

Hope

The King looked from his throne at the jar, left there this morning by parties unknown. Covered in the markings of the temple of Zeus, he studied it himself for a full morning, the whole thing sealed but with the occasional knocking within of something alive. With no trust of the men who worshipped Zeus to give him anything other than more requests for sacrifices, he determined to solve the riddle himself.

He summoned his men of medicine and they looked upon the jar, decreeing that nothing that lived could survive for long within the world, but anything that could be contained within a jar of this size would surely be a small animal or something of no significance.

He summoned his men of science to look at it and they came to him with puzzlement upon their faces, for there was neither hinge nor lid upon the pottery, whatever was within had surely been in there when the pottery had been cast, for the jar was seamless in its construction, and the presence of something moving within it would have caused too much stress, both on the pottery when it was being cast, and the living creature within.

With a heavy heart, he summoned the devotees of Zeus and bade them tell him of the meaning of the Jar. It was early in the evening when the Oracle deemed it necessary to rouse himself from his bed and attend the king.

Upon sight of the vase, the Oracle fell to his knees before it.

“Zeus favours you, my lord,” The oracles tone was reverent, his eyes held the edge of obsession within them. “This is the Jar of Pandora.”

“The Jar that contained the hope the gods denied the world?”

“The gods did not deny the world hope”, the Oracle was indignant “They gave us something that we could strive to be worth of and now Zeus has sent this to you, that you can be the one who brings hope back to the world. This is a mighty blessing Sire.”

“I have never believed in your gods, Oracle, why would they choose to give me such a blessing?”

“It is not for us to question the will of the gods, we must open the jar and give Zeus’ gift to the people.”

“I will consider what to do and make my decision in the morning.”

The Oracle paused in his reverie of the Jar

“Sire, you cannot withhold the blessing of the gods from the people.”

“Was this given to me Oracle?”

“It was Sire.”

“Then it is for me to decide what to do with the gift that Zeus has given *me* is it not?”

“It is Sire.”

“Then wait for the morning and you will have my decision.”

The Oracle’s eyes narrowed and he bowed low, leaving the room without paying the proper respect to the king.

It was early in the morning, the clouds gone from the sky allowing the gods to look down from Olympus through the lights of the stars. The guards upon the walls of the castle watched as a crowd gathered upon the courtyard below, at their head, the Oracle of Zeus. The captain of the guard called his men to the fore and went out to parley with the mob.

“You cannot be here,” His voice calm with the knowledge of twenty years of dealing with mobs “You are ordered to disperse.”

“On whose authority,” the Oracle stepped forwards from the crowd.

“On the authority of the king, whose land you tread upon now.”

“I am here from a higher authority, and he orders that we enter the palace now.”

“And whose authority is this?”

“That of Zeus, Lord of the gods and ruler on high.”

“The gods hold no sway here, men are ruled by their own laws, not those of uncaring deities.”

“You would do well to step aside and not impede the servants of Zeus, we come here to accept his gift to us.”

“You *will* disperse.” The Captain raised his hand and archers upon the walls drew back their bows

“Your men will not shoot me,” The Oracle spread his arms wide “For today Zeus sent us the gift of Hope.”

The oracle dropped his arms and the captain fell to the ground with a hundred arrows in his back. The Oracle looked up to the archers and raised his arms in silent benediction.

That and they all worship at my temple...

The King rose from his chamber as the sounds of fighting could be heard within the castle, he gathered his guard to him and marched upon the throne room as the mob clustered around the Oracle, now stood upon the Throne as he raised the Jar above his head.

“I warned you that no man may withhold the gifts of the gods.” The Oracle called to him “Now we will share the bounty that you sought to hold for yourself.”

“NO,” The King shouted as the Oracle brought down the Jar, shattering it into pieces upon the floor.

The mob stood silently as the Oracle sifted through the remains of the Jar

“It’s empty...” he said “There’s nothing within the jar.”

Around him, the mob milled aimlessly, the gift of the gods had been promised to them and now they had broken the laws of the king and would surely be sentenced to death. But the king himself was looking around at the palace without concern.

“Shall we punish these murderers sire?” The guard asked

“There is no need, we have the blessing of the gods now, we can hope that tomorrow they will be better.” The King smiled and walked to the Oracle

“But there was nothing within the Jar, Sire” the Oracle looked confused.

“But there was Oracle, now we have hope that the world will improve, you may all go home, I will hope that you and I do not have such a disagreement again.”

The next day came, no one arrived for work, no one attended for prayer and in his chambers, the Oracle understood. Before, everyone had simply hoped that someone else would do it for them, but without real hope, they had eventually got up and done what they needed to themselves. Now armed with the hope given by almighty Zeus, they knew that the hope would be fulfilled, and so lounged in their houses waiting for the gods to deliver what they hadn’t worked for.

Zeus looked down from Olympus without concern, the ants had long been beneath his notice and he no longer had the stress of having to address their ongoing pleas.

Now all they had was the illusion of a brighter tomorrow and above them, the ambivalent stars...