

Pandora - The Beginning

Zeus stormed into the throne room when the gods were discussing the fate of Prometheus. With every step the king took, thunder boomed and shook the palace floor. Harsh winds and rain pelted the faces of the other gods, and the air smelled sharply of ozone. Hera stood, palms sweaty, anxiously trying to formulate a plan to calm her husband down. With every step taken by Zeus, the palace shook harder, jolting some gods out of their thrones, instilling them all with fear. The wind blew fiercer with every second that passed. The rain turned to hail, hitting the faces of the other divinities with force. Hera yelled for her husband over the sounds of the storm he created.

“Zeu -- !” She was immediately cut off. Lightning hit the center of the throne room with such force that Hera hid behind her throne, losing all courage. Zeus stopped in the middle of the throne room. The silence was deafening. Only the clattering sounds of the hail hitting the golden floors and whistling of the wind remained. All eyes were on the king as he scanned the room, looking for an intruder. Zeus’ eyes were a startling dark gray versus his usual bright blue; only anger remained in his eyes, and all the gods knew it. The voices of the storm began to die down until, eventually, it stopped altogether, bringing the gods from behind their thrones and off the floor. Hera stood once again, eyes turning to her to make the first move. As she began to stand,

her heart rapidly beat from fear, but she put on a convincing show. She walked towards her husband with confidence, and would not allow him see the terror that still lay in her eyes.

“Zeus,” she began, “you’re late.” Zeus gritted his teeth, obviously trying to control his apparent anger.

“Where is he?” Zeus growled.

“He’s not here. I swear upon the Styx we don’t know where he is, but we are trying to think of a way to --”

“WOMAN! I WILL NOT REPEAT MYSELF! WHERE IS THE TRAITOR?” Zeus boomed, again shaking the throne room. There was murmuring in the throne room, but Hera had to concentrate. She took a breath to calm herself and began again.

“We have been discussing a way to punish Prometheus without needing him physically here,” she paused, then turned to the other gods. “Hephaestus! Come out!” she yelled. The blacksmith god came forward, bringing a marble life-size figure of a woman with him.

“What is this? Some kind of joke?” Zeus boomed. Hephaestus spoke next.

“This is Pandora. I created her.” Hera stepped in next. The marble woman has long curly hair, and was dressed in the nicest of garments. Although the statue was lifeless, its eyes seemed to flicker with a kind of curious light.

“She will be wed to Prometheus. We will pretend that we no longer hold any hostilities towards him for giving the humans fire, but this woman will be his undoing; she will kill him.”

The rest of the gods began to cheer, proud of their accomplishment. She turned away from the statue and back to Zeus, who looked as if he was about to create a worse storm than before. His eyes turned black, his face increasingly getting more and more red. Before he could yell, he looked at the marble statue closely and, for a second, he was calm. His temper decreased, and he walked towards the terrace of the high palace and looked down at the humans. The gods, again afraid to speak, watched Zeus think in the corner. Hera began to speak again, but was quickly stopped once she saw him turn back around, his eyes blue as the sky. He walked calmly towards the center of the throne room where Hera, Hephaestus, and Pandora stood, with his arms crossed. Zeus began to speak.

“Prometheus will not be killed.” With these simple words, the gods erupted in anger and curses. “QUIET!” Zeus shouted, and immediately the throne room was, yet again, filled with silence. He continued to explain. “Prometheus will, however, be punished. All mankind will be punished.” The gods looked puzzlingly at their king. Zeus walked towards Pandora, and at the same time Hera and Hephaestus cleared a path for him. He waved his hand around Pandora, and she began to shimmer. He then began whispering commands. “Live, breathe, sleep, and eat as one of humans. Hate and love as one of them. Carry the needs of the gods. Fulfill our actions on

Earth as we are here in Heaven.” Gradually as seconds passed, the marble statue began to move, and became real. Zeus took Pandora by the shoulders and turned her towards the gods. “Pandora will be wed, but to Epimetheus. Brother of -- “

“Prometheus!” shouted Ares. “That’s genius! Then she will kill Epimetheus and Prometheus will be so shattered -- !”

“QUIET! Your simple mind aimed towards bloodshed will not accomplish our goal. Prometheus AND mankind will both be punished. Pandora will make sure of that. She will plague mankind with misfortunes, and then, if we see fit, she will kill Epimetheus.” An uproar came from the other gods. Zeus turned Pandora towards him and whispered his final command into her. “I give you the curse of curiosity.” Pandora blinked and took in her surroundings.

“Hello,” she said. “Who are you?”

Now

“*Pandora,*” someone whispered in the darkness of the throne room. “*Pssst! Pandora!*” he or she forcefully whispered. Again, they were rewarded with no response. “For gods’ sake, Pandora! WAKE UP!” the figure screamed. Then the marble statue of a woman began to move.

Her hair turned light brown and curly; her eyes turned from white marble to a startling milk chocolate brown; her skin from milky white to the dark brown of a cocoa bean. She still wore the ancient dress she was in a thousand years ago. Pandora began to take in her surroundings; it was the middle of the night, so there would be no sunrise for a few hours. She was in the throne room of the gods on Mount Olympus, where she had been made.

