

Prometheus

A Closet Drama in Three Acts

by

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The Characters

Prometheus
Epimetheus
The Eagle
Pandora
The Man of Clay (Deucalion)
Pyrrha
Pelasgus
Lycaon
Nyctimus
Mulciber
Strength
Violence
Mercury

Chorus of Men
Chorus of Women

Setting: the primeval world, before the great flood

Act I

Scene I

[lights up on Prometheus, naked, in a harsh, rocky wilderness at morning – he bears water in cupped hands to a mound of clay sculpted into the shape of a man, and carefully dribbles the water all over it – he regards the shape expectantly, then slumps in disappointment]

Prometheus:

And... nothing? Not a breath, a twitch, a blink,
For all my craft and care? Thou hast that form
Of brother and myself – why dost not move?
I'd thought wet element was what ye lacked,
For have I liquid in me – this I've proved
When nicked by accident, and red doth drip
Some while, 'til skin seals up... I've found no red,
Though much I've wandered, searching ditch and hole:
No bloody stream here'bouts, no pool of rain
Left by a storm, which hath that color bright,
But only water: water which I know
And must drink – somehow thickened, lent rich hue
And warmed once it's ingested, and which I
Do feel within me pulse, and in my wrists
Might glimpse the valves it trav'leth...

I have shaped

Thee perfectly, oh Man! Thou hast thy limbs,
Thy feet and hands, thy head, all parts of face
I see in brother, and by touch I know
On me feature as well... Thy fingers, toes,
Eyes, ears, nose, lips, I all neglected not,
Working precisely curve and subtlety
Of countenance and shape to mimic us,
On sleeping brother gazing while I scraped,
Glancing between thee and th'original
So that thou mightst err nowise, suffer naught

In symmetry, proportion, detail, grace.
And after brother left on journey long,
Depriving me of pattern, still toiled I
From memory, and feeling of my face,
So many days, to flawless mold thy form.

What own we twain thou lackest? When thou didst
Not move nor stir when once I ceased from work,
E'en though thy shape was final, ne'er to be
Made better, then thought I: thou art too dry,
Too baked in sun – the heat hath leeches thee of
All vital moisture, making stiff and stuck
Thy body, keeping thee e'er motionless,
E'en though thou mightst cry out in soul to move:
What anguish, I imagined! So I cupped
My hands in river, sprinkled drops on thee –
But still thou mak'st no motion.

What lives there

In me, Prometheus, in brother eke,
That thou hast not? The simple worm hath soul
Of some sort – fly and beetle, ant and bee –
Such smallest minims, free to fly or crawl
Where will – why shouldst thou not know life as well?
If aught made me, what acted those great hands
I've acted not with mine?

[he wanders about, gazing at the heavens]

The moon's returned

Twelve times to that low slender bow it was
When Epimetheus left to roam this earth
As far he might, to see if any lives
Who might with him converse – who hath a mind
Could reason with us two...

Three planes exist

On which to dwell and ponder: one above,

Two at our level – one for us, one not.
This green one which we tread, this hath the most
Of things: most various in substances,
In objects – hardest too, most permanent,
Not flowing as the sky or ocean flows...

Now passes that gold circle shedding light
Above the mount which is the chief of peaks,
Such frore height, where oft bright bolts strike and rage –
A place forbidden: cold, calamitous,
By sheer slopes made straight inaccessible,
And e'en by daylight, veiled in darksome mists.
[turns round] To that way lies the mottled, twinkling sea,
Dark surge which with its million tongues doth hiss –
As many miles from me as sits yon mount –
Of depth unknown, of breadth and stretch as well;
And if aught lives therein, I am content
Never to learn: The animals of land
Are fell and strange enough.

[enter Epimetheus, likewise nude]

Brother, thou com'st!
Sit by me, take thy ease.

Epimetheus:
[sits] This great world I've
Tread far's I'm able.

Prometheus:
What didst glimpse beyond
The limit of our eyes when we ascend
The local pinnacles?

Epimetheus:
Oh brother, friend –
I know not how to say it.

Prometheus:
[*confused*] Didst thou find
More like ourselves – of bodies and of voice
Like unto ours?

Epimetheus:
No, brother.

Prometheus:
Then what lies
To north of us?

Epimetheus:
[*pause*] A lonely place.

Prometheus:
This place
Is lonely, fellow.

Epimetheus:
All the earth.

Prometheus:
But what
Mean'st thou, thou canst not speak the land beyond?

Epimetheus:
[*struggles*] I dare to speak, and yet my tongue revolts.

Prometheus:
Tell what thou canst.

Epimetheus:
[*with difficulty*] The cry of wolf, the snarl
Of pard, thou know'st them, brother... Yet such sounds
Become another thing when one's alone –
Do seem the gnarr of some dread land which hath

A brain somewhere within it, and which waits
An unknown time to slay thee.

Miles about
Of brutal, jagged rocks – of blasted stumps,
Of canyons and ravines of dizzy depths,
Great monoliths and crags, stark shadows cast
O'er lengths so limitless: such are the scenes
Of edgeless wilderness I found to north:
A horrid world, a waste. Eyes did me watch
By night, and from the shadows, woods, and caves
By daytime – every sound came wild and sharp:
Twice as distinct, I wit, as seemeth here
Somewhat near shore, where waves placate the ear
With constant calming rumble... In that tract
Beyond the mountain, silence reigns as lord,
And drives one mad.

