

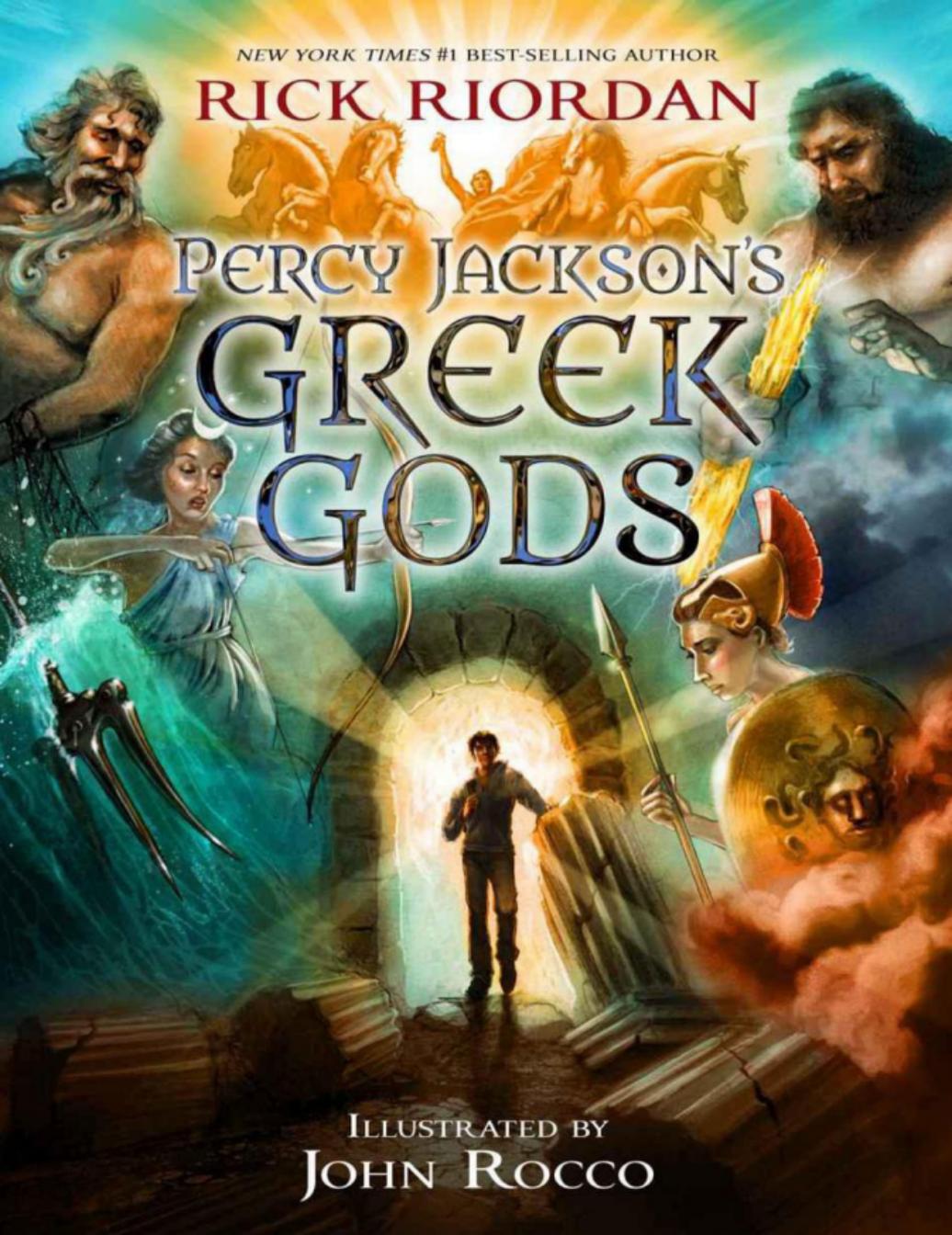
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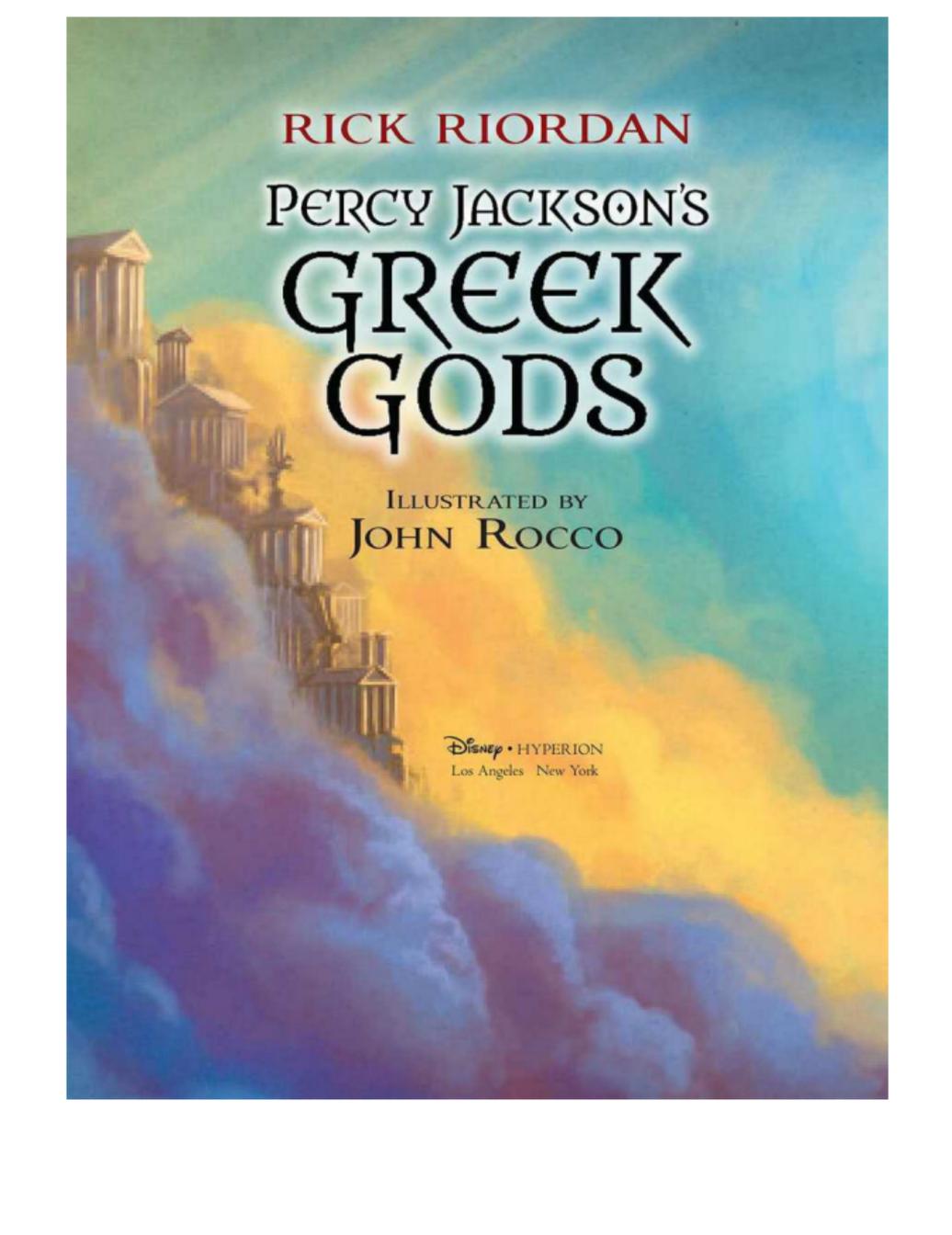
RICK RIORDAN

PERCY JACKSON'S
**GREEK
GODS**

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN ROCCO



The background of the cover is a vibrant, painterly illustration of Mount Olympus. The mountain is depicted as a series of white marble structures with classical columns and pediments, built into a steep, rocky slope. The sky is a mix of soft blues, greens, and yellows, suggesting a bright, clear day. The overall style is reminiscent of classical art or a high-quality digital painting.

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Disney • HYPERION
Los Angeles New York

BOOKS BY RICK RIORDAN

Percy Jackson and the Olympians Book
One:

The Lightning Thief

Percy Jackson and the Olympians Book
Two:

The Sea of Monsters

Percy Jackson and the Olympians Book
Three:

The Titan's Curse

Percy Jackson and the Olympians Book

Four:

The Battle of the Labyrinth

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The Demigod Files

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*To my father, Rick Riordan, Sr., who
read me my first book of mythology*

—R.R.