“Oh no...oh no, oh no, oh no! What have you done? Why can I talk? Leave me alone!”

Pandora shouted. She was so hysterical that the mysterious figure had to pin her down and forcefully put their hand over Pandora’s mouth.

“I understand that you don’t want to -- OUCH!” The figure cried, recoiling her hand back. Pandora had bitten the hand of the mysterious figure in an attempt to escape.

“No. You don’t understand. Mankind is wicked, and selfish, and cruel because of me. It’s my fault. All because I couldn’t keep myself from opening a box. Please, where’s Hephaestus? I want to be turned back.” The mysterious figure saw Pandora’s guilt, and decided to reveal herself. She took off her hood and came into the dim light given by the stars. It was Athena.

“Child, the world needs you. You need not be afraid. The world has changed vastly since you had last been there. They need your curiosity.” For a moment, Pandora smiled. She considered helping people and being proclaimed a hero. Then, reality struck.

Pandora sighed. “Goddess, I am no hero. No one needs me. I’m sorry, but you have made a mistake coming to me. Please, go.” Pandora went to turn her back on Athena, but then something unexpected happened. Pandora immediately had the wind knocked out of her, and could no longer feel the floor. She was falling, ricocheting against an unknown force. When she was about to hit the ground, she felt a tug in her gut, and suddenly she was standing on grass wearing a new business-casual dress.

She gasped. “What am I wearing?”

Athena materialized beside her. “You will not sit in the throne room and act sorry for yourself. If you really feel guilty for what you brought upon the humans thousands of years ago, then fix it. You have one day here until I bring you back to Olympus.”

“Wait! What will I do here for a day? Why are you leaving? Will you do this to me again?”

Athena looked curiously at the girl. “ You do ask many questions,” Athena said, but she did not seem to mind. “I will answer one of your questions for you. The answer is yes. Many times more until humans learn. Here.” When Athena took Pandora’s hand into her own, Pandora screamed, immediately feeling excruciating pain. Once Athena removed her own hand, Pandora looked at her own and saw an intricate tattoo of a jar -- similar to one she had a long time ago. Athena disappeared into the darkness, leaving Pandora on her own. She looked at the tattoo, and sighed.

She began to walk until she found herself in a city, but it was unlike any city she had seen before. She continued to walk until she found a newspaper she could, surprisingly, read. It read: New York, August 4, 2016. *Well, that explains the clothes*, Pandora thought. *But, what’s New York?* She continued walking and observing her surroundings. It was early morning, yet the city was buzzing. She screamed as she heard cars honking at each other, police sirens blaring, and everyone walking and talking all at once. Pandora was scared. She had no idea exactly where she was or where she was suppose to go, but she did know that she was hungry. She took a couple turns, barely escaping collisions with three vehicles and a biker, until she found a shop resembling a bakery, and went inside.

“Number 54: caramel macchiato with skim milk! For a, um, Sandra?” said the barista.

“It’s Sydney! Ugh, why do I come to this place?” Sydney said while storming out.

Macchiato? Pandora went up to the barista and asked for something to eat.

“Penney! I knew that was you! Sorry I missed you this morning, but don’t worry, I have your order hot and ready to go. Just give me a sec,” the barista said. Pandora was very confused at this point. Who was Penney? The barista came back with “Penney’s” order, which was when Pandora snuck a glance at his nametag.

“Um, Jack?” Pandora inquired. Jack looked up from the cashier to meet her eyes. “Where am I? I’m having some trouble, uh, *remembering* all of this,” she lied.

“Oh, ok. So you’re like disoriented and stuff, which is why you’re having trouble getting your thoughts organized?”

“Right! Exactly. Of course, I’m disoriented...and stuff. Can you help me?”

Jack laughed. “Typical Penney. Always testing me on how much I know about you. Sure. My break’s in a few minutes anyways. But, uh, aren’t you gonna be late for work? I mean, it’s early but you’re usually there before anyone else.”

“I’m sure I can be late for one day,” she said. They sat down at a table and Jack told her everything about her life. Her name is Penney, and she is the head nurse at Porter-West Hospital. She comes to Bonnie’s Coffee every morning for a hot scone and a hot chocolate mocha, with extra chocolate. Jack and Penney are best friends and share an apartment together. Her favorite color is orange, and she hates baseball. *How can I hate a ball without even knowing what it is?* Pandora thought “Ok, I think I’m starting to understand. Thank you so much.”

“Sure. If you really wanna make it up to me, you’ll pick up groceries on your way back home.” With that, Jack got up and went back to work. Pandora, now Penney, had to ask for directions six times before reaching the hospital, and five of those times the people looked at her

as if she were crazy. Once she got there, she was ambushed by a woman with curly red hair, blue eyes, and coffee breath.

“Penney? Where have you been? Oh my goodness, I thought you might have died! Anyway, John is looking for you again. I mean, I understand that you’re his favorite nurse, but come on, he’s ten! He wouldn’t even let me give him his shot this morning ‘cause he wanted ‘you to do it.’ Psh. Kids, am I right?” rambled the strange woman. Pandora stood with her mouth agape.

