

Pan

POETRY

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i.

mount olympus was a perfect paradise, but he
knew paradise
before marble and gold-plated luxury.
yes, he wandered the forests when they were new
and untainted,
ruled lush jungles and clear streams, gently sloping
hills and valleys,
reveled in a sun that warmed the earth and gave way
to glorious life.
he used to be able to breathe.

ii.

he always knew not to play with fire. the others would
curse and bless and love
those humans, but not him. never him.
his world was too precious to burn, too fragile to dare,
and when prometheus stole the still-flaming embers
from mount olympus itself,
he wept. he saw the smoke that rose from those coals
and the flickering ambition in man's eyes,
and he knew that his realm was primed to fall.

iii.

years are nothing to gods. they shouldn't be, but he
never thought that was true.
when he found the humans burning, burning, *burning*
his eons felt so very small.
ash littered the soil, choked the roots of the trees he
whispered to,
slid down the throats of the animals he had promised
to protect.
heat rose into the winds that circled the earth, and
even the spirits of the air
cowered within its strangling hold.
gods were perfect, he knew. they should be. that was
the truth he was promised.
but his world was crumbling around him, and all he
heard were lies.

iv.

in his last few breaths, he remembers what it's like
to hope.
humans have always been so innovative.
he listens to them speak in terms he doesn't
understand.

they say things like *energy* and *fossil fuels*. metal screeches
and sparks fly, and when they dig up the soil, they do
not plant seeds in the earth.

no, their plants are steel and like the giants of the old days.
their blades slice through the wind. he hears them
say *turbine*.

somewhere, aeolus finds himself tethered once more.

...

the only gods men worship are those of iron and steel,
machines that screech across roads,
but he looks closer and realizes that there are some that
do not smoke like the others.

there are some with zeus's lightning crackling in their
welded veins.

they whisper, *electric. energy. less gas. more mileage.*
more, more . . .

man will always want more, he knows. he is surprised
to find

that now, they want more paradise.

v.

they have noticed his passing. have cried it out in the
streets, holding signs,
yelling until their voices are hoarse. they write. speak.
he's always admired their persistence.

no one remembers that when prometheus first gave
humans fire,

he never told them how to burn. their love for destruction
is in their blood, some might say, as much as ichor is
inside of him.

and yet, the more he sees, the more he searches,
he discovers another side, a golden side
that yearns for the full forests and landscapes he used
to roam

and calls for clear streams and cooler air. although he is
fading, those humans are not.

he can never tell whether that is good or bad. maybe
the world is not so black and white.

gods cannot pray, but he hopes for a better ending.
a paradise that mirrored his own. a vision for the
future that he will not live to see.

so as he closes his eyes for the last time, as they *cry the*
great god Pan is dead,

with the smoke that rises in his lungs,
he breathes once more. ■