*To my heroes of illustration: N. C.
Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, Arthur
Rackham, and Frank Frazetta*

—J.R.



INTRODUCTION

I A publisher in New York asked me to write down what I know about the Greek gods, and I was like, “Can we do this anonymously? Because I don’t need the Olympians mad at me again.”

But if it helps you to know your Greek gods, and survive an encounter

with them if they ever show up in your face, then I guess writing all this down will be my good deed for the week.

If you don't know me, my name is Percy Jackson. I'm a modern-day demigod—a half-god, half-mortal son of Poseidon—but I'm not going to say much about myself. My story has already been written down in some books that are total fiction (wink, wink) and I am just a character from the story (*cough*—yeah, right—*cough*).

Just go easy on me while I'm telling you about the gods, all right? There's

like forty bajillion different versions of the myths, so don't be all *Well, I heard it a different way, so you're WRONG!*

I'm going to tell you the versions that make the most sense to me. I promise I didn't make any of this up. I got all these stories straight from the Ancient Greek and Roman dudes who wrote them down in the first place. Believe me, I couldn't make up stuff this weird.

So here we go. First I'll tell you how the world got made. Then I'll run down a list of gods and give you my two cents about each of them. I just hope I don't

make them so mad they incinerate me
before I—

AGGHHHHHHHHH!

Just kidding. Still here.

Anyway, I'll start with the Greek
story of creation, which by the way, is
seriously *messed up*. Wear your safety
glasses and your raincoat. There will be
blood.

**THE BEGINNING
AND STUFF**



IN THE BEGINNING, I wasn't there. I don't think the Ancient Greeks were, either. Nobody had a pen and paper to take notes, so I can't vouch for what follows, but I can tell you it's what the Greeks *thought* happened.

At first, there was pretty much

nothing. A lot of nothing.

The first god, if you can call it that, was Chaos—a gloomy, soupy mist with all the matter in the cosmos just drifting around. Here's a fact for you: *Chaos* literally means the *Gap*, and we're not talking about the clothing store.

Eventually Chaos got less chaotic. Maybe it got bored with being all gloomy and misty. Some of its matter collected and solidified into the earth, which unfortunately developed a living personality. She called herself Gaea, the Earth Mother.

Now Gaea *was* the actual earth—the rocks, the hills, the valleys, the whole enchilada. But she could also take on humanlike form. She liked to walk across the earth—which was basically walking across herself—in the shape of a matronly woman with a flowing green dress, curly black hair, and a serene smile on her face. The smile hid a nasty disposition. You’ll see that soon enough.

After a long time alone, Gaea looked up into the misty nothing above the earth and said to herself: “You know what would be good? A sky. I could really go

for a sky. And it would be nice if he was also a handsome man I could fall in love with, because I'm kind of lonely down here with just these rocks.”

Either Chaos heard her and cooperated, or Gaea simply willed it to happen. Above the earth, the sky formed—a protective dome that was blue in the daytime and black at night. The sky named himself Ouranos—and, yeah, that's another spelling for Uranus. There's pretty much no way you can pronounce that name without people snickering. It just sounds *wrong*. Why he

didn't choose a better name for himself—like Deathbringer or José—I don't know, but it might explain why Ouranos was so cranky all the time.

Like Gaea, Ouranos could take human shape and visit the earth—which was good, because the sky is way up there and long-distance relationships never work out.

In physical form, he looked like a tall, buff guy with longish dark hair. He wore only a loincloth, and his skin changed color—sometimes blue with cloudy patterns across his muscles,

sometimes dark with glimmering stars. Hey, Gaea dreamed him up to look like that. Don't blame me. Sometimes you'll see pictures of him holding a zodiac wheel, representing all the constellations that pass through the sky over and over for eternity.

Anyway, Ouranos and Gaea got married.

Happily ever after?

Not exactly.

Part of the problem was that Chaos got a little creation-happy. It thought to its misty, gloomy self: Hey, Earth and

Sky. That was fun! I wonder what else I can make.

Soon it created all sorts of other problems—and by that I mean gods. Water collected out of the mist of Chaos, pooled in the deepest parts of the earth, and formed the first seas, which naturally developed a consciousness—the god Pontus.

Then Chaos really went nuts and thought: I know! How about a dome like the sky, but at the *bottom* of the earth! That would be awesome!

So another dome came into being

beneath the earth, but it was dark and murky and generally not very nice, since it was always hidden from the light of the sky. This was Tartarus, the Pit of Evil; and as you can guess from the name, when he developed a godly personality, he didn't win any popularity contests.

The problem was, both Pontus and Tartarus liked Gaea, which put some pressure on her relationship with Ouranos.

A bunch of other primordial gods popped up, but if I tried to name them all

we'd be here for weeks. Chaos and Tartarus had a kid together (don't ask how; I don't know) called Nyx, who was the embodiment of night. Then Nyx, somehow all by herself, had a daughter named Hemera, who was Day. Those two never got along because they were as different as...well, you know.

According to some stories, Chaos also created Eros, the god of procreation...in other words, mommy gods and daddy gods having lots of little baby gods. Other stories claim Eros was the son of Aphrodite. We'll get to her

later. I don't know which version is true, but I *do* know Gaea and Ouranos started having kids—with *very* mixed results.

First, they had a batch of twelve—six girls and six boys called the Titans. These kids looked human, but they were much taller and more powerful. You'd figure twelve kids would be enough for anybody, right? I mean, with a family that big, you've basically got your own reality TV show.

Plus, once the Titans were born, things started to go sour with Ouranos and Gaea's marriage. Ouranos spent a

lot more time hanging out in the sky. He didn't visit. He didn't help with the kids. Gaea got resentful. The two of them started fighting. As the kids grew older, Ouranos would yell at them and basically act like a horrible dad.

A few times, Gaea and Ouranos tried to patch things up. Gaea decided maybe if they had another set of kids, it would bring them closer....

I know, right? Bad idea.

She gave birth to triplets. The problem: these new kids defined the word UGLY. They were as big and

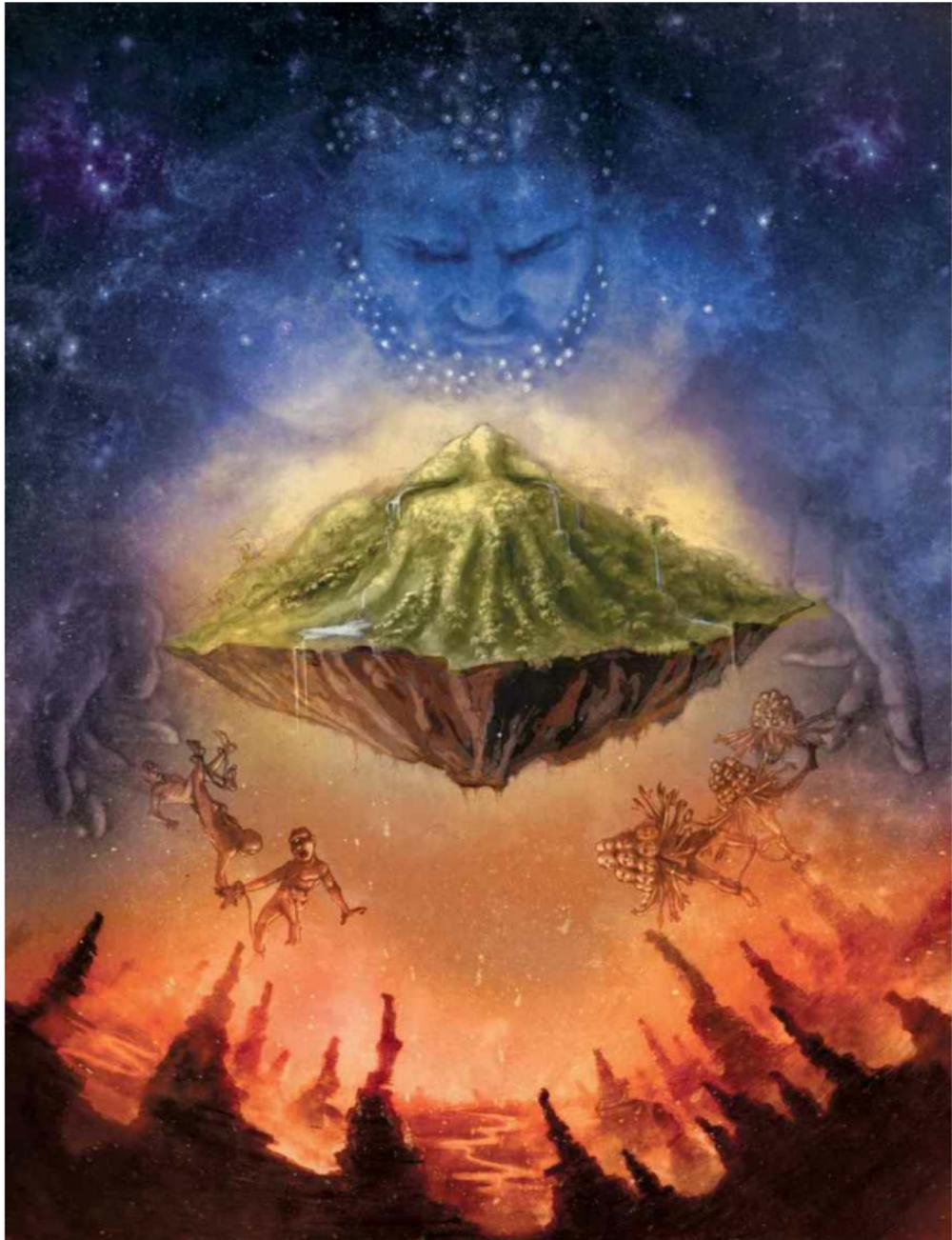
strong as Titans, except hulking and brutish and in desperate need of a body wax. Worst of all, each kid had a single eye in the middle of his forehead.

