

DIONYSUS AND HESTIA

Rise of the Olympians

1. Hestia

<Year 100, 4th month>

Zeus and his Olympian brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters were in full party mode. Aphrodite was gyrating on the table, her clothes strewn on the heads of her adoring admirers. Poseidon would go first.

Two floors below, his oldest sister, Hestia, quietly stared over the beautiful, peaceful Port Olympus Harbor. She had problems.

-- nothing worked as I planned -- well, no, actually, everything worked as I planned -- it's just the unintended consequences -- I didn't look far enough ahead -- did you know, Grandmother Kiya? -- that I would kill you and your titan children and then I would have it all? -- of course, you did -- you knew it all the time -- and now that we Olympians have it all -- whatever shall we do with it and how will we do it? --

She walked to the sofa, sat down, and cradled Philyra's head in her lap.

Philyra murmured, "All right, Chief, you're too quiet. What's our problem?"

"I thought Kiya would have had some kind of retribution planned. She had to have considered that her little Gigante uprising against me would fail. It wasn't like her to not have a backup plan."

"I don't know, Chief. She was grooming you to be Queen of Everything. Maybe she just accepted her death as the way things had to be."

"WHO TOLD YOU THAT?"

"I thought you knew. All the Elder Titans did. Themis and Mnemosyne had better organizational skills than you, but they weren't mean enough to manage this place. By the time Queen Kiya knew how evil you were and couldn't be changed, it was too late. But in the beginning, she was doing everything she could to help you. Feel better, now?"

Puzzled, Hestia asked no one in particular, "She was grooming me?"

She sat thinking. "Find Dionysus. Have him in my office mid-day tomorrow."

Upstairs, Ares joined in.

~ The Consultant ~

Late the next morning Philyra found Dionysus sitting at his favorite waterside table drinking wine with Heracles. She smiled and said, "Hello. I'm Philyra, Chief-of-Chiefs Hestia's Executive Assistant. She commands your presence in her office immediately."

Excited, Heracles asked, "Can I come, too?!"

Dionysus raised his hand for silence and replied, "Invite your master to join Heracles and me for lunch. Wine and cheese on the dock will do wonders for her disposition."

Philyra replied, "Olympian Hestia doesn't like to mingle with the lower classes nor have her demands declined. Come on, Titan Dionysus! Don't make my life any harder. Go meet with her. Bring your friend."

Dionysus sat silent for a moment and then replied, "Down here! Tell her that I command it."

Philyra laughed. "I didn't become Executive Assistant to the Chief-of-Chiefs of Port Olympus by being stupid, Titan. I will convey your deep regrets of being overly intimidated -- no, that won't work -- how about, you want her to come mingle with the people she is governing so she can get to know them better. That sounds good."

Now, Dionysus laughed. "She doesn't deserve you, Oceanid Philyra. You should have run away with your sisters when you could have."

"I have a physically deformed but otherwise beautiful son somewhere in Tartarus and the psychologically deformed but unbelievably powerful love-of-my-life commands the fifteenth floor of the greatest structure ever built. What's an Oceanid to do? I'll go see if I can convince her to join you."

Philyra left on her new errand.

Heracles stared at her rear as she left. "That's one good-looking Oceanid. I may share my body with her!"

"Hmmpf," Dionysus grunted.

The port market bustled with activity. Workers were filtering in for lunch with a view. The gentle wind came off the water and cooled the gathering throng. But there were far fewer people at the port since the war with the Gigantes. The Olympians won an all-out victory but paid a price; there were few Titans left in the city and there was an exodus of most of the Oceanids. The loss of the former was the loss of most upper and mid-management talent. Loss of the latter meant loss of secretarial and temporary jobs plus loss of free childcare at the beaches. Many of the everyday workers had also left with the Titans and Oceanids.

Hestia was prepared to endure these losses until she could recover a viable workforce.

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Dionysus did not need to look at the ruckus occurring at the patio entrance to know that Hestia was arriving. -- *she can't even be seated at a table with civility -- surely, she let her assistant escort her down --*

He glanced at the commotion. -- *Hestia and two bodyguards -- but no Philyra --*

"Make a place for Hestia," he commanded Heracles.

Dionysus rose and walked to where the Patio Captain was being loudly confronted by Hestia. "Chief-of-Chiefs, how nice of you to join us."

Hestia glared at Dionysus.

He said to the Patio Captain, "Kepten, I will seat our special guest at my table. Find a table where her two escorts can keep watch on her safety. Assign your ablest server to our table. I will be indebted to you."