Like little beast I shook
While passed I 'midst colossal firs and pines,
Through forests dark which never seemed to cease,
Or watched the pink-girt clouds darken the plain
Where rocks shine under drizzle – then I felt
A wee thing, littlest babe mouse, in that land,
Encount'ring no one.

Prometheus:
Oh, how vast this world,
How empty.

Epimetheus:
Brother – something seized me
In heart and flesh and nerves, when six moons out
I'd journeyed: every piece of me 'gan quake
Whilst gales that rushed from high storms keened amidst
Outcroppings and the tors – I thought I'd walked
Back to that age before I came to be,
And had arrived where nothing understood

What being was I – not e'en thee, good friend,
My fellow on this earth – nor ever would,
For naught lived there but brutal animal
And mindless void of storm and empty wind –
And clouds that ever piled upon themselves,
Uplifting sky, like trees or towers that grew.

Prometheus:

I shudder at thy words.

Epimetheus:

Could be, we two
Will find no peers, our long lives?

Prometheus:

And how long
Shall be our lives?

Epimetheus:

I cannot think how far
Back we extend.

Prometheus:

And I cannot foresee
When might we die, if ever.

Epimetheus:

They change not,
Our bodies: thy form looks the same as e'er
It hath... And I have felt no change in mine
E'er since that dim time of our origin,
Howe'er arose we.

Prometheus:

And we've known no time
Without the other; therefore have we guessed
We did emerge from common source – and call
Each other brother.

Epimetheus:
Something might we learn
Of what we are, if thou and I think back
To earliest memory.

Prometheus:
I trow thou hast
More vision in that way – I sight but blur
In casting much behind me.

Epimetheus:
Then I'll speak
This haziest recollection – something like
A dream of fitful sleep... Ne'er hath it left,
Nor troubled not my soul, but's stayed with me
Like some dark bird e'er hov'ring: Long ago –
How far back, I am blind – great tumult rang
Wide o'er this world: I saw the rocks and trees
Down hillsides tumble, witnessed stones pour down
In avalanche, knocking cacophony,
To crush the forests, spill in ocean waves,
Causing such deaf'ning chaos, while the skies
With their white fire shone livid, and the winds
Ferried black brows of storms from endless space
To lash their frigid downpours.

What it seemed
To my small self, o'erwhelmed, was like some war
Of elements: land did contend with rains,
Forests with lightning, ocean with the storms –
The upper regions, raging, causing fall,
By motions of their air, great rocks and crags,
Which scattered o'er the earth – while earth did strive,
Somehow, to pull proud welkin by its garb
Of mists and clouds down toward itself, to there
Strangle its wrathful spirit...

Yet the air

Resisted strong compulsion it collapse
And mix with grosser matter: At the last,
High dome did quell aspiring from beneath,
Smoothing the stones and waves with flatt'ning winds,
With thund'rous bolts reducing highest peaks,
'Til all grew still again... The storms ran on,
Much softer now, less grim, disdainful of
Defeated earth and ocean. I emerged
From where I hid – and some gray peace then seemed
To eerily descend: All storms since then
Have 'gainst that wild age seemed but as the stars
Against the blistering sun. Thou wert there too,
I recollect, dear brother – with me hid
Beneath a shattered cedar; but it seems
Thy memory hath vanished. 'Tis first thing
I do remember.

Prometheus:

And what might this tell
Of how we came to be?

Epimetheus:

Perhaps that war –
If such it was – such frenzy in extreme,
Its jarring and its violence, somehow birthed
Our bodies of the clay... Or, mix of things,
Mingling of rain and soil and air, in such
Calamitous degree, confused all parts
That in their shock, a new thing leapt t'exist,
Granted some portion of each warring side.

Prometheus:

Could be, for earth and water and this sea
Of fluid breath – each doth make up some part
Of body's whole... And flashes which thou saw'st
Dart crackling from the sky – perhaps those shaped
These elements in order, and lent soul
To govern and direct them.

[lights up slowly on the Eagle perched on a rock above the brothers, unseen]

Epimetheus:

It may be

The creature thou wouldst have arise, to think,
To feel, to speak, converse with us, doth lack
Such vivifying stroke.

Prometheus:

Some water I

Of late dripped o'er him – and two nostrils did
Prick open with a stick, so that he might
Respire our air – but how to bring such bolt,
White arrow of the sky, upon his form,
I do despair! Infrequently it strikes,
Sometimes far off, sometimes rather too near –
How might I guess beforehand where that dard
The earth shall stab? Yon mountain's peak oft feels
The flashing pierce – but would I never dare
To visit that dread pinnacle, e'en if
The mountain's sides climbed not so steep, and snows
Loomed not so thick, so frigid blue.

Epimetheus:

I fear

We are alone, oh brother – and shall be
For some great term.

Prometheus:

I'll never this relent,
Our search to make or find another man –
Or, better still, much people.

Eagle:

If ye seek,

Ye beings –

Prometheus:

Oh! What's that?

Epimetheus:

It is a bird

[*pointing*]
Above us!

Eagle:

If ye seek, long-living men,
To lend life to this clay –

Epimetheus:

It speaks without

Movement of beak...