Talk about a face only a mother could love. Well, Gaea loved these guys. She named them the Elder Cyclopes, and eventually they would spawn a whole race of other, lesser Cyclopes. But that was much later.

When Ouranos saw the Cyclops triplets, he freaked. “These cannot be my kids! They don’t even look like me!”

“They *are* your children, you

deadbeat!” Gaea screamed back. “Don’t you dare leave me to raise them on my own!”



“Don’t worry, I won’t,” Ouranos growled.

He stormed off and came back with thick chains made from the night sky’s pure darkness. He bound up the Cyclopes and tossed them into Tartarus, which was the only part of creation where Ouranos wouldn’t have to look at them.

Harsh, right?

Gaea screamed and wailed, but Ouranos refused to release the Cyclopes. No one else dared to oppose his orders, because by this time he was getting a

reputation as a pretty scary dude.

“I am king of the universe!” he bellowed. “How could I *not* be? I am literally above everything else.”

“I hate you!” Gaea wailed.

“Bah! You will do as I say. I am the first and best of the primordial gods.”

“I was born *before* you!” Gaea protested. “You wouldn’t even be here if I didn’t—”

“Don’t test me,” he snarled. “I’ve got plenty more chains of darkness.”

As you can guess, Gaea threw a total earthquake fit, but she didn’t see what

else she could do. Her first kids, the Titans, were almost adults now. They felt bad for Mom. They didn't like their dad much either—Gaea was always bad-mouthing him, with good reason—but the Titans were scared of Ouranos and felt helpless to stop him.

I have to keep it together for the kids, Gaea thought. Maybe I should give it one more try with Ouranos.

She arranged a nice romantic evening—candles, roses, soft music. They must have rekindled some of the old magic. A few months later, Gaea

gave birth to one more set of triplets.

As if she needed more proof that her marriage to Ouranos was dead....

The new kids were even more monstrous than the Cyclopes. Each one had a hundred arms all around his chest like sea urchin spines, and fifty teeny, tiny heads clustered on his shoulders. It didn't matter to Gaea. She loved their little faces—all hundred and fifty of them. She called the triplets the Hundred-Handed Ones. She'd barely had time to give them names, though, when Ouranos marched over, took one

look at them, and snatched them from Gaea's arms. Without a word, he wrapped them in chains and tossed them into Tartarus like bags of recycling.

Clearly, the sky dude had issues.

Well, that was pretty much it for Gaea. She wailed and moaned and caused so many earthquakes that her Titan kids came running to see what was wrong.

“Your father is a complete _____!”

I don't know what she called him, but I have a feeling that's when the first

cuss words were invented.

She explained what had happened. Then she raised her arms and caused the ground to rumble beneath her. She summoned the hardest substance she could find from her earthy domain, shaped it with her anger, and created the first weapon ever made—a curved iron blade about three feet long. She fixed it to a wooden handle made from a nearby tree branch, then showed her invention to the Titans.

“Behold, my children!” she said. “The instrument of my revenge. I will

call it a scythe!”

The Titans muttered among themselves: *What is that for? Why is it curved? How do you spell scythe?*

“One of you needs to step up!” Gaea cried. “Ouranos isn’t worthy to be the king of the cosmos. One of you will kill him and take his place.”

The Titans looked pretty uncomfortable.

“So...explain this whole *killing* thing,” said Oceanus. He was the oldest Titan boy, but he mostly hung out in the far reaches of the sea with the

primordial water god, whom he called Uncle Pontus. “What does it mean, to kill?”

“She wants us to exterminate our dad,” Themis guessed. She was one of the smartest girls, and she immediately got the concept of punishing someone for a crime. “Like, make him not exist anymore.”

“Is that even possible?” asked her sister Rhea. “I thought we were all immortal.”

Gaea snarled in frustration. “Don’t be cowards! It’s very simple. You take

this sharp pointy blade and you cut your dad into small pieces so he can't bother us again. Whichever of you does this will be the ruler of the universe! Also, I will make you those cookies you used to like, with the sprinkles.”

Now, in modern times, we have a word for this sort of behavior. We call it *psycho*.

Back then, the rules of behavior were a lot looser. Maybe you'll feel better about your own relatives, knowing that the first family in creation was also the first *dysfunctional* family.

The Titans started mumbling and pointing to each other like, “Hey, you’d be good at killing Dad.”

“Uh, no, I think *you* should do it.”

“I’d love to kill Dad, honestly, but I’ve got this thing I have to do, so—”

“*I’ll* do it!” said a voice from the back.

The youngest of the twelve shouldered his way forward. Kronos was smaller than his brothers and sisters. He wasn’t the smartest or the strongest or the fastest. But he *was* the most power-hungry. I suppose when

you're the youngest of twelve kids, you're always looking for ways to stand out and get noticed. The youngest Titan loved the idea of taking over the world, especially if it meant being the boss of all his siblings. The offer of cookies with sprinkles didn't hurt, either.

Kronos stood about nine feet tall, which was runty for a Titan. He didn't look as dangerous as some of his brothers, but the kid was crafty. He'd already gotten the nickname "the Crooked One" among his siblings, because he would fight dirty in their

wrestling matches and was never where you expected him to be.

He had his mother's smile and dark curly hair. He had his father's cruelty. When he looked at you, you could never tell if he was about to punch you or tell you a joke. His beard was kind of unnerving, too. He was young for a beard, but he'd already started growing his whiskers into a single spike that jutted from his chin like the beak of a raven.

When Kronos saw the scythe, his eyes gleamed. He wanted that iron

blade. Alone among his siblings, he understood how much damage it could cause.

And as for killing his dad—why not? Ouranos barely noticed him. Neither did Gaea, for that matter. His parents probably didn't even know his name.

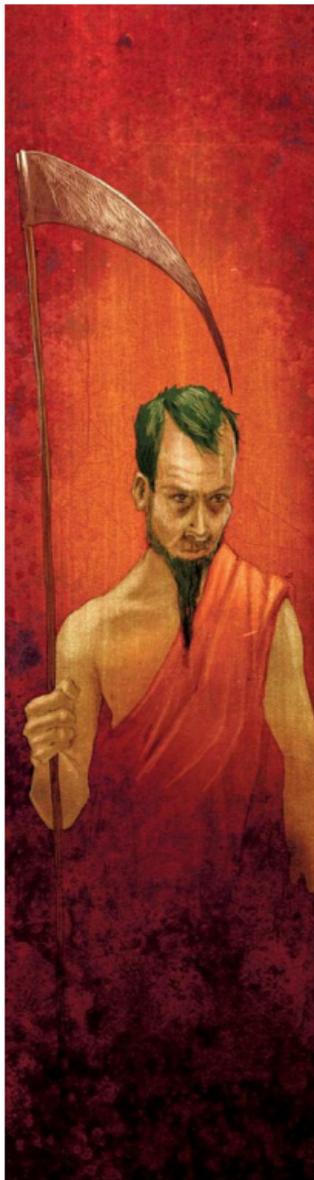
Kronos hated being ignored. He was tired of being the smallest and wearing all those stupid Titan hand-me-downs.

“I'll do it,” he repeated. “I'll chop up Dad.”