"Yes, of course. Thank you, Master Dionysus." The captain motioned his best server to attend to every need of Dionysus and his guest.

Hestia huffed beside Dionysus to the waiting table now being prepared for a third guest. The server pulled the chair out for her to be seated. She glared at him for having the audacity to look at her.

Dionysus spoke to the server. "Bring us a flask of the good dry red, bread, cheese, and shrimp with your red sauce to start. Then your fish with the fig sauce and nuts. If we finish that, check back with me. Be prompt and respectful. Bowing and scraping won't hurt, either."

The server said, "Yes, of course. Thank you, Master Dionysus."

Dionysus leaned back in his chair, lifted his cup of wine, and toasted, "Let us drink to the beauty, wisdom, and charm of Hestia."

"Hear, hear," said Heracles, quickly lifting his cup in salute.

"To what do I owe this attention, my dearest Hestia?" Dionysus asked.

"How can you possibly eat with these people under these conditions?" Hestia said in a voice loud enough to be heard across the patio.

Dionysus laughed. "With a voice like that, I can get you a job selling fish directly off the boats. They need loud obnoxious women to tout their wares. I, however, don't! Nor will I sit with a person without class. Do we have an understanding?" He smiled sweetly.

"Why don't I kill you, now?" she growled, in a softer voice.

"For the same reason I don't kill you now; blood on the table, spilled wine, nothing worthwhile accomplished. You just aren't worth the effort, Hestia. Now, I ask again. To what do I owe this attention? And where is your assistant? She seems nice. She's the only thing that might keep being around you tolerable."

"I have problems, Dionysus. I didn't want her to hear our conversation." She stared pointedly at Heracles.

Dionysus said to Heracles, "Go entertain the two Gigantes, Heracles. Gossip with them. Glean any intelligence they might happen to have."

Heracles reluctantly rose. "Yes, *Master!*" he said as he left to join the two bodyguards.

Dionysus said, "All right, Hestia, keep it business and I will keep it business."

"I have lost half my workforce, the smart half at that. I don't know where workers come from. What port do I raid to capture hardworking subjects to obey the Olympians? What did Titans do to subjugate their workers?"

He stared at Hestia in silent disbelief, then sadness, then anger. "Let's concentrate on your problem. You need to hire more staff. How do you do that? Correct?"

"Yes. We already had too many low-class people working for the port. And now I need to find a higher class of people."

"You're too hung up on this class thing, Hestia. Let it go. Your nemesis Titans created a great empire by surrounding themselves with rejects, castoffs, and cripples from other tribes. You have far better talent to draw from. You don't think that you are better than our food server, do you? Never mind! Of course, you do. But know this, it is by accident of birth that I'm not sitting here with the server and you are the one serving. Throw you both naked into a wilderness and I guarantee it will be the server that walks out. Not you. Now, back to the subject that you keep wandering from. You need to hire staff."

"Very well, Dionysus. How do I find these worthy new hires?"

"Oh, I don't know. How about this?" Dionysus signaled his server.

The server hurried over. "Yes, Master Titan -- I mean Olympian."

Dionysus laughed. "You are most attentive and disciplined. What's your name? Are you from around here?"

The server was in an awkward position but responded with false confidence. "I am Charon, Master. I am from Tartarus. My mother was a farmer girl. She told me that my father was Master Outis or maybe even the great Enceladus. But I imagine he was some random metal worker.

"Interesting," Dionysus replied. "What do you do in your off-hours?"

"I am a scribe at the great Library. I teach reading. I also read the scrolls of and about Chief Iapetus, from his boyhood days as Piercer up until his -- last entries."

"Fantastic! And last question. What are your interests?"

"Oh, the metalworking projects they do in the north. I study the teachings of the great Iapetus in the library. I came to the port last season and tried to get work, but I was told that I was not worthy."

"My goodness. An unworthy, studious scribe. How interesting." Dionysus took a small piece of blank parchment from his pocket and scribbled his sign on it. "In five days, take this to Philyra on the thirteenth floor. Tell her you request an internship in upper metalworking management. I make no promises, Master Charon, but I believe Philyra likes me. She will at least listen to you. Be confident, almost arrogant; not subservient."

Charon accepted the paper with several quick bows. "Thank you, Master Olympian. I will do this. Thank you." -- *master Charon -- he called me 'master' -- he is an Olympian calling me master Charon -- thirteenth floor -- this paper is my way to greatness -- Philyra! -- five days -- an actual job with the port administration! --*

Dionysus cleared his throat and stared at Charon. "Any questions?"

