

To the Muses of Pieria:
tell of Zeus your father

Muses, who from Pieria give glory through singing,
come to me, tell of Zeus, your own father,
sing his praises, through whose will
mortal men are named in speech or remain unspoken.
Men are renowned or remain unsung
as great Zeus wills it.

5 For lightly he makes strong,
and lightly brings strength to confusion,
lightly diminishes the great man,
uplifts the obscure one,
lightly the crooked man he straightens,
withers the proud man,
he, Zeus, of the towering thunders,
whose house is highest.

To Zeus: hear and direct

Hear me, see me, Zeus: hearken:

direct your decrees in righteousness.

To Perses (my brother):
listen to me

10 To you, Perses, I would describe
the true way of existence.

There are two ways of trying
to beat others

It was never true that there was only one kind
of strife. There have always
been two on earth. There is one
you could like when you understand her.

One means Trouble and Fighting

The other is hateful. The two Strifes
have separate natures.

There is one Strife who builds up evil war,
and slaughter.

15 She is harsh; no man loves her, but under compulsion
and by will of the immortals men
promote this rough Strife.

But the other is only
Healthy Competition

But the other one was born
the elder daughter of black Night.

The son of Kronos, who sits on high and
dwells in the bright air,
set her in the roots of the earth and among men;
she is far kinder.

20 She pushes the shiftless man to work,
for all his laziness.

A man looks at his neighbor, who is rich:
then he too

wants work; for the rich man presses on with
his plowing and planting
and the ordering of his state.

So the neighbor envies the neighbor
who presses on toward wealth. Such Strife
is a good friend to mortals.

25 Then potter is potter's enemy, and
craftsman is craftsman's
rival; tramp is jealous of tramp,
and singer of singer.

Stay away from the wrong kind

So you, Perses, put all this firmly away
in your heart,

nor let that Strife who loves mischief
keep you from working
as you listen at the meeting place
to see what you can make of

Mind your own business,
you'll have no time

30 the quarrels. The time comes short for litigations
and lawsuits,

(until you're supplied for a year)

too short, unless there is a year's living
laid away inside
for you, the stuff that the earth yields,
the pride of Demeter.

When you have got a full burden of that,
you can push your lawsuits,

to go after *others'* goods

Do not try to be too clever

as you and your judges did before, with my share

Easier isn't better

There is no easy way any more

ever since

Prometheus tried to be too clever
to outwit Zeus,
to make things easy for men

scheming for other men's goods, yet you
shall not be given another chance
to do so. No, come, let us finally settle
our quarrel
with straight decisions, which are from Zeus,
and are the fairest.

Now once before we divided our inheritance,
but you seized
the greater part and made off with it,
gratifying those barons
who eat bribes, who are willing
to give out such a decision.

40 Fools all! who never learned
how much better than the whole the half is,
nor how much good there is
in living on mallow and asphodel.

For the gods have hidden and keep hidden
what could be men's livelihood.

It could have been that easily
in one day you could work out
enough to keep you for a year,
with no more working.

45 Soon you could have hung up your steering oar
in the smoke of the fireplace,
and the work the oxen and patient mules do
would be abolished,

but Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it away
because the devious-minded Prometheus had cheated him;
and therefore Zeus thought up dismal sorrows
for mankind.

50 He hid fire; but Prometheus, the powerful son
of Iapetos,

by stealing fire
which Zeus had hidden

To pay for this, Zeus promised men
an evil thing

So the gods made the evil
in the form of a lovely, living woman

(Who may be called Woman or Eve or Beauty)

She has everything good

except a good heart

stole it again from Zeus of the counsels,
to give to mortals.

He hid it out of the sight of Zeus
who delights in thunder
in the hollow fennel stalk. In anger
the cloud-gatherer spoke to him:

“Son of Iapetos, deviser of crafts beyond all others,
55 you are happy that you stole the fire,
and outwitted my thinking;
but it will be a great sorrow to you,
and to men who come after.

As the price of fire I will give them an evil,
and all men shall fondle
this, their evil, close to their hearts,
and take delight in it.”

So spoke the father of gods and mortals;
and laughed out loud.

60 He told glorious Hephaistos to make haste, and plaster
earth with water, and to infuse it with a human voice
and vigor, and make the face
like the immortal goddesses,

the bewitching features of a young girl,
meanwhile Athene

was to teach her her skills, and how
to do the intricate weaving,

65 while Aphrodite was to mist her head
in golden endearment
and the cruelty of desire and longings
that wear out the body,
but to Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos,
he gave instructions
to put in her the mind of a hussy,
and a treacherous nature.

So Zeus spoke. And all obeyed Lord Zeus,
the son of Kronos.

