



PANDORA AND THE EVILS OF THE WORLD

Against the wishes of the god Zeus, man had gained the gift of fire. This was a power which should have been the gods' alone and Zeus watched in dismay as fire enabled man to build new civilisations and rise above the beasts of sea, land and air. He knew that if the supremacy of the gods was to remain unchallenged, something would need to be done. It was then that Zeus decided to create the first woman.

Zeus visited Hephaestus, the blacksmith god of volcanoes and hot fires. Hephaestus' skill was without equal. It was he who had made Hermes' winged sandals, Helios' mighty chariot and Eros' bow and arrows. Almost all of the magnificent and magical equipment of the gods had been created in the workshop of Hephaestus. He would be able to realise Zeus' plan.

“The Titan Prometheus has paid for his trickery in stealing the fire of the gods,” Zeus explained to him, “but I am not content to punish Prometheus alone, man must also suffer for his trespass.”

Prometheus' punishment was well known to Hephaestus; he had constructed the chains which held the Titan in his mountain prison. Now, he would help to deliver man's punishment.

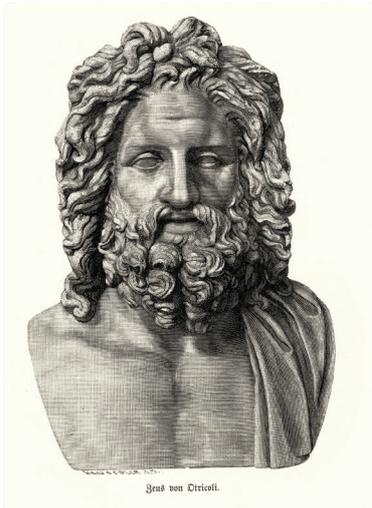
Zeus instructed Hephaestus to fashion a maiden out of earth, clay and water. This, the blacksmith did. When the maiden was completed, Zeus





gave her a human voice and strength. Then, his fellow gods showered this new creation with gifts. Athena, goddess of wisdom, courage and inspiration, taught her the crafts, whereas Aphrodite, goddess of love, beauty and pleasure, bestowed upon her charm. In turn, all of the gods provided her with some new skill or quality. The maiden was then dressed and adorned by the gods. Finally, she was named. As she had been given many gifts from the gods, she was called Pandora, meaning “all gift.”

Pandora was then sent by Hermes to the Titan Epimetheus as a gift. Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, lived in the world of man. Before Prometheus had been bound, he had warned his brother not to accept any gifts from Zeus.



Epimetheus saw Pandora. Such was her beauty that immortal gods and mortal gods were seized by wonder when they gazed upon her. The warning of Prometheus, once firmly grounded within Epimetheus’ thoughts was forgotten and he took Pandora as his wife.

Zeus was pleased to see that the trap he had devised was working. On the day of their wedding, he presented Pandora with a wedding gift of a beautiful box. He gave only one condition to the offering of the vessel: Pandora must never open the box. Although she was mystified, Pandora agreed to this and accepted the present in good faith. Following the wedding, the box was taken their home. There, it sat and it waited...

At first, Pandora had no desire to open the box; she had given a promise to Zeus that the lid would remain firmly closed. Yet, in receiving the gifts of the gods, Pandora had also been given curiosity. Often, her thoughts would turn to the box of secrets. “What could be hidden inside?” she wondered, “and why must its contents remain hidden?”

As time passed, these thoughts grew until Pandora could think of little else. Soon, she could stand it no longer. A moment came when Epimetheus left the room and she was alone with the gift. Then, consumed by her curiosity, Pandora was driven to the box.



“I wonder...” she gasped.

Her fingers anxiously unfastened the clasp and drew back the lid.

Suddenly, a host of ghostly creatures streamed out of the box. One of the spirits was disease, another famine, whilst poverty, misery and sadness could also be counted amongst their number. Pandora had acted out of curiosity, not malice, but in doing so, she had loosed all of the evils of the world upon man’s head. In horror, she slammed the lid of the box down. It was too late. All of the spirits had escaped.

Except one...

At the bottom of the box, one small but important spirit remained – Hope. That is why hope is the last thing that dies in man. Although hope can often deceive man and lead him down false paths, it is the only defence against the many ills let loose that day.