Prometheus:

Oh brother, let it say;

It talks to my great need!

Eagle:

Do not remark

I own a voice – that pow'r by which ye came,
Did spring such soul as mine, in great bird placed,
A vast and hov'ring form. To you I say,
If that ye wish new creatures to endue
With what ye own – with reason, passions, thought,
With speech, with hearts attuned to such as ye
Feel in your breasts – then list!

Prometheus:

Say on, oh bird;

We do attend.

Eagle:

Then hear what wisdom I
For love do grant ye, with no recompense
Expected for such boon: The element
Ye lack to spirit breathe in molded shape,

You shall find at the top of yonder peak.

Prometheus:

But that we might not reach! See how high looms,
How fortress-like it towers.

Eagle:

Thou'rt deceived,

Oh creature! That way's gradual and mild:
Long winding trail around slow-rising ground,
A route to apex, spiral's top – 'tis rich
With spices of the wilderness; and o'er
Those slopes grow terraced gardens, crammed with flow'rs,
Well-tended shrubs and orchards, where bright birds
Hold golden songful discourse. Should ye go,
Ye should find trail head promptly – and soon know
What truth I speak, ascending.

Prometheus:

Gardens? How?

I've ne'er spied such.

Epimetheus:

What hands would gardens tend?

What beings on the mountain?

Eagle:

I know not;

None have I glimpsed while sailing o'er that peak –
But gardens thrive there sure, and e'er are kept
Pristine in beauteous order, ne'er one leaf
Growing astray.

Prometheus:

Thou speakest strange news – but
Tell me of what's at summit.

Eagle:
Living jewel
Thou mayst take with thee – yet the ruby shall
Remain where 'tis.

Epimetheus:
How can it be? Thou sayst
He'd take the jewel, and yet it would remain?

Eagle:
Journey that place, and thou, Prometheus,
Shalt see how it could be.

Prometheus:
Here, to my eye,
The alp looks barren, sheer, encased with ice –
No winding trail, no gardens cut in slope –
But barbarous howling spire of rock and snow,
Death to the one who'd brave it!

Eagle:
If thou goest
Quite nearer, looks shall alter.

Prometheus:
And this jewel
My man shall wake?

Eagle:
I promise thee, it shall,
If thou dost heed my guidance: I'll thee lead
To trail, to peak, and tell thee what to do
Once thou hast seen this treasure.

Prometheus:
If it seems
[*aside to his brother*]
There's fraud, I shall turn back.

Epimetheus:
[*aside*] I something fear
Thy flesh it wishes, and it means to guide
A way to doom.

Prometheus:
[*aside*] Should the mountain not
Redraw its aspect, I'll leave off th'attempt
Well ere I 'gin to climb. Thou here remain
To see my man is safe. [*to Eagle*] Then lead, oh bird,
I'll follow thee. I trow no other chance
Might ever light my way to spark mankind
And populate this earth.

Eagle:
Watch where I fly –
I'll flap with languorous wing-beat so thou'lt not
Lose sight of me.

[*exit Eagle*]

Prometheus:
Oh brother, sit close by
This lifeless one I've made, but mean to make
Third of society, and first of those
Shall rule this wild, strange land.

Epimetheus:
I am so tired,
So sore of foot, I'll not from here remove,
Be sure. Watch thou becom'st not eagle's prey.

[*exit Prometheus – lights down*]

Scene II

[lights up on the top of the great mountain at evening – a fire burns in a hollow stone, flanked by two large, featureless statues that suggest guardians – enter the Eagle, who perches on a tree – enter Prometheus]

Prometheus:

What figures? Oh, what made them? Those same hands
Which tend the gardens! Beings I've ne'er viewed,
Mysterious, inhabit this high world...
Are they who fashioned us, brother and me?

[he gazes about in wonderment]

No snow, no ice, no sheer slope – how is this
That same peak I have studied for an age,
So mist-veiled, so forbidding, cold and dire –
But now an easy mountain, scaled by steps
In circling trail that never ached my legs,
Perfumed by jasmine, roses, asphodel,
Perfectly mild, by unknown gardeners kept,
Yet of such height immense? From here I view
As far as Epimetheus roamed, I trow,
And as far o'er the ocean – plain of blue,
And glitt'ring road of sunlight 'cross the waves
Which leads to worlds dreamt never...

And, behold,

Below thee, Eagle, lives that jewel thou saidst
I should encounter – strange jewel! It doth twitch
And leap like anguished creature! Hath it soul?
Hath mind and will? I fear to go it near,
Lest, like some serpent, or the crouching pard,
It strike to harm me!

Eagle:

Well thou think'st to keep
Thy distance – though it hath no soul, nor shall

Leap on thee. This, Prometheus, this is fire,
Which must eat, and shall eat thee if it might –
That is, if thou dost touch thy flesh to it.

Prometheus:
This thing would eat me – yet I must it bring
To my clay man to make him live?

Eagle:
Yea, must:
The heat it lends shall furnish him with soul.
Approach, and feel its warmth.

Prometheus:
[approaching, holding out his palms] A comfort is't
Upon this height so chill.

Eagle:
Move not too near,
And it shall favor thee – too close, the flame
Shall torment and destroy thee.

Prometheus:
And I see
By waning evening's light, that it doth shed,
Like some small sun, a golden aura here.
I cannot look away.