“My favorite son!” Gaea cried. “You are *awesome*! I knew I could count on

you, uh...which one are you again?"

"Kronos." He managed to keep his smile. Hey, for a scythe, cookies, and a chance to commit murder, Kronos could hide his true feelings. "I will be honored to kill for you, Mother. But we'll have to do it my way. First, I want you to trick Ouranos into visiting you. Tell him you're sorry. Tell him it's all your fault and you're going to cook him a fancy dinner to apologize. Just get him here tonight and act like you still love him."



“Ugh!” Gaea gagged. “Are you crazy?”

“Just pretend,” Kronos insisted. “Once he’s in human form and sitting next to you, I’ll jump out and attack him. But I’ll need some help.”

He turned to his siblings, who were all suddenly very interested in their own feet.

“Look, guys,” said Kronos, “if this goes bad, Ouranos is going to take revenge on *all* of us. We can’t have any mistakes. I’ll need four of you to hold him down and make sure he doesn’t

escape back into the sky before I finish killing him.”

The others were silent. They were probably trying to picture their shrimpy little brother Kronos taking on their huge violent dad, and they weren't liking the odds.

“Oh, come on!” Kronos chided. “I'll do the actual slicing and dicing. Four of you just need to hold him. When I'm king, I'll reward those four! I'll give them each a corner of the earth to rule—north, south, east, and west. One-time offer. Who's with me?”

The girls were too wise to get involved in murder. They made their excuses and quickly left. The oldest son, Oceanus, chewed his thumb nervously. “I have to get back to the sea, for some, uh, aquatic stuff. Sorry...”

That left only four of Kronos’s brothers—Koios, Iapetus, Krios, and Hyperion.

Kronos smiled at them. He took the scythe from Gaea’s hands and tested its point, drawing a drop of golden blood from his own finger. “So, four volunteers! Nice!”

Iapetus cleared his throat. “Uh, actually—”

Hyperion jabbed Iapetus with his elbow. “We’re in, Kronos!” he promised. “You can count on us!”

“Excellent,” Kronos said, which was the first time an evil genius ever said *excellent*. He told them the plan.

That night, amazingly, Ouranos showed up.

He wandered into the valley where he usually met Gaea and frowned when he saw the sumptuous dinner laid out on

the table. “I got your note. Are you serious about making up?”

“Absolutely!” Gaea was dressed in her best green sleeveless dress. Her curly hair was braided with jewels (which were easy for her to get, being the earth), and she smelled of roses and jasmine. She reclined on a sofa in the soft light of the candles and beckoned her husband to come closer.

Ouranos felt underdressed in his loincloth. He hadn't brushed his hair or anything. His nighttime skin was dark and covered with stars, but that probably

didn't count as "black tie" for a fancy dinner. He was starting to think he should've at least brushed his teeth.

Was he suspicious? I don't know. Remember, nobody in the history of the cosmos had been lured into an ambush and chopped to pieces before. He was going to be the first. Lucky guy. Also, he got lonely hanging out in the sky so much. His only company was the stars, the air god Aither (who was, in fact, a total airhead), and Nyx and Hemera, mother and daughter, who argued with each other every dawn and dusk.

“So...” Ouranos’s palms felt sweaty. He’d forgotten how beautiful Gaea could be when she wasn’t all yelling up in his face. “You’re not angry anymore?”

“Not at all!” Gaea assured him.

“And...you’re okay with me wrapping our kids in chains and throwing them into the abyss?”

Gaea gritted her teeth and forced a smile. “I am *okay* with it.”

“Good,” he grunted. “Because those little guys were UGLY.”

Gaea patted the couch. “Come sit with me, my husband.”

Ouranos grinned and lumbered over.

As soon as he settled in, Kronos whispered from the behind the nearest boulder: “Now.”

His four brothers jumped out from their hiding places. Krios had disguised himself as a bush. Koios had dug a hole for himself and covered it with branches. Hyperion had tucked himself under the couch (it was a large couch), and Iapetus was attempting to look like a tree with his arms out for branches. For some reason, it had worked.

The four brothers grabbed Ouranos.

Each one took an arm or a leg and they wrestled their dad to the ground, stretching him out spread-eagle.

Kronos emerged from the shadows. His iron scythe gleamed in the starlight. “Hello, Father.”

“What is the meaning of this?” Ouranos bellowed. “Gaea, tell them to release me!”

“HA!” Gaea rose from her couch. “You gave our children no mercy, my husband, so you deserve no mercy. Besides, who wears a loincloth to a fancy dinner? I am disgusted!”

Ouranos struggled in vain. “How dare you! I am the lord of the cosmos!”

“Not anymore.” Kronos raised the scythe.

“Beware! If you do this, uh...what was your name again?”

“KRONOS!”

“If you do this, Kronos,” said Ouranos, “I will curse you! Someday, your *own* children will destroy you and take your throne, just as you are doing to me!”

Kronos laughed. “Let them try.”

He brought down the scythe.

It hit Ouranos right in the...well, you know what? I can't even say it. If you're a guy, imagine the most painful place you could possibly be hit.

Yep. That's the place.

Kronos chopped, and Ouranos howled in pain. It was like the most disgusting cheap-budget horror movie you can imagine. Blood was everywhere—except the blood of the gods is golden, and it's called *ichor*.

Droplets of it splattered over the rocks; and the stuff was so powerful that later on, when no one was looking,

creatures arose from the ichor—three hissing winged demons called the Furies, the spirits of punishment. They immediately fled into the darkness of Tartarus. Other drops of sky blood fell on fertile soil, where they eventually turned into wild but gentler creatures called *nymphs* and *satyrs*.

Most of the blood just splattered everything. Seriously, those stains were *never* going to come out of Kronos's shirt.

“Well done, brothers!” Kronos grinned ear to ear, his scythe dripping

gold.

Iapetus got sick on the spot. The others laughed and patted each other on the back.

“Oh, my children!” Gaea said. “I am so proud! Cookies and punch for everyone!”

Before the celebration, Kronos gathered up the remains of his father in the tablecloth. Maybe because he resented his eldest brother, Oceanus. for not helping with the murder, Kronos toted the stuff to the sea and tossed it in. The blood mixed with the salty water,

and...well, you'll see what came from that later.

Now you're going to ask, *Okay, so if the sky was killed, why do I look up and still see the sky?*

Answer: *I dunno.*

My guess is that Kronos killed Ouranos's physical form, so the sky god could no longer appear on the earth and claim kingship. They basically exiled him into the air. So he's not dead, exactly; but now he can't do anything but be the harmless dome over the world.

Anyway, Kronos returned to the

valley, and all the Titans had a party.

Gaea named Kronos lord of the universe. She made him a cool one-of-a-kind collector's edition golden crown and everything. Kronos kept his promise and gave his four helpful brothers control over the four corners of the earth. Iapetus became the Titan of the west. Hyperion got the east. Koios took the north, and Krios got the south.

That night, Kronos lifted his glass of nectar, which was the immortals' favorite drink. He tried for a confident smile, since kings should always look

confident, though truthfully he was already starting to worry about Ouranos's curse—that someday Kronos's own children would depose him.

In spite of that, he yelled, “My siblings, a toast! We have begun a Golden Age!”

And if you like lots of lying, stealing, backstabbing, and cannibalism, then read on, because it definitely was a Golden Age for all that.

**THE GOLDEN
AGE OF
CANNIBALISM**



AT FIRST, KRONOS WASN'T SO BAD. He had to work his way up to being a *complete* slime bucket.

He released the Elder Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handed Ones from Tartarus, which made Gaea happy. The monstrous guys turned out to be useful, too. They had spent all their time in the

abyss learning how to forge metal and build with stone (I guess that's pretty much all there was to do), so in gratitude for their freedom, they constructed a massive palace for Kronos on top of Mount Othrys, which back then was the tallest mountain in Greece.

The palace was made from void-black marble. Towering columns and vast halls gleamed in the light of magical torches. Kronos's throne was carved from a solid block of obsidian, inlaid with gold and diamonds—which sounds impressive, but probably wasn't very

comfortable. That didn't matter to Kronos. He could sit there all day, surveying the entire world below him, cackling evilly, "Mine! All mine!"

His five Titan brothers and six Titan sisters didn't argue with him. They had pretty much staked out their favorite territories already—and besides, after seeing Kronos wield that scythe, they didn't want to get on his bad side.

In addition to being king of the cosmos, Kronos became the Titan of time. He couldn't pop around the time stream like Doctor Who or anything, but

he *could* occasionally make time slow down or speed up. Whenever you're in an incredibly boring lecture that seems to take forever, blame Kronos. Or when your weekend is *way* too short, that's Kronos's fault, too.

