” Apollo yelled over the cacophony. “You ever self-indulgent, hedonistic fool, we did not come here to inebriate ourselves. We have been brought together by Hermes, the Messenger, yet we know not why. This is the question we must consider.”

Swaying her hips to the rhythmic music, Aphrodite danced her way over to Dionysos. “Calm your anxious mind, Apollo. We can discuss the purpose of our gathering *and* sample his ambrosia.” She kissed Dionysos on his smooth cheek, then pulled a golden goblet from thin air. He filled her cup with the immortal drink and she sipped the nectar, smiling.

“I agree,” Hera said, also moving to the festive music. “We will know soon enough why we’ve been brought together. Hermes is doubtless on his way, swift-footed one that he is. In the meantime, I am in need of some refreshment.”

“Dear Lady of Argos, what a pleasant surprise,” Dionysos replied, bowing down low. “Allow me to pour you a generous cup.” He did so, then from behind his back pulled a bouquet. “And to add to your pleasure, I present you with these fragrant flowers, fresh cut from the meadows of Díkti.”

“Most gracious of you, Dionysos,” Hera replied, taking the flowers and sipping the ambrosia. “Mmmmm, truly divine.”

“I too would delight in sampling your concoction,” Athena said, approaching her brother.



“Goddess Athena, you look most splendid in your fine garments, woven no doubt by your own Immortal hand. It would be my honor to pour it for you.”

Dionysos then gestured to the others with wide-open arms. “Come come, Artemis, Auntie Demeter, and Apollo, most level-headed one, are you *certain* we cannot tempt you? Oh, and poor, poor Zeus. You look so exhausted, dear.” Dionysos glided over to his woebegone father. “There, there. Please, take just a sip, as it will help to strengthen you. You’ve been so tormented by the ravages of the wilderness.” He filled a goblet and held it out to Zeus.

Zeus snatched it from his hands, swallowed the drink down in one gargantuan gulp, and then hurled the goblet against a jagged rock. With a remarkable blast, it shattered into a thousand shining slivers, then vanished. Though he tried not to show it, Zeus himself was surprised at his power, as was everyone else.

Suddenly, Apollo gestured toward the cave. “Behold those fantastic lights emanating from the Earth! Surely, it must be Hermes at last. Come, let us go in and greet him.”

They all followed Apollo into the cavern, and Zeus trailed behind, fuming at having been upstaged once again.

Colored lights shot forth from a point suspended in mid-air, as if split by some unseen prism. As they approached the source and formed a semicircle around it, the light beams suddenly curved and twisted into a whirling vortex, and all at once, Hermes emerged, youthful as ever. When his winged sandal touched the floor of the cave, the portal collapsed into a diamond of light and disappeared. He stood before them and raised his wand. Two living serpents wound their way around it, and his whole marvelous form glowed with awesummal radiance.

“Greetings most esteemed Goddesses and Gods of the Pantheon. I am pleased to see us all together once again...”

“Yes, yes,” Zeus interrupted. “Why are we here?”

“Greetings to you as well, my impatient father. I have asked you all to return to Kríti, this fair and pleasant isle, as it is the place



where the Minoan Message was created. The Minoa herself has beckoned us here because the Transformation is not yet complete. Indeed, it now faces a grave and serious threat. Ares, most detested of the Immortals, is spinning a web of destruction.”

“Yes,” Athena affirmed, with concern in her voice. “I have sensed it. The peace and prosperity we have enjoyed since the dawn of the New Era is at risk. Our very existence is in jeopardy.”

Apollo erupted in fury. “Ares, you bloodthirsty barbarian. In your brashness you would destroy us all! Tell us, Hermes,” he went on, trying to regain his composure, “what more do you know?”

“I will give you an honest answer, Phoebos Apollo. I learned of it first from the Minoa herself, when I visited the distant past. She warned me then that a time of great danger would come, and bade me to beware of the god of war, because she knew he would again resurface. I left her world and returned to the present, seeking to track him down. I went to the Great Barren Wilderness, and hidden in my own dimension, I watched him. As had been foreseen, I found him recruiting henchmen. Ares spoke with fire on his breath, whipping up the evil winds of fundamentalism. I heard the admission, from his own wicked mouth, that he is indeed building an army of Mortals.”

“That scruffy, flea-bitten band,” Zeus interrupted. “I wouldn’t call them an army!” He raised his arms in great lamentation. “Oh, the legions I once commanded, I..”

“Yes, Zeus,” Hermes continued, “I agree, they are a pitiable hoard, but they’re ruthless and their numbers have grown. They are on a quest of retribution and vengeance, determined to restore the old order, and Ares himself is slipping further into insanity.”

Aphrodite looked at the metal around her wrist. “So his power has solidified. Perhaps that’s the meaning of the persistence of this cuff. Indeed, it has grown tighter since I cast him off.”

Apollo stepped forward and addressed his father. “So, Cloud Gathering Zeus, how is it that you know of Ares’ band of mortal henchmen?”



Zeus glared at his son, on the one hand wanting to lash out in defense of himself, but on the other, wanting to be more cautious, so he said nothing.

Apollo turned to Hermes. "Tell us, Hermes, during your travels in the wilderness, did you encounter Zeus amongst the conspirators?"

"Yes," Hermes replied, directing his comments to Zeus. "I did see you there, in conversation with your hateful son, but I heard not the words you spoke."

