

Pandora's box

Extract 1

Zeus was angry! He had trusted two gods, the brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus with the task of filling the Earth with living creatures. Prometheus, the clever one, watched as Epimetheus filled the skies with singing birds, the seas with fish and the land with all kinds of creatures. He gave them all precious gifts: tooth and claw, strength and speed, tail and talon.

Prometheus saved the best job for himself! Reaching his hands into the clay soil he fashioned the first man, moulding him in the image of the gods. He gave him two legs to stand on, two arms and two hands to make and mend. His man would look up to the gods, not down at the ground, like the other creatures. Prometheus wanted a special gift for his creation, but Epimetheus had used them all on the other creatures. Prometheus thought for a moment. "I have it!" he cried. Then climbing swiftly into the heavens, he plucked a sliver of golden flame from the Sun. Cupping it in his hands, to hide it from the gods, he took it as his gift for man.

When Zeus saw the red flame of fire flickering on Earth, he was angry. Man should not have been given a gift that was only for gods. Zeus hid his anger behind a gift of his own. He summoned Prometheus and Epimetheus. "Close your eyes!" he commanded. As they stood, eyes closed, Zeus fashioned the first woman. The gods gave her gifts. Venus gave her beauty, Apollo gave the gift of music and Mercury gave her a sweet talking tongue. Zeus gift-wrapped her in gorgeous silks. "Behold! Pandora!" he said. "A gift to reward you for all your hard work."

Prometheus sensing a trick, whispered a warning to Epimetheus. Too late! Epimetheus was captivated. Zeus smiled, "take her for your bride Epimetheus. And this box as a wedding gift. But, never open it. Never."