Charon broke from his trance, said, "Oh, none. Thank you, Master," and scurried away tightly holding the parchment.

Dionysus said to Hestia, "He has potential. Philyra can decide. Now, let's go to your fifteenth floor and see what we have to work with."

Hestia nodded with acquiescence.

2. Team Meeting

Philyra met Hestia, Dionysus, and Heracles at the entrance to the fifteenth floor; the executive floor where the Olympian overlords worked. "Did you have a nice lunch, Chief?"

"Exquisite," she replied.

"Sweet, Bitter, or wine?" Philyra asked the three.

"Nothing. We have business to discuss," Hestia replied as she marched toward her desk.

The three sat down at the executive table. "Philyra will join us as an equal," Dionysus told Hestia.

"Join us as an equal?!" Hestia demanded.

"Equal in a business sense. As a matter of fact, in business, she is more equal than either of us. We are discussing business here, Hestia."

Hestia said, "Very well. It's a bad precedent but you may join us, Philyra. Dionysus needs your input."

Philyra hesitated, said "Yes, Chief," and pulled out a chair to sit in.

Dionysus said, "You need to put up a privacy wall, Hestia. Your siblings appear to be interested in what's going on. But then you couldn't watch *them*, could you? No matter. Philyra, what position is most important to fill the quickest?"

Philyra looked confused and looked to Hestia for guidance.

Hestia nodded permission to speak freely.

Philyra took a deep breath. "Oh, my goodness. We have been needing someone for Mining, Metals, and Manufacturing for a long time. I'm sure Hades does an outstanding job but no one from that department is ever here to plan and coordinate. Hades is always out in the field. Maybe if he had an administrative assistant, at least on the thirteenth floor, it would help streamline things a little bit. And a coordinator to receive and dispatch port traffic would be fantastic. Amphitrite did an amazing job, but she was retired with all the other Titans. I don't know whose ships to expect or what they carry. That would be a tremendous help. And our internal messaging is almost nonexistent. Nobody knows what they should be doing or what anybody else has done."

Heracles interjected, "Wow, we need those Titans back. They were great at that."

Dionysus said sharply, "Quiet! Dung-head!"

To Philyra, he said, "A candidate for the 3M department will call on you in five days. I don't know if he would fit but he has an interest in the discipline. Do you know anyone who might be a good coordinator?"

Philyra glanced at Hestia. Hestia stared back cold faced. Philyra answered, "Well, yes. There is a young man who worked in Amphitrite's office, Nerites. He's smart and knowledgeable."

Dionysus asked, "Poseidon manages Port Operations well?"

"He's fantastic with the in-the-water part of it. Not so great with the paperwork and managing people part of it. He's seldom here which is probably for the best. Kind of like Hades. Demeter would be a good manager, but she is just interested in grains and harvesting."

"Who is in charge of hiring, Philyra?"

"In charge of hiring? We don't have anyone like that. If a manager needed someone, they went out and found them."

"I've heard enough, Chief Hestia. Can we have a private meeting tomorrow after mid-day meal? Up on the roof? The view is inspiring."

Hestia considered the request. "Will you have anything worthwhile to bring me?"

"By after mid-day meal, yes. But I need time for it to come together in my mind."

"All right. You and I on the roof tomorrow afternoon. Show them out Philyra."

Philyra rose immediately and motioned Dionysus and Heracles to follow.

As they approached the door, Dionysus said, "Meet me at the cafe after you get off work. All right? I have a problem that I suspect you can fix for me."

"You want to couple with an Oceanid? Sorry, big boy! You aren't my type."

Dionysus laughed. "After work, Philyra! Be there!"

"Maybe. But maybe not."

"Be there, Philyra!"

3. Chiron

She arrived sooner than Dionysus had expected but he had the wine waiting. He poured a cup for her as soon as he saw her approach. It was waiting when she arrived at his table. "Sit, drink this. Let's get you ready for the evening."

"You are persistent, Dionysus, and the answer is still no," she said as she sat down and accepted his wine.

He laughed. "I'm here to negotiate a trade with you, Oceanid. I see the future for your mistress and her Olympian ilk. Plus, for the port and all humanity. Should I sell out my self-respect and tell your chief how to save her butt? I will do it just for you, except, it's what Kiya would want me to do. She's the only reason I'm still in this place. "

"Yes, I would like that. I see a lot of things that need doing but for an Olympian to take suggestions from an Oceanid is unthinkable. You are one of them. She will listen to you. That's why she went to you for help. Yes, I will couple with you if you save Port Olympus from going under."