Eagle:
To that great race
Thou shalt create, this flame will be a gift
Surpassing every other – for much arts
Its taming shall inspire.

Prometheus:
What those are,
I cannot think – but tell me, if it be
Great pain to touch this miracle, how might

I bear it with me?

Eagle:
Look beside thee.

Prometheus:
'Tis
A fennel plant.

Eagle:
Wrest ye one of the stalks
And place its top within the flame.

[Prometheus rips a stalk and approaches the fire, but hesitates]

Prometheus:
Thou sayst
This ruby must have food for it to live?

Eagle:
Why, so – just like thyself, it must consume
Or perish. Wood, leaf, grass are what it most
Yearns after, dry and dead – yet it will eat
An animal, or thee.

Prometheus:
What doth the flame
Within this empty stone feast on? I see
No fuel for it.

Eagle:
Invisible things feed
An oil invisible to this first fire –
Those same which tend the gardens. Children of
This source – the fires mankind shall light for warmth –
Must eat an earthly fuel. If thou dost set
The stalk within, a firstling of this flame
Shall live upon it: This thou must bear back

To coax a larger fire again, to warm
Thy man to life – which shall some minutes ask
Ere stirs he.

Prometheus:
I shall do what sayst.

[he lights the stalk]

Eagle:
Now lose
No time descending – slowly will the flame
Consume thy torch. Let not the winds blow hard
Upon thy fire – the gentler air it needs,
For strong blasts snuff it out. 'Round man of clay
Build ring of twigs, logs, leaves – but not too close,
Lest he be burnt at birth! – set them alight,
Then wait thy child's first stirring, his first cry.

Prometheus:
With rapid steps I'll rush the mountain round
A second time, cupping my fire, oh bird –
The first of goodly race to raise below,
Which shall in time inhabit full this earth,
As more I fire and wake from deathly sleep.

[exits – lights down]

Scene III

[lights up on the man of clay – Epimetheus is not there – enter Prometheus with his torch]

Prometheus:
Oh brother, thou hast left! Thou wert to watch
Our man, that animal disturb him not,

Nor entity unknown... No matter, though –
I must prepare the food for this young flame,
Then watch it grow.

[he finds and piles twigs, leaves, and branches around the man, then lights a corner – the flame spreads in a ring]

Too near, my child? I do
Recall the bird said painful, deadly 'tis
To touch this living ruby – and I fear
The flame's too close to thee! Oh, horrible,
Wert thou to wake, only at once to die!
How might I slay this gobbling element?
Too much of wind, said eagle – yet what blast
Could kill a fire so large? But, oh, I trow
If that I feed no more the burning thing,
It shall abate somewhat, touch not my child
With roasting hands, as nearly doth it now.

[a sound in the forest]

What's that? Who comes?

[enter Epimetheus with Pandora, nude, who holds a jar]

Brother! Who is this hangs
Upon thine arm?

Epimetheus:
[as though hypnotized] She came while thou wert gone.

Prometheus:
What word is 'she'? How came he here?

Epimetheus:
It was
A thing I've never glimpsed, from which she stepped.
It fell from out the sky.

Prometheus:
You, stranger – tell
Your name.

Pandora:
It is All-Giving; and 'tis true
What this one saith.

Epimetheus:
She came down with much steam,
Within a dropping chamber.

Prometheus:
What is 'she'?
What sayst thou?

Pandora:
Thou shalt view I lack that part
Thou'st puzzled much upon.

[she crosses slowly to the fire]

Thou hast a blaze
Much roaring.

Prometheus:
Part ye lack – dost keep it in
Thy jar?

Pandora:
I have a fine gift, but I'm bid
To not disclose.

Prometheus:
For whom?

Pandora:
I shall be told

When time is right.

Prometheus:
Who art, damn thee?

Pandora:
I am

Just as thy brother saith... I know no more
Than what hath hap'd to me. Within a room
Somewhere on starry cope, I found myself
Gazing about, viewing this world beneath.
Some moments gone this was – I took a breath,
Heard hissing, saw great vapor steam up hot,
And promptly 'gan descend. I knew my name,
Knew how to speak, knew jar I held in hand
My charge was to keep closed, e'er lidded shut,
Until a voice should bid I open it.

[lights up gradually on the Eagle on a branch]

Slowly the earth rose up below my feet
Which stood upon clear glass – huge continent
Surrounded by the rolling ocean stream,
The briny green enclosing land like womb...
And speed then of the vehicle reduced,
The hissing grew and whined, 'til in great cloud
I felt the jolt of landing.

Door did ope –
I passed outside, remarking all I saw:
The mountains vast, the woods like dreadful crowds
Of giants o'er my head – the shattered logs,
Crushed rocks, and storming cloud-forms which did roll
Above the sea, seeming to sprinkle rain –
And shapes of creatures shifting in the woods,
Disturbed by steam and hissing. Round I turned
When hot noise rose again – it lifted up,
The steaming room, and joined once more the stars,

In this place leaving me... That moment I
Thy brother came across. I told him all
I've spoke to thee – he told me who he was,
That he had brother, not with him just then,
And how hadst built this man of clay thou mean'st
To lift to life – hadst sought some magic spark
Upon the mountain, guided by a bird,
And that he waited for thee.