He was especially interested in the destructive power of time. Being immortal, he couldn't believe what a few short years could do to a mortal life. Just for kicks, he used to travel around the world, fast-forwarding the lives of trees, plants, and animals so he could watch them wither and die. He never got

tired of that.

As for his brothers, the four who helped with the murder of Ouranos were given the four corners of the earth—which is weird, since the Greeks thought the world was a big flat circle like a shield, so it didn't really *have* corners, but whatever.

Krios was the Titan of the south. He took the ram for his symbol, since the ram constellation rose in the southern sky. His navy blue armor was dotted with stars. Ram's horns jutted from his helmet. Krios was the dark, silent type.

He would stand down there at the southern edge of world, watching the constellations and thinking deep thoughts—or maybe he was just thinking he should have requested a more exciting job.

Koios, the Titan of the north, lived at the opposite end of the world (obviously). He was sometimes called Polus, because he controlled the northern pole. This was way before Santa Claus moved in. Koios was also the first Titan to have the gift of prophecy. In fact, *Koios* literally means

question. He could ask questions of the sky, and sometimes the sky would whisper answers. Creepy? Yes. I don't know if he was communing with the spirit of Ouranos or what, but his glimpses of the future were so useful that other Titans started asking him burning questions like: *What's the weather going to be on Saturday? Is Kronos going to kill me today? What should I wear to Rhea's dance?* That kind of thing. Eventually Koios would pass down the gift of prophecy to his children.

Hyperion, Titan of the east, was the flashiest of the four. Since the light of day came from the east every morning, he called himself the Lord of Light. Behind his back, everybody else called him Kronos Lite, because he did whatever Kronos told him, and was basically like Kronos with half the calories and none of the taste. Anyway, he wore blazing golden armor and was known to burst into flames at random moments, which made him fun at parties.

His counterpart, Iapetus, was more laid-back, being the Titan of the west. A

good sunset always makes you want to kick back and chill. Despite that, you didn't want to get this guy mad at you. He was an excellent fighter who knew how to use a spear. *Iapetus* literally means *the Piercer*, and I'm pretty sure he didn't get that name by doing ear-piercings at the mall.

As for the last brother, Oceanus, he took charge of the outer waters that circled the world. That's how the big expanses of water bordering the earth came to be called *oceans*. It could have been worse. If Iapetus had taken over the

waters, today we'd be talking about the *Atlantic Iapet* and *sailing the iapet blue*, and that just doesn't have the same ring to it.

Now, before I turn to the six lady Titans, let me get some nasty business out of the way.

See, eventually the guy Titans started thinking, Hey, Dad had Gaea for a wife. Who are *we* going to have for wives? Then they looked at the lady Titans and thought, Hmm...

I know. You're screaming, *GROSS!* *The brothers wanted to marry their own*

sisters?!

Yeah. I find that pretty disgusting myself, but here's the thing: Titans didn't see family relationships the same way we do.

First off, like I said before, the rules of behavior were a lot looser back then. Also, there weren't many choices when it came to marriage partners. You couldn't simply log into TitansMatch.com and find your perfect soul mate.

Most important, immortals are just *different* from humans. They live

forever, more or less. They have cool powers. They have ichor instead of blood and DNA, so they aren't concerned about bloodlines not mixing well. Because of that, they don't see the whole brother-sister thing in the same way. You and the girl you like might have been born of the same mom, but once you grew up and you were both adults, you wouldn't necessarily think of her as your sister anymore.

That's my theory. Or maybe the Titans were all just freaks. I'll let you decide.

Anyway, not *all* the brothers married all the sisters, but here's the rundown.

The oldest girl was Theia. If you wanted her attention, all you had to do was wave something shiny in her face. She *loved* sparkly things and bright scenic views. Every morning she would dance with happiness when daylight returned. She would climb mountains just so she could see for miles around. She would even delve underground and bring out precious gems, using her magic powers to make them gleam and sparkle. Theia

is the one who gave gold its luster and made diamonds glitter.

She became the Titan of clear sight. Because she was all about bright and glittery, she ended up marrying Hyperion, the lord of light. As you can imagine, they got along great, though how they got any sleep with Hyperion glowing all night and Theia giggling, “Shiny! Shiny!” I don’t know.

Her sister Themis? Totally different. She was quiet and thoughtful and never tried to draw attention to herself, always wearing a simple white shawl over her

hair. She realized from an early age that she had a natural sense of right and wrong. She understood what was fair and what wasn't. Whenever she was in doubt, she claimed that she could draw wisdom straight from the earth. I don't think she meant from *Gaea*, though, because Gaea wasn't really hung up on right and wrong.

Anyway, Themis had a good reputation among her brothers and sisters. She could mediate even the worst arguments. She became the Titan of natural law and fairness. She didn't

marry any of her six brothers, which just proves how wise she was.

Third sister: Tethys, and I promise this is the last “T” name for the girls, because even *I’m* getting confused. She loved rivers, springs, and fresh running water of any kind. She was very kind, always offering her siblings something to drink, though the others got tired of hearing that the average Titan needs twenty-four large glasses of water a day to stay hydrated. At any rate, Tethys thought of herself as the nursemaid for the whole world, since all living things

need to drink. She ended up marrying Oceanus, which was kind of a no-brainer. “Hey, you like water? I like water too! We should totally go out!”

Phoebe, the fourth sister, lived right in the geographic center of the world, which for the Greeks meant the Oracle of Delphi—a sacred spring where you could sometimes hear whispers of the future if you knew how to listen. The Greeks called this place the *omphalos*, literally the belly button of the earth, though they never specified whether it was an innie or an outie.

Phoebe was one of the first people to figure out how to hear the voices of Delphi, but she wasn't a gloomy, mysterious sort of fortune-teller. Her name meant *bright*, and she always looked on the positive side of things. Her prophecies tended to be like fortune cookies—only good stuff. Which was fine, I guess, if you only wanted to hear good news, but not so great if you had a serious problem. Like if you were going to die tomorrow, Phoebe might just tell you, “Oh, um, I foresee that you won't have to worry about your math test next

week!”

Phoebe ended up marrying Koios, the northern dude, because he also had the gift of prophecy. Unfortunately, they only saw each other once in a while since they lived very far apart. Bonus fact: much later, Phoebe's grandson, a guy named Apollo, took over the Oracle. Because he inherited her powers, Apollo was sometimes called Phoebus Apollo.

Titan sister five was Mnemosyne—and, man, with my dyslexia I had to spell check that name about twenty times, and

it's probably still wrong. Pretty sure it's pronounced NEMO-sign. Anyway, Mnemosyne was born with a photographic memory long before anyone knew what a photograph was. Seriously, she remembered *everything*—her sisters' birthdays, her homework, putting out the garbage, feeding the cats. In some ways, that was good. She kept the family records and never *ever* forgot anything. But in some ways, having her around was a drag, because she would never *let* you forget anything.

That embarrassing thing you did

when you were eight years old? Yep, she remembered. That promise you made three years ago that you would pay her back that loan? She remembered.

What was worse, Mnemosyne expected everybody else to have a good memory too. Just to be helpful, she invented letters and writing so the rest of us poor schmucks who didn't have perfect recall could keep permanent records of everything. She became the Titan of memory, especially rote memorization. Next time you have to study for a spelling test or memorize the

capitals of all fifty states for no apparent reason, thank Mnemosyne. That kind of assignment was *totally* her idea. None of her fellow Titans wanted to marry her. Go figure.

Finally, there was sister number six: Rhea. Poor Rhea. She was the sweetest and most beautiful of the lady Titans, which of course meant she had the worst luck and the hardest life. Her name either means *flow* or *ease*. Both definitions fit. She always went with the flow, and she totally put people at ease. She would wander the valleys of the

earth, visiting her brothers and sisters, talking to the nymphs and satyrs who had sprung from the blood of Ouranos. She loved animals, too. Her favorite was the lion. If you see pictures of Rhea, she almost always has a couple of lions with her, which made it *very* safe for her to walk around, even in the worst neighborhoods.

Rhea became the Titan of motherhood. She adored babies and always helped her sisters during their deliveries. Eventually she would earn the title *the Great Mother* when she had

kids of her own. Unfortunately, she had to get married before any of that happened, which is how all the trouble started....

Oh, but everything was so great! What could possibly go wrong?