Apollo confronted Zeus more forcefully now. "Perhaps your threat against me is not an idle one after all. Exactly what was it you plotted with the dreaded Ares?"

"I have no need for an army of mortals," Zeus responded coolly.

"Then, what was it you discussed?" Apollo pressed.

"I will not be subjected to your questioning, my brazen son."

"So be it, Zeus, but let me be clear, if you are in league with Ares it will be your undoing." Apollo turned back to Hermes. "Tell us more about this horrific plot. Do you know the time and place of Ares' planned destruction, and the means by which he intends to carry it out?"

"All I know is that it will occur at the Olympic Games, this summer, in our beloved Athens."

"What?" cried Zeus. "That wretched son of Hera is planning to mar my Sacred Games?"

"He *is* my son," Hera retorted, "but *you* are his father, and you have taught him well your ways of violence. And, in regard to the Sacred Games you claim as your own, need I again remind you that I presided over them long before you forced the Mortals to build that ostentatious temple at Olympia."

"This is not the time to set that record straight," Athena intervened. "The Games are in danger, as is the city which bears my name! We must set aside our differences, and unite to prevent this calamity from occurring."



“Woe be unto us,” Dionysos exclaimed, “if Ares succeeds in his plan of hideous destruction.” He plucked a golden mask of tragedy from the damp air and placed it in front of his eyes. “A return to the days of the warrior kings and their bloody rule, masculinity unfettered, out of sweet agreement with the Sacred Feminine.” He cast off the mask and it vanished. “We simply cannot allow that to happen, dears. I’m with you, wise Athena.” He summoned a full amphora and poured another cup of ambrosia for Athena and himself, then invited his family to partake. “Who else will join us in opposition to the god of war?”

One by one they refilled their chalices, until Zeus alone was without. Finally, after a long silence, Hera raised her voice and put the question to her husband. “What is your intention, Zeus? Will you join with us to prevent the disaster? Or will you stubbornly cling to your old ways and aid Ares in his destruction?”

Zeus of the Aegis hesitated, looking into the eyes of his family. Then, as a distant thunder rumbled, he began taking on a glimmer of his former magnificence, growing somewhat taller and stronger. His robe no longer appeared as a shabby rag and his gray, knotted hair regained some of its silvery luster.

“Hera, Queen of Heaven, fear not my intention, for I too am horrified by the prospect of the destruction of our Games and the city of Athena. It saddens me that you think I’m capable of such abominable acts, but no matter. I declare to you now, and will prove to you in time, that I am allied with you, and with the rest of my family.”

He summoned a robust chalice of Dionysos’ ambrosia to appear in his waiting hands, and lifting it high in the air, made his pledge. “Now let great Gaia, wide Ouranos and the flowing waters of the Styx bear witness, we will unite to stop the god of war!”

As the Immortals brought their goblets together, a hearty ringing sounded, reverberating throughout the cave.

“So then,” Apollo boldly reaffirmed, “we are resolved to combine our talents, to cooperate to foil Ares’ loathsome plan – but



mind you Zeus, do not attempt to deceive us, for I will be watching. In the meantime, I now propose we leave this womb and travel through our spheres of influence, collecting information as we go. Then let us reconvene at my, I mean *our*, sacred Oracle of Delphi and consult its wisdom.”

One by one, each in their own turn consented to the plan. However, before they went their separate ways, Athena, daughter of Metis, stepped forward with one further request. “Please, follow me into the deeper recesses of the cavern, as there is another of whom you must become aware.”

She led them down the steep path, their collective brilliance illuminating the passageway. At last, they reached the bottom, and behind a curtain of red and gold stalactites, lay a small pond, framed by a row of spectacular stalagmite columns at the back. A blue sky with white clouds appeared on the surface of the clear sparkling water, and the Goddess spoke.

“There is a Mortal who will become indispensable to our plans, and I shall introduce him to you now.” The clouds parted, revealing an image of the handsome Greek hero, fast asleep. “His name is Herakles Speros, son of Maria and Alexander, and a son of Athens, born there 22 years ago. The family moved across the Sea’s wide ridges to America, when he was a boy. He has since become a fine young man, a scholar and athlete, and the favored Olympic contender in the decathlon. He is clever and brilliant, indeed god-like in many of his finest qualities, and he is most favored by me, so bid him great glory and do him no harm.”

Aphrodite looked upon his beauty and smiled. “I have the perfect mate for him...”

“He *is* a handsome boy,” Hera said, admiring him, “with that golden body and those curly brown locks. Though I cannot help but wonder, could this be our long lost Herakles of the Twelve Labors?”

Apollo of the Rational Mind scoffed. “Herakles, *reborn?*”

“Impossible!” Zeus declared. “I myself gave that godlike human



the gift of immortality. How could he have been reborn as a mere mortal?"

Hera spoke then to Athena. "You know him best of all. Do you believe it to be true?"

"Surely he is brave and strong, but this Herakles also possesses a vast intellect, and he is diplomatic and gentle in nature."

Dionysos laughed. "Doesn't sound like the hairy brute who bullied his way around the ancient world to me."

"No he does not," Athena concurred, "but perhaps if he were reborn, he would take on more flattering attributes. I know I feel a great love in my heart for this Mortal, and I have not seen the immortal Herakles for some time.

"Here, I give you the opportunity to decide for yourselves. Peer into the Mortal Realm and see young Herakles with your own eyes. Meanwhile, I will go to him and beckon him to join us at Delphi."