Prometheus:
How dost know
A voice shall tell thee when to ope the lid?

Pandora:
By that same sense by which my name did come,
And language that we speak: I can't explain,
Except I know 'tis true – and know that I
Awoke, or came to be.

Epimetheus:
Brother, this much
Recalls the way of dreams.

Prometheus:
[pause] What was the word
Thou saidst? Thou call'dst him 'she'?

Epimetheus:
Aye, brother – why
Dost call her 'him'?

Prometheus:
Another word unknown:
Thou usest 'her'.

Eagle:
Prometheus – how think'st
To populate this earth?

Prometheus:
Why, bird, I'll make
So many like my man.

Eagle:
A cumbrous way
And slow – each soul ye must scrape up from mud,
Sculpt to exact proportion and detail,
Then heat with fire... Each man must learn such craft
Which took thee long to master – shaping clay
To mimic human form – if he should wish
A progeny of's own.

Prometheus:
Yet life is long,
Is't not? Each soul shall own eternal time –
Or great age, at the least – to practice art
And gift the world much copies of his form;
And those new souls like age shall have to leave
An offspring further.

Eagle:
Yet, there is a way
Unknown to thee, which shall thy way supplant
In fashioning of men. It is not one,
But two things, this new race; and in their merge
The progeny shall issue.

Prometheus:
Ye speak strange;
I must look to my child.

[*going to the clay man*] Wilt stir at all,
My creature? Burns the fire too close to thee?
Wast born, but quickly died while I forgot
To tend thee?

Eagle:
Spirit in him quickens yet –
Fear not.

Prometheus:
When shall arise?

Eagle:
A moment more
And he will stir.

Prometheus:
The fire's sunken low
And gutters now.

Eagle:
The coals shall yet give heat,
Their cordial vigor raise him.

Epimetheus:
Look! He stirs!

[the man of clay fidgets, rubs his eyes, stands and examines himself]

Man of Clay:
Three beings stand about – and one doth perch
Above me in this tree, not like the rest.
To look me o'er, I'm like the three that stand...
Oh you I see before me – what am I?
And what are ye, ye four who stare intent?

Prometheus:
Thou wert formed of the earth – I sculpted thee,
Granting thee aspect, stature like mine own,
For I do wish our kind should multiply
And settle this vast earth.

Man of Clay:
[*looking about*] This earth is vast?

Prometheus:
Beyond even how far my brother's walked
And seen... There stands he – Epimetheus;
I am Prometheus called. This one who lacks
Our part below, whom knew I not 'til late,
All-Giving is. The one of different form
High up, is Eagle named. 'Twas he who told
The secret of thy birth: he showed me flame
High up on yonder mountain – watch it burn
All round thee, this red rose, which warmed thy soul
And brought it forth of clay.

Man of Clay:
'Tis beauteous –
I'll gather some.

Prometheus:
Touch not! It shall thee harm,
So I am told; and I have felt its heat
Too much e'en at some distance... Thou dost sweat,
My child! Leap out the circle of the coals!

[*the man leaps out*]

Man of Clay:
[*approaching Prometheus*] I am thy child?

Prometheus:
Aye, creature, and I am
Thy father... Though not of my flesh art thou,
Yet thou art earth's flesh, and such am I too,
I am so nearly certain – and, more worth,
Each trace and curve and breadth which makes thee up
Was shaped by my hand.

Man of Clay:
How long was I
A soulless, voiceless lump?

Prometheus:
Ye lived beneath
My sculpting hand some year or more – some weeks
Completed, but unliving, whilst I sought
A means to wake thee, 'til the eagle led
The path to fire at mountain peak.

Eagle:
New man,
See that the flame dies not. Pick up that plant
Thy father left on ground, and place one end
In coals.

[he does so]

Thou seest the flame that dances there,
And eats?

Man of Clay:
I see it.

Eagle:
'Tis the instrument
By which thou'lt master earth. Great industry
And art proceed from this – dominion o'er
Each brute and savage thing. See it ne'er dies,
But e'er hath fuel.

Man of Clay:
I'll nurture it as if
It were my son, as I am son to him
Who stands beside me.

Prometheus:
Soon we shall make more
Who'll aid us in this guardianship.

Eagle:
Ye may,
But 'tis not how the main of thy new race
Shall issue.

Prometheus:
Thou hast said – but I know not
How such may be, this merging, nor how makes
New men: for two to join as one subtracts
A man, not adds one.

Epimetheus:
Brother, in the months
To come, thou shalt see what the eagle speaks.
Think on the tree – its trunk, branches, and twigs.
Create ye men, and I'll create as well.

Prometheus:
Thou hast some knowledge, brother, skipped me o'er
While I was on the mountain.

Epimetheus:
Brother, thou'rt
The wisest of us all: I follow where
Nature doth lead – but thou blazest ahead
Of gradual guide who secrets keeps to breast.

Prometheus:
Then be thou led – perhaps thy way's most wise:
To let another take thee by the hand
In stepping toward strange woods which veil our sight.