That's what the Earth Mother Gaea thought. She was so pleased to see her kids in charge of the world, she decided to sink back down into the earth for a while and just be, well...the earth. She'd been through a lot. She'd had eighteen kids. She deserved a rest.

She was sure Kronos would take care of things and be a good king forever and ever. (Yeah, right.) So she lay down for a quick nap, which in geological terms meant a few millennia.

Meanwhile, the Titans started having kids of their own, who were second-generation Titans. Oceanus and Tethys, Mr. & Mrs. Water, had a daughter named Klymene, who became the Titan goddess of fame. I'm guessing she was into fame because she grew up at the bottom of the ocean where nothing ever happened. She was *all* about gossip and reading the

tabloids and catching up on the latest Hollywood news...or she would've been, if Hollywood existed. Like a lot of folks who are obsessed with fame, she headed west. She ended up falling for the Titan of the west, Iapetus.

I know, he was technically her uncle. Disgusting. But like I said before, the Titans were different. My advice is not to think about it too much.

Anyway, Iapetus and Klymene had a son named Atlas, who turned out to be an excellent fighter, and also kind of a jerk. When he grew up, he became

Kronos's right-hand man and main enforcer.

Next, Iapetus and Klymene had a son named Prometheus, who was almost as clever as Kronos. According to some legends, Prometheus invented a minor life form you may have heard of—humans. One day he was just messing around at the riverbank, building stuff out of wet clay, when he sculpted a couple of funny-looking figures similar to Titans, only much smaller and easier to smash. Maybe some blood of Ouranos got into the clay, or maybe Prometheus

breathed life into the figures on purpose
—I don't know. But the clay creatures
came to life and became the first two
humans.



Did Prometheus get a medal for that? Nah. The Titans looked on humans the way we might look on gerbils. Some Titans thought humans were kind of cute, though they died awfully quick and didn't really serve any purpose. Other Titans thought they were repulsive rodents. Some Titans didn't pay them any attention at all. As for the humans, they mostly just cowered in their caves and scurried around trying not to get stepped on.

The Titans kept having more baby

Titans. I won't mention all of them or we'll be here for as long as Gaea napped, but Koios and Phoebe, the prophecy couple, had a girl named Leto, who decided she wanted to be the Titan protector of the young. She was the world's first babysitter. All the dad and mom Titans were really happy to see her.

Hyperion and Theia, Mr. & Mrs. Shiny, had twins named Helios and Selene, who were in charge of the sun and the moon. Makes sense, right? You can't get much shinier than the sun and

the moon.

Helios would drive the chariot of the sun across the sky every day, even though it got terrible mileage. Helios thought he looked pretty hot, and he had an annoying habit of calling the sun his “chick magnet.”

Selene wasn't quite so flashy. She drove her silver moon chariot across the sky at night and mostly kept to herself, though the one time she *did* fall in love, it was the saddest story ever. But that's for later.

At any rate, one particular Titan

wasn't getting married or having kids... namely Kronos, the lord of the universe. He just sat on his throne in the palace of Mount Othrys and got very, very grumpy watching everyone else have a good time.

Remember that curse Ouranos warned him about—that someday Kronos's own kids would overthrow him? Kronos couldn't get that out of his head.

At first he told himself, *Well, no biggie. I just won't get married or have kids!*

But it's a pain to be on your own when everyone around you is settling down and starting families. Kronos had earned the throne fair and square, but that curse took all the fun out of chopping up his dad. Now he had to worry about getting overthrown while everyone else got to enjoy the good life. Uncool.

His relatives didn't visit him much anymore. Once Gaea went back into the earth, they stopped coming by the palace for Sunday dinner. They said they were busy, but Kronos suspected that his

brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews were simply scared of him. He *did* have his father's temper and sense of cruelty. His scythe was intimidating. Plus, he had the slightly off-putting tendency to scream, "I'll kill you all!" whenever someone made him mad. But was that *his* fault?

One morning he really snapped. He woke up to a Cyclops hammering on a piece of bronze right outside his bedroom window. Seven in the morning, on a *weekend*!

Kronos had promised his mom he

would free the Elder Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handed Ones from Tartarus, but he was getting really tired of his ugly relatives. They'd become more and more disgusting as they grew up. They smelled like Porta Potties. They had, like, *zero* personal hygiene, and they were constantly making noise—building things, hammering metal, cutting stone. They'd been useful for building the palace, but now they were just annoying.

Kronos called Atlas and Hyperion and a couple of his other goons. They rounded up the Cyclopes and Hundred-

Handed Ones and told them they were going for a nice drive in the country to look at wildflowers. Then they jumped the poor guys, wrapped them in chains again, and tossed them back into Tartarus.

If Gaea woke up, she wouldn't be happy—but so what? Kronos was the king now. Mom would just have to deal with it.

Things were much quieter at the palace after that, but Kronos still had a major case of the grumpies. It wasn't fair that he couldn't have a girlfriend.

In fact, he had a particular girl in mind.

Secretly, he had a crush on Rhea.

She was *gorgeous*. Every time the Titan family got together, Kronos stole glances at her. If he noticed any of the other guys flirting with her, he would pull them aside for a private conversation with his scythe in hand, and warn them never to do it again.

He loved how Rhea laughed. Her smile was brighter than Helios's chick magnet...uh, I mean the sun. He loved the way her dark curly hair swept her

shoulders. Her eyes were as green as meadows, and her lips...well, Kronos dreamed about kissing those lips.

Also, Rhea was sweet and kind and everyone loved her. Kronos thought: If I just had a wife like that, my family wouldn't fear me as much. They'd come to the palace more often. Rhea would teach me to be a better Titan. Life would be awesome!

But another part of him thought, No! I can't get married, because of that stupid curse!

Kronos grumbled in frustration. He

was the king of the freaking universe! He could do whatever he wanted! Maybe Ouranos had just been messing with him and there *was* no curse. Or maybe he would get lucky and he wouldn't have kids.

Note to self: If you're trying not to have kids, don't marry a lady who is the Titan of motherhood.

Kronos tried to restrain himself, but finally he couldn't stand it any longer. He invited Rhea to a romantic dinner and poured out his feelings. He proposed to her on the spot.

Now, I don't know if Rhea loved the guy or not. If she didn't, I imagine she was too afraid to say so. This was Kronos the Crooked One, after all—the dude who had killed their dad. The king of the freaking universe.

It didn't help that the whole time they ate dinner, his scythe was resting on a hook on the wall right behind him, its blade gleaming in the candlelight like it was still covered in golden ichor.

Rhea agreed to marry him.

Maybe she thought she could make him into a better guy. Maybe *Kronos*

believed that, too. They had a nice honeymoon. A few weeks later, when Kronos heard that (surprise, surprise) Rhea was expecting their first child, he tried to convince himself everything was fine. He was happy! He would never be a bad father like Ouranos. It didn't matter if the baby was a boy Titan or a girl Titan. Kronos would love him or her and forget all about that old curse.

Then the kid was born—a beautiful baby girl.

Rhea had been secretly worried her child might turn out to be a Cyclops or a

Hundred-Handed One. Maybe Kronos had been stressing about that, too. But nope. The child was perfect.

In fact, she was a little *too* perfect.

Rhea named her Hestia. She swaddled the baby in soft blankets and showed her to her proud papa. At first, Kronos smiled. The kid was not a monster—sweet! But as he tickled her chin and looked into her eyes and made the usual cute *goo-goo* noises, Kronos realized Hestia wasn't exactly a Titan.

She was smaller than a Titan baby, but heavier and perfectly proportioned.

Her eyes were much too intelligent for a newborn. She radiated power. With Kronos's understanding of time, he could easily envision what this girl would look like when she grew up. She would be smaller than a Titan, but capable of great things. She would surpass any Titan at whatever she chose to do.

Hestia was like an improved version of the Titans—Titan 2.0, the Next Big Thing. In fact, she wasn't a Titan at all. She was a *goddess*—the first member of an entirely new branch of immortal evolution.

Looking at her, Kronos felt like an old cell phone staring at the latest model smartphone. He knew his days were numbered.

His proud papa smile faded. This kid could *not* be allowed to grow up, or the prophecy of Ouranos would come true. Kronos had to act fast. He knew Rhea would never agree to have her child killed, and she'd brought those stupid lions with her as usual. He couldn't have a fight in the throne room. Besides, he couldn't reach for his scythe while holding the baby. He had to get rid

of Hestia immediately and irreversibly.

He opened his mouth—super, super wide, wider than he even realized he could. His lower jaw was hinged like on one of those massive snakes that can eat a cow. He stuffed Hestia in his mouth and swallowed her whole.

