



How Evil Came Into the World

Although Zeus [ZOOS] had punished Prometheus [pro-MEE-thee-uhs] for giving fire to Man, he couldn't take the fire away from Man. The law of Olympus was that no god could take away any gift that another immortal had given. Zeus could only bestow another gift that might balance the account with Prometheus. So he called his son and chief craftsman, Hephaestus [hee-FES-tuhs], the blacksmith, and told him to make a new creature, like nothing known before—a creature made up of all good things, but also with their opposites.

So Hephaestus, who must have been the most industrious of all the gods, took a lump of clay and mixed into it a little bit of everything, from gold to gravel, from honey to gall, sweet things and bitter things and contradictory things: love and hate, kindness and cruelty, faithfulness and inconstancy, beauty and treachery, a little bit of heaven and a great deal of earth. He created a lovely creature—the first woman. (How men got along without women before that, only the gods knew!) The goddess Athena [uh-THEEN-uh] dressed her in beautiful clothes and taught her household crafts like spinning and sewing. Aphrodite [af-roh-DIE-tee], the Love Goddess, gave her beauty, of course, and the gift of sweet talk, but she also put all kinds of cunning tricks into her mind. All the gods gave her something, so they called her "Pandora" [pan-DOOR-uh], which means "All-Gifted."

Zeus directed that Hermes [HER-meez], the Messenger, take Pandora to Epimetheus [ep-ee-MEE-thee-uhs], brother of Prometheus, to be his wife. This was to show Epimetheus that the gods bore him no grudge or ill will because of his brother's rebellion.

Epimetheus—"Afterthought"—who never could foretell the consequences of his actions and often got into trouble without far-sighted Prometheus to guide him, naturally received the beautiful Pandora with great joy. He forgot his brother's warning about accepting gifts from Zeus. He was still guarding the sealed box that Prometheus had left with him, charging him never to open it. He was so charmed, however, with his new mate, Pandora, that he almost forgot the box until one day she

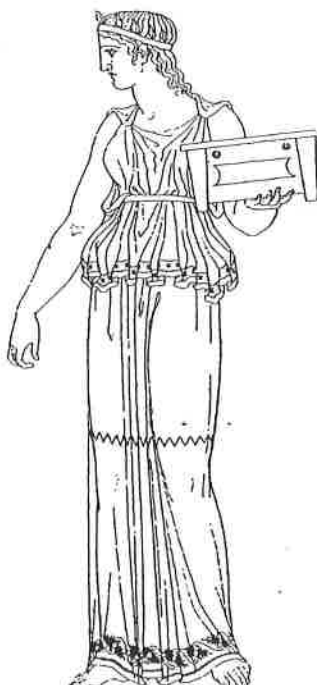
Zeus = Jupiter, Jove

Hephaestus = Vulcan

Athena = Minerva

Aphrodite = Venus

Hermes = Mercury



**Pandora with the
Forbidden Box**

asked what it was. Epimetheus, remembering his brother's warning, put her off. And so, for awhile, everything was fine.

But one day when Epimetheus was out gathering a bouquet for his beautiful bride, the too-curious Pandora broke the seal and lifted the lid of the box. Out flew big horseflies and wasps, beetles and bats, terrible creatures, stinging and poisonous—all the bad things that Prometheus, with careful foresight, had gathered together—sins and plagues and misery—and guarded so that the Golden Age and happiness of men might go on. And now they had all flown out into the world because of an undisciplined woman! Pandora was not a bad girl—just a little too curious about things better left alone.

However, one good thing remained in the box after the bad things had flown out and away. Hope, a beautiful, angelic little figure, had remained at the bottom of the box of evil things. Hope reassured Pandora and Epimetheus that she would never leave them. As we say, "While there's life, there's hope."



When Pandora opened the box, all the bad things that Prometheus had trapped inside flew out and escaped into the world.

Beyond the Myth

Why do you suppose the Greeks blamed the first woman for bringing evil into the world? Why not a man or a god?

Identify:

Pandora

Epimetheus

Define:

curiosity

hope