[*lights down*]

Act II

Scene I

[lights up on an orchard at midday, in which stand two thrones side by side, and flanking them two prominent fruit trees – a columnated temple can be seen beyond the orchard, and far away, the hints of seashore – begins a pleasant music – enter Deucalion from the left, Pyrrha from the right – both are crowned, and the former holds a scepter – they grasp hands, kiss, and sit]

Deucalion:

Now four years have whirled round since first I waked
Amidst that red gem shining forth man's road
From out the shadowed sleep of early life –
Bright taper guiding race to reign o'er earth,
Casting its golden ray to banish shade,
Resisting night and shadow. O'er this land
Of Arcady, I wield a scepter's might;
And white jewels of my crown glow like the orbs
Of firmament. None doth resist my rule;
None quarreleth with other, none doth slay,
None perisheth. Behold a temple here
To Man's great father, bold Prometheus,
In which eternal fire in a bowl
The virgins oil feed by light and dark –
Though that first fire (on mountain none dare climb)
Needed no fuel, for stars and sun were source
That lit its flame e'erlasting.

First of men,
Children of mine and Pyrrha's (daughter of
That lady who in chamber dipped from sky),
The savage creatures frightened with their flame,
Their magic flow'r which bloometh on the stick,
From hut and home the cruel fang driving far
So they'd fear not in nighttime... Meat cooked Man
Upon his gift; the wooden point made hard

By black'ning fire's touch – and soon metals he
From earth with heat extracted, fashioned them
By molten pouring, by hard sparkling blows
Into the axe, the spear-tip, ewer, bowl,
The adze, the awl, spade, chisel, mattock, saw,
And hammer, anvil, plow, earring and torque
And necklaces and crowns: By implements
And symbols did he conquer.

Pyrrha:
Altar's smoke

Ascends from hill and tumulus: the ram,
The ox are sacrificed and fed to flame
To lend sweet savor to th'ascending air.
The words of our forefather do we heed,
Propitiating that we cannot glimpse –
And know not if exists; but reverence asks
Our constant piety. He showed us two
The slitting of the throat, collecting blood
In cupped hands to sprinkle o'er the flames –
Where organs to discover, and to burn
Those secret chambers of the creature's life,
Pleasing some heart which hides the stars amongst,
Calamity forestaying (so he told),
That this age joyful holds. The animal
Is hunted, or is slaughtered, whilst no man
Nor woman knows cruel death... But if we cease
These actions were prescribed by ancestor,
We know not what result: some think the doom
Of beasts should visit us – new sacrifice
To fill for negligence.

[far-off sounds of talking]

Deucalion:
A train of men
Comes striding our direction.

Pyrrha:
Skipping come

Much girls and women.

Deucalion
Opposite their ways –
They'll meet at our location.

[enter the Chorus of Men from the left and the Chorus of Women from the right – each group begins to circle the nearest prominent tree, the men clockwise, the women counterclockwise – the fruits grow as they walk and sing]

Pyrrha:
Now they chant
A poem to please our ears and honor us.

Chorus of Men:

*Oh holy King, around this tree
We step with patient pace
That thou mightst growing oranges see –
Sweet-swelling globes for Man to eat –
As if were turned a crank.*

*We are the newest men of earth –
Three months from womb to here:
The golden sun lights on our mirth;
It lights our ample planet's girth
And wakes our souls from fear.*

*Scarce older than we, fathers are,
Our fathers' fathers, too,
So swiftly nurtured us the stars'
Sustaining light, touch from afar –
Quick blood and muscles grew.*

*Ne'er from a mother's flesh thou didst
Emerge, oh sovereign lord –*

*The great god's hand reached down amidst
Fell blasts, to sculpt thee – so exists
Our race despite such storms.*

Chorus of Women:

*Good mother, watch how circle we
These branches which 'gin droop
With fruits more red than any tree's:
Rich apples grow Woman may eat;
What trouble but to stoop*

*If they do fall? or reach if still
They bulge beside the leaf?
All generations feast their fill;
We turn the handle at our will –
None needs to act the thief.*

*The men nearby, we shall with these
Combine when hour is right
To generate what shall thee please –
More subjects who shall bend the knee,
Conceived and born o'ernight.*

*Much generations side by side
Do live upon this world:
The eldest, peers of youngest, thrive,
And welcome us to our sweet life
Upon our shining pearl!*

Both Choruses:

*Now fruits are swoll'n, both apples and
These oranges, ripe and fair.
How melancholy rolls the land –
How sad's the shore, how sad's the sand –
Whilst gloom rides on the air.*

*The mountain may not visit we,
Nor sacred grotts below.*

*From cave and height our souls must flee –
And here remain, on pleasant meads,
In pleasant woods and groves.*

*[the two choruses peel off, each departing the way it came from – a strong,
lonely wind rises, then dies]*

Pyrrha:

That each new breed grows up so soon, to us
Was worry – for how far and broad's the world
That e'er-expanding man it might support,
And not split at the seams? No soul as yet
Hath felt Death's hand, as have those animals
We slay and offer up, or hunt to eat –
Nor did progenitor tell aught of Death
As touching us, and therefore we believe
It never shall – or, at the least, an age
Is granted for our lives, or nearly such...
But seemed it, generations 'gan delay
In maturation – this has been my note,
Thine too, oh husband: Epimetheus,
My father, while tiara did he place
Upon my brow, said two weeks would be term
I grew from babe to woman. Our first child,
Pelagus, three weeks was attaining age
Of manhood – and each generation thence
Somewhat a longer, longer stretch requir'd
For childhood to lay by. From this we hope
Man shall not all o'erwhelm, but rather reach
A population fitting to the land,
Then cease to reproduce – or final breed
Might take so long in growing to mature,
That ocean and the hills should blow away
Ere fertile they develop.