“I -- I --um, where’s John?” Pandora managed.

“I swear, you are always forgetting your way. Alright, come on missy. And don’t worry, I won’t tell John you forgot his room number.”

They went onto the pediatric floor where Penney worked, took two right turns, a left, then they reached room 427. Inside were two parents whispering to each other in the corner of the room, and in the bed was a young boy with curly brown hair, green eyes, and olive skin playing on a small rectangular box. Somehow, Pandora knew it was called a phone. The red-haired woman knocked on the door and the boy looked up.

“Nurse Penney!” he exclaimed. He jumped out of his bed to give her a hug but the moment he hit the floor, his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he fainted. A rush of nurses and doctors came into the room, pushing Pandora into the hallway. All she could do was stand there, helpless. Red-Haired Woman appeared to her side.

“What happened?” Pandora asked. “He just...he just fainted.”

“Cancer is an awful thing, sweetie,” Red-Haired Woman said.

The news hit Pandora like a truck. Her voice became very quiet. “No. You don’t understand. This is all my fault.” Red-Haired Woman saw that Pandora was about to cry, so she took her to the breakroom to be alone. They were only there for two minutes until Pandora then had the idea to come up with a cure for John. Red-Haired Woman thought she was joking at first. When she realized Pandora was serious, she led her to the lab. Pandora searched the lab for something to help John, but she had no idea what she was doing or where to start. A few minutes later, a doctor whom Pandora recognized from John’s room walked in.

“Excuse me, sir,” Pandora said, “do you know John?” The doctor turned around to meet Pandora’s sad face.

“I would hope so. I am his doctor after all,” the doctor said. He offered his hand to her. “My name’s Michael, or Dr. Lucas if you prefer.” Pandora looked at him blankly for a moment, then broke out laughing.

“Your name is Michael Lucas? You have two first names!” Pandora could barely breathe, she was laughing so hard.

Red-Haired Woman looked at Pandora as if she had just signed her own death sentence. “I am so sorry, sir. She’s had quite the morning,” she said in an attempt to cover for Pandora’s careless words.

“No need to be sorry, Peggy. I would have had the same response. What can I do for you?” *So that’s her name!* Pandora thought. Pandora quickly composed herself, then apologized to the doctor.

“I’m John’s nurse. I need help to cure his cancer. Will you help me?” asked Pandora. The doctor looked at her for a moment, then began to laugh. He looked back at Pandora to see if she was joking, and met a cold look from her instead.

“I’m sorry for laughing. John’s particular type of cancer is serious, and can’t just *be cured*. That’s not how things work. I have done everything I can for this boy. Some realities are harder to swallow than others, and this is one of them.” Pandora almost threw a beaker at his head. She clenched her fists and ground her teeth together.

“And why not? Are you too busy to create a cure? Do you not care about this little boy enough to even try something? Or perhaps you just hate being asked to go above and beyond with your patients! Well, which is it?” Peggy held her breath and waited for Pandora to be fired. Dr. Lucas’ shoulders sagged.

“No. I’ve been trying for months to come up with a solution for John. I even thought I had a solution.” The moment Pandora heard this, she took his hand and tried pulling him out the door. “Whoa! What are you doing?”

“I’m taking you to John and you’re going to tell him you have a solution.”

“I can’t! It’s just a trial, I don’t know if it will work!” Pandora let go of his hand and met his eyes.

“You have the chance to make life better for this boy, to take his misery away, and you won’t even try? You can’t think like that. You have to have hope! Hope that it will work!” No one said anything for a few seconds. Dr. Lucas took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He muttered something to himself, opened his eyes, and smiled.

“OK. Let’s go.” Pandora was shocked, but she was not fazed for long. She took the doctor by the hand once again and took him to John’s room, Peggy following close behind. The trio reached John’s room and told him of their plan. John’s mother started crying and his father gave Dr. Lucas a hug. After agreeing to the terms and signing the needed paperwork, Pandora sat by John on the bed and held his hand in her tattooed own. Suddenly, some color returned to John’s face. His breathing was even better. Pandora did not know what happened, but she felt herself getting heavy. She looked at the originally small tattoo, and saw it had grown a few millimeters.

It was night when Pandora left the hospital. She was on her way to meet Jack and ask him what groceries were when she could not longer feel the ground underneath her feet. She was free falling, felt a tug in her stomach, and landed where Athena first met her. She got up and began looking for the goddess, who materialized right next to her.

“See what you can do in one day, Pandora? You’ve taken away a boy’s illness,” said Athena.

“No I haven’t. That was the doctor. I just persuaded him, as any other sane person would do,” Pandora countered. Pandora’s hand started feeling sore where the tattoo was.

“Pandora, that mark is the same jar that was given to you by the gods. The reason I sent you to earth is because man has suffered for thousands and thousands of years. The people need someone like you to take their suffering away. But, you can only take away their suffering when they believe that they can make a difference. You inspire hope in others, seeing as hope was the one thing you kept inside that jar of yours.” Pandora was speechless.

“So, John --”

“Will live. Are you ready?” Pandora looked at Athena in both awe and confusion.

“Ready for what?”

Athena smiled. “The ‘20s.”