Just like: *GULP*. She was gone.

As you can imagine, Rhea completely freaked.

“My baby!” she screamed. “You—you just—”

“Oh, wow.” Kronos belched. “My bad. Sorry.”

Rhea's eyes bugged out. She screamed some more. She would have launched herself at Kronos and pummeled him with her fists, or ordered her lions to attack, but she was afraid of hurting the baby that was now stuck inside him.

“Cough her up!” Rhea demanded.

“Can't,” Kronos said. “I have this super-strong stomach. Once something goes down, it doesn't come back up.”

“How could you swallow her?” she shouted. “That was our child!”

“Yeah, about that...” Kronos tried to

look apologetic. “Listen, babe, it wasn’t going to work out with that kid.”

“Work out?”

“There was this curse.” Kronos told her what Ouranos had prophesied. “I mean, come on, sweetcakes! That baby wasn’t even a proper Titan. She was trouble, I could tell! The next kid will be better, I’m sure.”

This sounded perfectly reasonable to Kronos, but for some reason Rhea wasn’t satisfied. She stormed off in a rage.

You’d think Rhea would never

forgive him. I mean, your husband eats your firstborn child like a slider hamburger....Your typical mother isn't going to forget that.

But Rhea's situation was complicated.

First, Kronos had swallowed the baby Hestia *whole*. Hestia, like her parents, was technically immortal. She couldn't die, even inside her father's stomach. Gross in there? Yes. A little claustrophobic? You bet. But fatal? No.

She's still alive, Rhea consoled herself. *I can find a way to get her*

back.

That calmed her down a little, though she didn't have a plan. She couldn't use force to get her way. Rhea was a gentle goddess. Even if she tried to fight, most of the strongest Titans, like Hyperion and that big goon Atlas, would back Kronos up.

She couldn't risk a sneak attack with a knife or the scythe or even her lions, because that might hurt the baby.

Maybe you're thinking, *Wait a minute. If the kid is immortal, why is Rhea worried about hurting her?* But,

see, immortals can be hurt badly, crippled, or mutilated. An injury might not kill them, but they also don't always *heal* from damage. They just stay crippled forever. You'll see some examples of that later on. Rhea wasn't about to cut open Kronos and risk chopping up her baby, because being in pieces is no way to live, especially when you live forever.

She couldn't divorce Kronos, because nobody had invented divorce yet. And even if they had, Rhea would have been too scared to try. Can you

blame her? As you may have noticed, Kronos was one crazy piece of work. Rhea had known that fact ever since he chopped up their dad with the scythe and then walked around the after-party in his ichor-stained shirt shouting, “Awesome murder, guys! High five!”

She couldn't run, because Kronos was lord of the whole world. Unless she wanted to jump into Tartarus (which she didn't), there was no place to go.

Her best bet was to stick it out, bide her time, and wait until she found a way to get Hestia back.

Kronos tried to be nice to her. He bought her presents and took her out to dinner, as if that could make her forget about the baby in his stomach.

When Kronos thought enough time had passed—like three or four days—he insisted that they try to have more kids.

Why? Maybe he had a secret death wish. Maybe he became obsessed with Ouranos's prophecy and wanted to see if the next kid would be a proper Titan or one of those horrible, too-powerful, too-perfect little *gods*.

So Rhea had another baby—a little

girl even cuter than the first. Rhea named her Demeter.

Rhea dared to hope. Demeter was *so* adorable, maybe she would melt Kronos's heart. He couldn't possibly feel threatened by this little bundle of joy.

Kronos took the child in his arms and saw right away that Demeter was another goddess. She glowed with an aura even more powerful than Hestia's. She was trouble with a capital *tau*.

This time he didn't hesitate. He opened his jaws and swallowed her

down.

Cue the screaming fit from Mom.

Cue the apologies.

Rhea was *seriously* tempted to call out her lions, but now the stakes were even higher. Kronos had two kids in there.

I know, you're thinking it must've been getting crowded in the Titan lord's gut. But gods are kind of flexible about their size. Sometimes they are huge. Sometimes they're no bigger than humans.

I was not there in Kronos's stomach,

thankfully, but I'm guessing the little immortal babies just made themselves small. They continued to mature, but they didn't get any bigger. They were like springs getting wound up tighter and tighter, hoping that someday they would get to burst out fully grown. And every day praying that Kronos wouldn't have hot sauce with his dinner.

Poor Rhea. Kronos insisted they try again.

“The next child will be better,” he promised. “No more swallowing babies!”

The third kid? Also a girl. Rhea named her Hera, and she was the least Titan-ish, most godly yet. Rhea was indeed the Great Mother. In fact, she was a little *too* good at it. Every child she had was better and more powerful than the one before.

Rhea didn't want to take little Hera to Kronos, but it was a tradition back then. Dad got to hold the baby. It was one of those natural laws that Themis always insisted on. (There was also a natural law against eating your kids, but Themis was too afraid to mention that to

Kronos.)

And so Rhea mustered her courage. “My lord, may I present your daughter Hera.”

GULP.

This time, Rhea left the throne room without throwing a fit. She was too numb with pain and misery and disbelief. She had married a pathological liar who was also a murderer and a cannibal baby-eater.

Could things be any worse?

Oh, wait! He was also the king of the universe with lots of powerful

henchmen, so she couldn't fight back or run away.

Yeah. Things were worse.

Two more times she gave birth to perfect, lovely god babies. The fourth child was a boy named Hades. Rhea hoped Kronos would let him live, because every dad wants a son to play catch with, right? Nope. Down the hatch, matey!

The fifth child was another boy, Poseidon. Same story. *SNARF.*

At this point, Rhea fled the palace. She wept and wailed and didn't know

what to do. She went to her brothers and sisters, her nieces and nephews, anyone who would listen. She pleaded for help. The other Titans were either too scared of Kronos (like Themis), or they *worked* for Kronos (like Hyperion) and told her to stop whining.

Finally Rhea visited her sister Phoebe at the Oracle of Delphi, but sadly, even the Oracle had no advice for her. Rhea ran to the nearest meadow, threw herself on the ground, and began to cry. Suddenly she heard whispering from the earth. It was the voice of Gaea,

who was still asleep; but even in her dreams the Earth Mother couldn't stand to hear the wailing of her lovely daughter.

When you are ready to deliver your next child, Gaea's voice whispered, go to Crete to give birth! You will find help there! This child will be different! He will save the others!

Rhea sniffled and tried to pull herself together. "Where is Crete?"

It's an island in the south, Gaea's voice said. You take the Ionian Sea down to, like, Kalamata. Then you turn

left and—You know what? You'll find it.

When the time came and Rhea started to get very big in the belly, she took a few deep breaths, composed herself, and waddled into the throne room.

“My lord Kronos,” she said, “I am off to Crete. I will be back with the baby.”

“Crete?” Kronos scowled. “Why Crete?”

“Um, well,” Rhea said, “you know how Koios and Phoebe sometimes have glimpses of the future?”

“Yeah?”

“I didn’t want to spoil the surprise, but they prophesied that if I had this child in Crete, it would please you best of all! And of course, my lord, I am all about pleasing you!”

Kronos frowned. He was suspicious, but he also thought: Hey, I’ve eaten five kids, and Rhea is still here. If she were going to try something fishy, she would’ve done it already.

Plus, by now his thoughts were getting a little sluggish. He had five young gods shifting around in his gut,

fighting for space, so he always felt like he'd just eaten a massive dinner and needed a nap.

I mean, five gods in one stomach—*dang*. That's enough for doubles tennis, including a ref. They'd been down there so long, they were probably hoping Kronos would swallow a deck of cards or a Monopoly game.

Anyway, Kronos looked at Rhea and said, “You'll bring the baby to me immediately?”

“Of course.”

“Okay. Off you go. Where is Crete?”

“Not sure,” Rhea said. “I’ll find it.”

And she did. Once she got there, she was immediately met by some helpful nymphs who had also heard the voice of Gaea. They brought Rhea to a cozy, well-hidden cave at the base of Mount Ida. The nymphs’ stream ran nearby, so Rhea would have lots of fresh water. The bountiful forest offered plenty to eat.

Yes, I know: immortals live mostly on nectar and ambrosia; but in a pinch they could eat other stuff. Being a god wouldn’t be much fun if you couldn’t enjoy the occasional pizza.

Rhea gave birth to a healthy baby boy god. He was the most beautiful and perfect one yet. Rhea named him Zeus, which, depending on who you ask, either means *Sky* or *Shining* or simply *Living*. I personally vote for the last one, because I think at this point Rhea had simple hopes for this kid—keep him alive and away from hostile stomachs.