Deucalion:

Queen, observe –
Walks hither, all alone, a grandson ours,

Appearing something anxious.

[*enter Lycaon*]

[*bowing*]
Dear grandparents.

Lycaon:
Couple, hail,

Deucalion:
What wouldst thou, noble prince
Of this good land?

Lycaon:
Oh high ones – have ye seen
Prometheus of late? or brother his,
Or she who holds the jar?

Deucalion:
Are they not found
Close by the mountain's foot? E'er since my birth
That is where they've abode.

Lycaon:
They are not there,
So shepherds did inform. I searched the place
All round, and throughly – not a great one lives
Amidst those lonesome grots, but only goats,
And small things in the crevices.

Pyrrha:
How strange –
But it may be some little ways uphill
They dwell now. Farther may we not ascend
Than foothills – so perhaps they wished to move
Remote from waxing Man.

Lycaon:
I do not know;

But I should tell ye, these same shepherds have
At various hours of day heard ringing peals,
As of a hammer's clang, descend from slopes
To echo in the valleys – something ne'er
Was heard before in those parts. I myself
Something of what they told, mine ears descried
So faintly while I searched: a sound as though
Some beaten anvil sang – blunt, bell-like notes
From far away and up.

Pyrrha:

I wonder if
They fashion men of metal.

Deucalion:

I must pray
'Tis not so. Sterner, cruel would be such men,
Not soft like clay, which though hardened by heat
To come to life, shall at the last return
To crumbly composition... Men of iron
Or bronze would firmer be, but own less heart,
And should not scruple weaker men to slay,
Supplanting us to steal this earth's delights.

Lycaon:

Great pair – I ask ye that I may ascend
To seek this ringing, though the law hath been,
Since first were ye created, that no man
Nor woman should go up. I ask not just
On my behalf, but for all family ours,
Your kingdom's clan – for, to a soul, all feel
The angst of god-man's absence.

Deucalion:

[*shaking his head*]
Thou know'st this.

It mayn't be –

Lycaon:

Yet, I risk no other wight,
His life and welfare – just mine own. Should I
Fall captive to great parents, I'll proclaim
No other men my foray knew. I've asked
Out of great reverence toward ye... If now's forged
Some danger on the mountain, we ought learn
And think on what's to do – but if none's built,
And clangs portend no peril, still our race
Ought learn whence come those sounds: if they be made
By parents, or some other.

Deucalion:

[*mulling*] Thou hast cause
In how plead'st – yet, for that we know not what
Should be the consequence if firm decree
By but one man be broken, still I bid
Thee absolutely to remain. I dread
A general chastisement, hard and severe,
E'en if thou wert believed none else said aye
Or knew of thy intention.

Lycaon:

What if we
View parents ne'er again? I fear some change –
Or worked by them, or 'pon them worked – transpires,
Which happy state could alter.

Deucalion:

Best, I think,
To leave things be, my grandson. Whate'er haps
Upon the mount, whether it us concerns –
Great parents or us children – leave it be;
For children are we truly, stern enjoined
To learn only such things as serve our bliss,
And told where ne'er to venture. This proclaim
To Arcady: none shall attempt the hill
Where fire was found, and from which peals now ring.

Lycaon, shalt thou do so?

Lycaon:
King, I shall.

Deucalion:
This rule we've always known – but now I add,
As gerent, left alone some unknown time
With parents none to guide me, consequence
Explicit: he who scales forbidden slope
Shall from this land be exiled, and must fend
Companionless among the brutal beasts
In horrid wilderness – and likewise, none
Shall by aught act succor or shelter him
Who's banished, lest he wish to take as friend
For aye him exiled first. See thou dost speak
Across the length and breadth of Arcady
This penalty, my grandson.

Lycaon:
Every hut
And town shall have this.

Pyrrha:
[*to her husband*] Think I, deem alone,
With punishment unsaid, should hearts compel,
For all this nation love thee, and regard
Thy will as theirs.

Deucalion:
So hath it been these years
Without exception, for our race is young,
Society an infant thing: untried,
Full innocent... but, innocence of ill
May by its nature let vast harm to grow
Or burst to life, by knowing not what 'tis,
Its origin, how thriveth. Tell all men,
My grandson, penalty, and I'll sleep sound –

And so ye both may, every soul as well.

Lycaon:

Rest easy, then.

Deucalion:

I thank thee. [*to Pyrrha*] Shall we go
To visit other parts, Queen, to receive
The honor of our family, and disperse
Sweet blessing of our love, while watch we grow
The youngest up from birth?

Pyrrha:

Lead on the way,
In such things I delight.

[*exeunt king and queen, holding hands*]

Lycaon:

I am to state
A penalty – the first that men have heard.
Laws have we known since generation first
Did learn to speak and reason: not to steal,
Not murder, nor to go up that great hill –
But never consequence. 'Twas thought by all,
And still is, that the speaking be enough,
And hearing, for to fend 'gainst any crime,
Since heart of our forefather is our own,
And laws to us are as one's will to flesh,
Commanding by fast unity. How strange
They disappear, the three who made mankind...
How strange those sounds from mountain!