"Sorry, Oceanid Philyra, the price for my self-respect is not your pleasure, it is your pain."

"Ohhh, a spanking beforehand. I can handle that!"

Dionysus became serious. "I have a friend, Philyra. I have heard his story many times. The name 'Philyra' is always there. He is the most noble and worthy human there is. He simply looks different. He needs you." He stared at her.

Her face went cold. "No, Dionysus. I will not see him."

"If I am to sacrifice my humanity for you and your worthless Olympians. I require your humanity in return."

"No. Please, no, Dionysus."

"Have another cup of wine, sweet Philyra. Together, we can do this thing."

After her third wine. He took her hand and led her to the port transportation center. He engaged a carriage and helped her into it. His satchel over his shoulder, he climbed in and said, "900 Pace Path, please."

The carriage arrived at the great path circling the abandoned home of the now dead Elder Titans. It was well into the night when they arrived.

Few people still lived there; some farmer women, animal handlers for the livestock, some stone cutters, and random people. Gone were the Elder Titans, now dead, and the younger Titans, scattered to the high hills of the mainland, and the Oceanids, to waters far from Port Olympus. Gone, too, were the Gigantes. None remained to live in this now accursed place.

"He lives this way, Philyra." He led the reluctant Oceanid up a path bounded by flowers gone to seed. They passed bathhouses and unpruned shrubs on their left. The only light was provided by a quarter moon under slow-moving clouds.

Finally, in the distance were the small fires and torches of the remaining inhabitants. "Halloo," Dionysus called out into the night. A figure appeared. "Dionysus," a female shrieked out, "you have come to see us." Women came running from their homes to greet him.

He removed flasks of wine from his satchel, and said, "I bring you gifts better than I. Here, take these bottles, enjoy the fruit of the grape." They wanted him to join them and provide even more merriment. He declined. "I am here on business. We will have a party next time!"

They retired in sadness, but excitedly, with their four containers of wine.

Dionysus led Philyra past the houses, to the last one, away from the others. He stopped, turned to Philyra, and said, "Not only will you do this, but you will do it well." With that, he walked to the door and knocked. "It is I, Master Chiron, your friend Dionysus."

After the sound of shuffling, the door opened. Chiron stood there with outstretched arms. "My friend, you take time to come see me. Come in."

"I did not come alone, Chiron. I brought someone else."

"To see me, Master? Do they know what I look like?"

"All too well, Chiron. But she sees only the outside. I have brought her to see the real you."

"Oh, Master, I will present myself as best I can."

He motioned to Philyra. "Come here, my dear. You remember Chiron – I believe he is your son."

Philyra stepped forward to face her son. In the darkness looking head-on, he appeared to be a normal man. She took a deep breath. "Hello, Chiron. I haven't seen you in a long time."

"Mother. You honor me. That you will look upon me, brings my heart joy. You need not look more. This moment is more than I deserve." He fell to his knees and prostrated himself before her. The front half, that is. The rear half continued standing.

She choked on a sob.

Dionysus glared at her, daring her not to take his hands and pick him up. She closed her eyes and lifted her son to his feet.

"We wish to visit, Master Chiron. I am here to show your mother the difference between humanity and inhumanity, between grotesque and merely physically different. I bring the mother to face the son. Be patient. This will be difficult for her."

"I understand, Friend Dionysus. I will show her my disfigurement. I will suffer the revulsion she will feel. If this is your will, then I shall not try to hide the grotesque shape of my body. I shall trust you to salve the horror that I bring her. Come in, Mother. This is where I live."

Chiron led them into his modest home. He gave them chairs and put another log on the small fire. Illuminated by the firelight, he removed his tunic and stood so she could see the outline of his body. "As you can see, my hindquarters have grown significantly since I became a man. My rear legs are now fully functional. At least, enough that children could ride upon my back. I can gallop, after a sort. Although not as smoothly as a real horse. Friend Apollo taught me the art of the lyre, medicine, and prophesy. Friend Artemis trained me in archery and hunting. Before they left Tartarus, the children would come to the beach to see me. They came to see my grotesque deformity but would deem to ride upon my back, and sometimes let me teach those things which Leto's twins had so graciously taught me. I live in quiet joy. My only regret is the extreme dishonor which my birth brought to my beloved mother and esteemed father."

Philyra threw up.