Zeus began to cry, maybe because he sensed his mother's anxiety. The sound echoed through the cave and out into the world—so loud that everyone and their Titan mother knew a baby had been

born.

“Oh, great,” Rhea muttered. “I promised to bring the child to Kronos immediately. Now word will get back to Kronos that it’s baby-swallowing time.”

The cave floor rumbled. A large stone emerged from the dirt—a smooth, oval rock exactly the same size and weight as a baby god.

Rhea wasn’t stupid. She knew this was a gift from Gaea. Normally, you would not be excited if your mom gave you a rock for a present, but Rhea understood what to do with it. She

wrapped the stone in swaddling clothes and gave the real baby Zeus to the nymphs to take care of. She just hoped she could pull off the switcheroo once she got back to the palace.

“I’ll visit as often as I can,” Rhea promised the nymphs. “But how will you care for the baby?”

“Don’t sweat it,” said Neda, one of the nymphs. “We can feed him honey from the bees nearby. And for milk, we have an *awesome* immortal goat.”

“A what, now?” Rhea asked.

The nymphs brought in their goat

Amaltheia, who produced excellent magical goat milk in many different flavors, including low fat, chocolate, and baby formula.

“Nice goat,” Rhea admitted. “But what if the baby cries? Kronos has incredible hearing up there on Mount Othrys. You may have noticed this kid has a set of lungs on him. Kronos will suspect something.”

Neda considered this. She led Rhea to the cave entrance and called out to the Earth Mother: “Oh, Gaea! I know you’re asleep, and all. Sorry to disturb you. But

we could use some help guarding this kid! Preferably some very loud help!”

The ground rumbled again. Three new helpers emerged, born of dirt and the spilled blood of Ouranos (like I said, that stuff got *everywhere*). The new guys were large, hairy humanoids, dressed in fur and feathers and leather like they were on their way to some primeval festival deep in the rain forest. They were armed with spears and shields, so they looked more like headhunters than nursemaids.

“WE ARE THE KOURETES!” one

shouted at the top of his lungs. “WE WILL HELP!”

“Thank you,” Rhea said. “Do you have to speak so loudly?”

“THIS IS MY INSIDE VOICE!” the warrior yelled.

Baby Zeus began crying again. The three warriors immediately busted out some sweet tribal dance moves, beating their spears on their shields and shouting and chanting. They covered up the crying just fine.

For some reason, Baby Zeus seemed to like the noise. He went to sleep in the

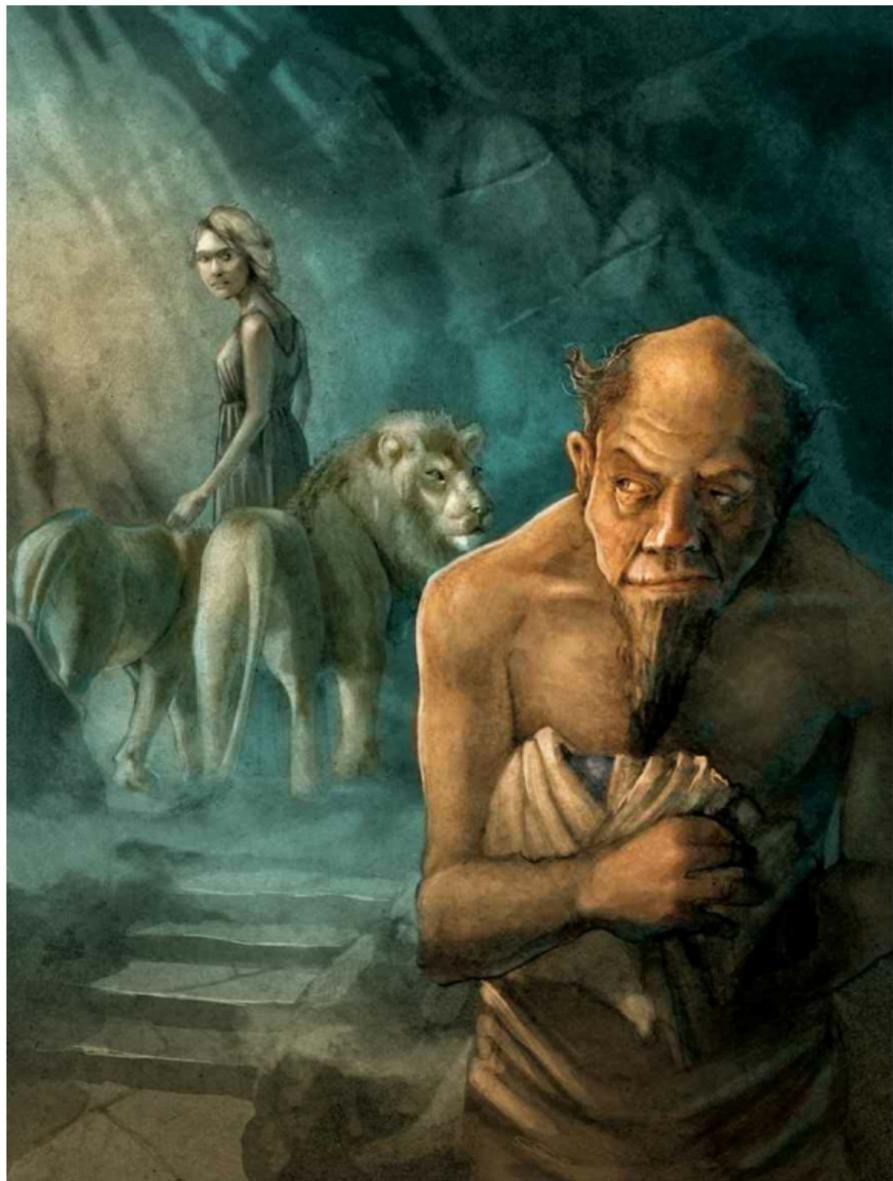
nymph Neda's arms, and the Kouretes stopped.

“Okay, well,” Rhea said, her ears popping, “looks like you have things under control here.” She hefted her fake baby. “Wish me luck.”

Once she got back to Mount Othrys, Rhea stormed into the throne room with her swaddled boulder. She was terrified her plan wouldn't work, but after so many years married to Kronos, she was learning to be a good actress. She marched right up to King Cannibal and shouted, “This is the best baby yet! A

fine little boy named, uh, Rocky! And I suppose you're going to eat him!"

Kronos grimaced. Honestly, he wasn't excited about swallowing another baby god. He was full! But when you're king, you do what you have to do.



“Yeah—sorry, hon,” he said. “I have to. Prophecy, and all.”

“I hate you!” she screamed. “Ouranos was a horrible father, but at least he didn’t swallow us!”

Kronos snarled. “Give me that child!”

“No!”

Kronos roared. He unhinged his jaw and showed his extreme mouth-opening skills. “NOW!”

He snatched up the swaddled boulder and stuffed it down his throat without even looking at it, just as Rhea

had hoped.

In Kronos's belly, the five undigested young gods heard the rock rolling down the esophagus.

“Incoming!” yelled Poseidon.

They shifted—as much as they could in the cramped space—and Rocky landed in their midst.

“This is not a baby,” Hades noticed.

“I think it's a rock.”

He was observant that way.

Meanwhile, in the throne room, Rhea threw an Oscar-worthy tantrum. She screamed and stomped her feet and

called Kronos all kinds of unflattering names.

“RO-O-CCCKY!” she wailed. “NO-O-O-O-O-O-O!”

Kronos started to get a bad stomachache.

“That kid was *filling*,” he complained. “What have you been feeding him?”

“Why should you care?” Rhea wailed. “I will never have another child again!”

That was okay with Kronos. He was stuffed.

Rhea ran screaming out of the throne room, and he didn't try to stop her.

Eventually, things quieted down in the palace. Kronos was now convinced he had thwarted the curse of Ouranos. No way could his children displace him, since he knew exactly where they all were. He was the king of the cosmos and would never be overthrown!

Meanwhile, Rhea visited Mount Ida whenever she could. Her baby boy began to grow up, and Rhea made sure he heard lots of bedtime stories about his horrible father and his five

undigested siblings who were just waiting to be rescued from Kronos's gut.

So you *know* that when Zeus comes of age, there's going to be a father-son smackdown of epic proportions. If you want a "happily ever after" ending for Kronos and his Titans, I would stop reading now. Because in the next chapter, Zeus goes nuclear.