70 The renowned strong smith modeled her figure of earth,
in the likeness
of a decorous young girl, as the son of Kronos
had wished it.

The goddess gray-eyed Athene dressed and arrayed her;
the Graces,
who are goddesses, and hallowed Persuasion
put necklaces
of gold upon her body, while the Seasons,
with glorious tresses,

75 put upon her head a coronal of spring flowers,
[and Pallas Athene put all decor upon her body].
But into her heart Hermes, the guide,

the slayer of Argos,
put lies, and wheedling words
of falsehood, and a treacherous nature,
made her as Zeus of the deep thunder wished,
and he, the gods' herald,

80 put a voice inside her, and gave her
the name of woman,

Pandora, because all the gods

who have their homes on Olympos
had given her each a gift, to be a sorrow to men
who eat bread. Now when he had done
with this sheer, impossible
deception, the Father sent the gods' fleet messenger,
Hermes,

85 to Epimetheus, bringing her, a gift,
nor did Epimetheus

remember to think how Prometheus had told him never

But Zeus called her Pandora

which means she is given everything

Epimetheus (Afterthought)
forgot his brother's warning
and took her

and men have been miserable
ever since

She opened the jar and let
sicknesses and troubles fly
about the world

to accept a gift from Olympian Zeus,
but always to send it
back, for fear it might prove
to be an evil for mankind.

He took the evil, and only perceived it
when he possessed her.

∞ Since before this time the races of men
had been living on earth
free from all evils, free from laborious work,
and free from

all wearing sicknesses that bring
their fates down on men
[for men grow old suddenly
in the midst of misfortune];
but the woman, with her hands lifting away the lid
from the great jar,

95 scattered its contents, and her design
was sad troubles for mankind.

Hope was the only spirit that stayed there
in the unbreakable

closure of the jar, under its rim,
and could not fly forth
abroad, for the lid of the great jar
closed down first and contained her;
this was by the will of cloud-gathering Zeus
of the aegis;

100 but there are other troubles by thousands
that hover about men,
for the earth is full of evil things,
and the sea is full of them;
there are sicknesses that come to men by day,
while in the night

The same thing may be said in a
different way, as

that the world has been steadily
getting worse, and that easy
life we want is lost way
back in the beginning

The good Golden Age (whose
people are now beneficent
spirits)

moving of themselves they haunt us,
bringing sorrow to mortals,
and silently, for Zeus of the counsels
took the voice out of them.

105 So there is no way to avoid what Zeus has intended.

Or if you will, I will outline it for you
in a different story,
well and knowledgeably—store it up
in your understanding—
the beginnings of things, which were the same for gods
as for mortals.

In the beginning, the immortals
who have their homes on Olympos
created the golden generation of mortal people.

110 These lived in Kronos' time, when he
was the king in heaven.

They lived as if they were gods,
their hearts free from all sorrow,
by themselves, and without hard work or pain;
no miserable
old age came their way; their hands, their feet,
did not alter.

115 They took their pleasure in festivals,
and lived without troubles.

When they died, it was as if they fell asleep.
All goods
were theirs. The fruitful grainland
yielded its harvest to them
of its own accord; this was great and abundant,
while they at their pleasure

quietly looked after their works,
 in the midst of good things
 [prosperous in flocks, on friendly terms
 with the blessed immortals].

120

Now that the earth has gathered over this generation,
 these are called pure and blessed spirits;
 they live upon earth,
 and are good, they watch over mortal men
 and defend them from evil;
 they keep watch over lawsuits and hard dealings;
 they mantle
 themselves in dark mist
 and wander all over the country;
 they bestow wealth; for this right
 as of kings was given them.

125

Was followed by the silly
 Silver Age

Next after these the dwellers upon Olympos created
 a second generation, of silver, far worse
 than the other.

They were not like the golden ones either in shape
 or spirit.

A child was a child for a hundred years,
 looked after and playing
 by his gracious mother, kept at home,
 a complete booby.

130

But when it came time for them to grow up
 and gain full measure,
 they lived for only a poor short time;
 by their own foolishness
 they had troubles, for they were not able
 to keep away from

reckless crime against each other,
 nor would they worship

135

the gods, nor do sacrifice on the sacred altars
of the blessed ones,
which is the right thing among the customs of men,
and therefore
Zeus, son of Kronos, in anger engulfed them,
for they paid no due
honors to the blessed gods who live on Olympos.

140 But when the earth had gathered over this generation
also—and they too are called blessed spirits
by men, though under
the ground, and secondary, but still
they have their due worship—
then Zeus the father created the third generation
of mortals,
the age of bronze. They were not like
the generation of silver.