Chiron hurried away to fetch water and linens to clean her vomit. Philyra remained in the chair sobbing uncontrollably.

While Chiron was away, Dionysus said to Philyra, "Strange, isn't it? Cronus, the only son of Kiya and Pumi, fathered only little monsters. Six physically beautiful but completely inhumane babies by Rhea and one physically deformed but emotionally beautiful baby like Chiron by you. Nature has a delicious sense of humor, don't you think?"

As Charon returned, Dionysus said. "Your mother has a few issues to work through, Chiron. Before you put your clothes back on, there is one last thing to be done." He walked to Philyra, pulled her up, and roughly removed her dress. She stood there in her undergarments, eyes clenched closed, gulping sobs. "Now, Oceanid Philyra, Assistant to Chief-of-Chiefs Olympian Hestia, do as the children of Tartarus have done before you. Ride upon his back!"

She held back as Dionysus pulled her toward her son. He forced her, eyes clenched closed, to touch the deformed growth of her son's extended back. She trembled, vomited again, fell to her knees, and cried out, "Cronus -- Rhea -- Kiya -- forgive me." She was silent for a long, long time and then opened her eyes to stare at her deformed son. She whispered, "Chiron -- my son -- forgive me." She rose, swung her leg over his back, and said "Carry me to Oursea, Chiron. I have not touched Oursea since you were born. Let all people see Philyra with her son."

4. Birth of the Ghods

Noon.

Hestia waited on the Port Olympus building roof.

Dionysus entered and walked over to greet Hestia. "The view is inspiring. You are inspiring. The Olympians are inspiring. I know what you should do. I will tell you what you should do and after I tell you, I will leave. You need not say a word. You need not do anything I tell you. I have told no one what I shall tell you nor will I. This, dear Aunt Hestia, is what you should do."

She stared at him without expression.

He began, "Olympians will no longer see themselves as part of anything. Olympians are above everything. I have a new made-up name for you -- 'Ghods.' You own everything in the world. You don't have to demand anything because you already own it. You are just letting other people use it. You can do and take whatever you want. No one can even aspire to become one of you. And most important, Ghods don't have to associate with the lower classes ever again. Think about that, never again! Do you like that part?"

"Yes, I like that part."

"Well, you won't like this! You will make Oceanid Philyra the Port Olympus 'Chief-of-Chiefs.' You and your brethren are out of day-to-day operations. But you will like this part -- you will be the sole chief of Philyra. You can command her what you want to be done, just not how to do it. Your brothers and sisters can tell you what they want, if they really care, and you can command Philyra what her goal is, but the other Ghods will be isolated from Philyra and her staff."

"Hmmm."

"Don't make an immediate decision. Consider everything. You can give out fancy titles like 'Ghod of the Sea,' and 'Ghod of the Sky,' and 'Ghod of the Underground.' But command Philyra to create a Port organization to maximize the reach and power of the port and then stay out of her way except

for some petty commands to make you feel good about yourself. She will recruit and appoint based on competence; not on family relations; not on your preferences. When word gets out that Olympians are no longer running -- that is, interfering -- with port operations, old managers will start drifting back in. You and your brethren can party all day on the sixteenth and seventeenth floors. Maybe make some vacation homes in the Graikoi Mountains."

He paused. "That's a lot to absorb. Are you with me so far?"

"Yes."

"There are a few rules. The managers closest to you, the lords of the lower floors, those who actually do the work must all become rich and powerful. But it is not the Ghods they will compete with. It's everybody below them. And everybody below them must have the hope that one day, they, too, can become powerful like your Lords on the high floors. But no one can aspire to ever become a Ghod. The Ghods may look down upon the lower classes like scum beneath their feet if you think of them at all. But you must not look down upon your Lords. They are your top-level managers; the ones who do all the work and are the buffer between the Ghods and the lower classes. You must always, without exception, *always* respect your Lords, love them, and reward them well. They will do everything they can to maintain your favor. Whatever you do -- sear this into your brain -- don't interfere with Philyra. Tell her what you want, then stay out of her way while she does it."

She continued to stare at him, unblinking.

He finished, "I have shown you the way, Aunt Hestia. Now, I am evil like you. Do as you will. I'm going to get drunk. Goodbye."

Dionysus turned and left.

Hestia stared after him. -- *no more dealing with the lower classes -- own everything? -- I may like this --*

5. Hestia and Artemis

Artemis was thrilled. The great Hestia, herself, had Artemis by the hand pulling her to the rooftop away from the raging Olympian party. This was