

16. *Who Fired Prometheus?* Copyright © 2011 Richard Lawrence Norman

And Prometheus did descend into the carpeted valley, part man, part god he climbed down into the emerald folds and lush hills, as man, to bring his godly gift of Fire. For he did trust the struggling race of Man. So did he come to them with his precious gift, to lift the veil of their misery: a forbidden warrior for a good, however mistaken, for Prometheus did love the race of Man, and in contempt of Man was Zeus, He who was as Father above all the gods, one far more evil and right than Prometheus. So the good of Prometheus was a brave and sneaking good.

As man he crept by night into their sullen camp, so dim and foreboding, darkness wrapped in huddling dim foreboding. Blind and shivering were they, or the wiser, under earthen cover or beneath sheltering dim tents of stretched hide.

"I am Prometheus, friend of the race of Man. I have something to help you... Behold! I give Fire unto thee!" And so did he present them the gift of Fire, and did trust in them to find the sanctuary within the flame, rather than be seduced by its heat. And he did caution them: "I am alone, and others far greater than I do not believe you worthy, and fear to give you this. So you must find wisdom to bind your cruel and stupid heart, and use for warmth and shelter that which is provided to you. In this you will honor me, and I may in turn be forgiven."

So did he speak unto them..... As the Father watched! Unknown as a slippery ghost is the wisdom of Zeus, who finds both ire and patience in an old spirit, wise and evil is He, waiting and lurking, sneaking, stealthy and wise.

And so, Prometheus was then beloved by all. All that was Man's was his to have, and they held him in their honor! Prometheus the god had descended unto them, and now, they too possessed a spark of liquid rising Sun, shimmering in darkness which stretched with new golden arms of warmth to embrace them into evening's hour. So did they sup and supplant their misery with meats well cooked and warmth to sustain and nourish them. So did they praise the name of Prometheus.

Oh how fickle in folly and forgetting is the hollow heart of Man! For Hate soon gripped one sure in power, and another had found, of equal measure, both his strength and resolve, now doubled with Fire's teeth. And they then did set each upon the other, one upon the next with blaze and Hate, set Ruin loose and burning, swallowing the land and scalding it bare, the burnt Earth sloughed into the sea... washed away into foam. But barren rock and crag remained, so they did starve and die, upon rock and wind did they wither, and bore up a black fist of hatred into the air, and with their last bitter squeeze of breath, did they hate him, "Oh how I hate you, Prometheus! Why have you ruined us? We wish you dead, and wish but you had never set eyes, or Hope's murderous blaze upon our wretched world, once so beautiful. Oh, how I wish you dead!" So did they curse the name of Prometheus.

And as a god weeps, did Prometheus weep, his screeching wounded cries held within his breast, echoing through his ruined godly soul, but as a god did he suffer, and soon tire of suffering, and so did twice cast a hopeful eye upon Mankind.... Now aged a thousand years twice did he find them, starving but for want of a simple thing, a forbidden thing, which need but a few bits of knowledge, and then, from the overspilling land, so double rich in game and spoil, they could but easily sup and live, happy and well, their lot so easily lain but for this!

So again did he descend into the double green forest and enfolded himself in the tangled damp shadows with them, again, as man did he go among them, for Prometheus did love the race of man.

"I am Prometheus, and I bring you a thing, a simple wooden thing crafted thus, and so you may see the rich wood yield easily its sweet bounty, and we will all enjoy life's precious spoil with less cost. But I do beg you, do use this thing for that which makes life sweet, leaves it a treasured thing, now doubly rich. For there are gods above me, who twice holy I do fear, and if you spoil yourself, I shall surely be the one to pay the cost... So do I beg you." And with this warning he gave them the bow and arrow, and they did rejoice and sup, eat and live with life rich and plentiful around and before them, and did praise the name of Prometheus.

But soon, one found his hatred too hard to grasp and so did slip his arrow into his enemy's breast, and Rage did cull what absence did before the bow, and then twice again and double still did the cost in blood exceed that ill which Prometheus had sought to slake.... now drained into the Earth from arrows pierced in blood, and with their last breath squeezed from their black lips did they scar the air with his name, borne up in blackest hate. "We hate you, Prometheus! For why, why have you done this to us? Why have you cursed us to slaughter and ruin? Oh how I wish you were dead— Oh how I wish you had never come unto us!" So did they curse the name of Prometheus.

Prometheus withdrew to a lonely wood, dark, damp and sullen, filled only with the silent ache of his godly wailing, the swallowed cry choked within his empty breast, hollowed out and sunken, ruined from his foolish love of Man.

Oh how Zeus did laugh and withhold His blows, so loving and kind, so easy and light would they be compared to the still turning torrent shifting in the broken breast of Prometheus. So Zeus did but watch and laugh, warm and sure, wise and wicked was He.

And again, Prometheus took refuge in the ages and did heal. How godly was his withered breast, again brought forth to light and foolish hope, aglow in a new knowledge which he did bestow in pieces amongst the wisest of men. Until, at last, the atom was split, and upon its unbinding came the energy to light a thousand homes, or destroy a thousand destinies, and at once Prometheus saw his folly and wept... but aloud, in horror. Prometheus had gone mad from his love of Man. Unhinged was his mind, as was to the race of Man the essence of being itself now uncoiled— In madness did Prometheus cry out and wander the hills, raving and gaunt, stammering and drunken with his deed, as a mad man did he carry his smoldering sticks, embers of wood and coal held in his hands, tossing back and then forth, from right to left, always burning but never burning, juggling and stammering, "To Whom!—To Whom!— Who may have this?— Who?— To Whom!?" So did he rave.

At last Zeus had mercy upon him and took form as an old ragged beggar, so wise and sure in His body and spirit, He could not be mistaken for but a brittle shell of god, His wisdom a cool shawl of serenity cloaking His aged face, divine and worthy. And so Prometheus stumbled mad and ranting through the hills until at last he discovered a beggar's camp, and within it, a wise and godly beggar, alone in the hills.

"Ahhhh... To you! To you I may give this! Oh please take it from me, oh please... I have something only you can have, I beg you, you alone are worthy, I beg you, please... Oh please, take this from me."

And so, Zeus did accept the dim coals and relieve Prometheus of his madness, for at last He had another with whom He could share His despair and laughter, a brother who knew as He knew. For even gods need wise company, which is but a voice, a tale told best around firelight.