145 They came from ash spears. They were terrible
and strong, and the ghastly
action of Ares was theirs, and violence.
They ate no bread,
but maintained an indomitable and adamant spirit.
None could come near them; their strength was big,
and from their shoulders
the arms grew irresistible on their ponderous bodies.
150 The weapons of these men were bronze,
of bronze their houses,
and they worked as bronzesmiths. There was not yet
any black iron.

Yet even these, destroyed beneath the hands
of each other,
went down into the moldering domain of cold Hades;
nameless; for all they were formidable black death

but these men also are now
spirits

Then came the fierce Bronze
People

Who nevertheless were mortal
and died

155 seized them, and they had to forsake
the shining sunlight.

Now when the earth had gathered over this generation
also, Zeus, son of Kronos, created yet another
fourth generation on the fertile earth,
and these were better and nobler,
the wonderful generation of hero-men, who are also
called half-gods, the generation before our own
160 on this vast earth.

But of these too, evil war and the terrible carnage
took some; some by seven-gated Thebes
in the land of Kadmos
as they fought together over the flocks of Oidipous;
others

war had taken in ships over the great gulf
of the sea,
where they also fought for the sake
of lovely-haired Helen.

165 There, for these, the end of death was misted
about them.

But on others Zeus, son of Kronos, settled a living
and a country
of their own, apart from human kind,
at the end of the world.

And there they have their dwelling place,
and hearts free of sorrow
in the islands of the blessed
by the deep-swirling stream of the ocean,
prospering heroes, on whom in every year
three times over

the fruitful grainland bestows its sweet yield.
These live

followed by the great age of
the Heroes

who perished in such wars as those
at Thebes and Troy

but others went west to the end of
the world

and live there in bliss even
today

far from the immortals, and Kronos
 is king among them.
 For Zeus, father of gods and mortals,
 set him free from his bondage,
 although the position and the glory still belong
 to the young gods.

Then Zeus made the Fifth
 Age, of Iron

After this, Zeus of the wide brows
 established yet one more
 generation of men, the fifth, to be
 on the fertile earth.

mine
 I wish it were not

And I wish that I were not any part
 of the fifth generation
 of men, but had died before it came,
 or been born afterward.

For here now is the age of iron. Never by daytime
 will there be an end to hard work and pain,
 nor in the night
 to weariness, when the gods will send anxieties
 to trouble us.

Yet here also there shall be some good things
 mixed with the evils.

180 But Zeus will destroy this generation of mortals
 also,

in the time when children, as they are born,
 grow gray on the temples,
 when the father no longer agrees with the children,
 nor children with their father,
 when guest is no longer at one with host,
 nor companion to companion,
 when your brother is no longer your friend,
 as he was in the old days.

Zeus will destroy this age too

When it has gone bad and lost
 all sense of right and wrong

185 Men will deprive their parents of all rights,
 as they grow old,
 and people will mock them too,
 babbling bitter words against them,
 harshly, and without shame in the sight of the gods;
 not even

to their aging parents will they give back
 what once was given.

Strong of hand, one man shall seek
 the city of another.

190 There will be no favor for the man
 who keeps his oath, for the righteous
 and the good man, rather men shall give their praise
 to violence
 and the doer of evil. Right will be in the arm.

Shame will
 not be. The vile man will crowd his better out,
 and attack him
 with twisted accusations and swear an oath
 to his story.

195 The spirit of Envy, with grim face
 and screaming voice, who delights
 in evil, will be the constant companion
 of wretched humanity,

and becomes an Age of Force
 and at last Nemesis and Aidos, Decency and Respect,
 shrouding

their bright forms in pale mantles, shall go
 from the wide-wayed

earth back on their way to Olympos,
 forsaking the whole race

200 of mortal men, and all that will be left by them
 to mankind

such force as rapacious hawks,
like our own barons, practice

unashamed

They may live on force, Perses,

not you

you are not strong enough

will be wretched pain. And there shall be no defense
against evil.

Now I will tell you a fable for the barons;
they understand it.
This is what the hawk said when he had caught
a nightingale
with spangled neck in his claws and carried her
high among the clouds.

205 She, spitted on the clawhooks, was wailing pitifully,
but the hawk, in his masterful manner,
gave her an answer:

“What is the matter with you? Why scream?

Your master has you.

You shall go wherever I take you,
for all your singing.

If I like, I can let you go. If I like,

I can eat you for dinner.

210 He is a fool who tries to match his strength
with the stronger.

He will lose his battle, and with the shame
will be hurt also.”

So spoke the hawk, the bird who flies so fast
on his long wings.

But as for you, Perses, listen to justice;
do not try to practice

215 violence; violence is bad for a weak man; even a noble
cannot lightly carry the burden of her,
but she weighs him down

when he loses his way in delusions; that other road
is the better

*the Works
and Days*

Theogony

*the Shield
of Herakles*

HESIOD

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