[*enter Pelasgus and Nyctimus*]

Father, glad

I am to see thee – and to see thee, son.

Nyctimus:

Hail, father!

Pelasgus:

[*to Lycaon*] Thou, my boy, didst speak just now
To king and queen?

Lycaon:

I did.

Pelasgus:

And didst secure
Permission we might search the mystery
Of far-off height?

Lycaon:

No, father.

Pelasgus:

Liked they not
Our reasons?

Lycaon:

Reasons passed full easily
Into their ears – but hearts of royal pair
Fear greatly such transgression. I'm to tell
The kingdom what befalls that man who steps
One foot on rocky slope.

Nyctimus:

What's that?

Lycaon:

He must

Depart Arcady, nevermore return.

[*the three look glum, sit down*]

Nyctimus:

If he is caught, that is.

Lycaon:

If find we aught
Of meaning on the slopes, how might we tell
Such news, without our violation known?

Pelasgus:

If news be great enough, touching Man's weal,
Or weal of our forefathers, then our act
Should be forgiven, since some remedy
Could not be acted, had we three not sinned...
And if, by our discovery and search,
It turns out clanging sound and vanishings
Which trouble us mean little – or if we
Find nothing, not one clue – then we'll speak naught,
And none shall be the wiser.

Lycaon:

All shall note

Our absence.

Nyctimus:

Let us tell, we leave to slay
Twelve sheep at mountain's foot, a sacrifice
O'er many days, to ask our ancestors
Return into men's sight. 'Twill not be lie;
We'll shed the blood indeed.

Lycaon:

Yet, son, we may
On our ascent, by those we much revere
Be noticed, and their wrath descend on us,
Without e'en monarch's nod to plead our case.

Nyctimus:

'Tis true... yet if we say our anguish o'er

Their disappearance moved us, I believe
We ought be spared.

Pelasgus:
I fret more o'er their loss
Than what to us may happen.

Lycaon:
[*pause*] Father, son –
You do align me. For if worst may fall,
Our exile, we should still each other know
For comfort and society outside
The settled world: three generations, yet
Like siblings, close in age, free in our speech,
Easy and pleasant 'mongst ourselves: No hurt,
No punishment such exile, when one brings
Close kin along with one.

Nyctimus:
Father, well said!
When shall we leave?

Lycaon:
Not ere to every home
I've giv'n Deucalion's word – that very law
And consequence we are to brave.

Pelasgus:
And not
Before twelve sheep we've gathered, and have told
What we intend with them.

Lycaon:
Then, let us act
For five days' time – then early on sixth morn
Meet at this spot to leave.

Nyctimus:
And let each pledge
His faithfulness to us, and to our plan.

[they shake hands, each in turn with the next]

Lycaon:
To preparations, then – good father! – son!
For our forefathers' weal, we snap their law –
May they us pardon, for they know our hearts
Do swell with love for them, and act for love!
The word of law o'erruleth not the heart,
For heart lived first, and alters word at will.

[they depart severally – lights down]

Scene II

[lights up on the cavernous wilderness at the foot of the great mountain at sunset – enter Lycaon, Pelasgus, and Nyctimus, equipped for travel, driving twelve sheep ahead of them]

Lycaon:
Since morn we've journeyed – let us take our ease!
Now sun snuggles in tent... Here make we camp,
And shall tomorrow climb.

Pelasgus:
A few steps more
Up through those boulders, and scared decree
We shall have violated.

Nyctimus:
Now we're here,
Somewhat my soul doth quail.

Pelasgus:
How great it stands,
This edifice of nature – like some god,
Some sentinel betwixt mundane and sky,
O'erwatching earth and ocean!

Nyctimus:
Oh! Look west,
Grandfather, father! See – what steaming peaks
Far off! Obscured by hazy miles and mists,
The fiery mountains brood like ten cruel kings
Far 'bove the wave-plain, pondering that stretch,
Breathing their seething smoke-traces... And hear –
What hiss! Their molten drool touches the sea,
Which seethes its indignation!

Lycaon:
Oh, enough,
I am so weary.

Nyctimus:
Shall we pight our tent,
Or start a fire first?

Lycaon:
Son, thou mayest choose,
Thou still hast breath enough. What leav'st, I'll do.

[Pelasgus sits – Nyctimus begins making a fire – the ringing peals are heard briefly]

Nyctimus:
Oh, there! What think ye of't?

Pelasgus:
It sounds indeed
Like hammer on an anvil.

[the ringing comes again – the sheep are frightened off, bleating]

Nyctimus:
See, the flock,
It scatters!

Lycaon:
Let them go, it matters not.

Nyctimus:
Should we not sacrifice them?

Lycaon:
For our work,
And for their blood, what benefit? We brought
Those creatures but to serve our story. Here
There's grass enough for them... I would they live
As happy as our race.

Nyctimus:
Yet that god-man
We search for, did instruct us in such rite
To ward off some vast danger – some grim storm
Of ruin from the welkin.

Pelasgus:
'Tis enough
We climb the sacred mountain – I would not
This second trespass 'gainst forefather's word.

[more ringing comes – soon a light rain begins to fall]

Lycaon:
If wishest, father, thou mayst take my knife
And slit their throats... But, oh, this rain shall douse
The fire to eat their organs.

Pelasgus:
Well, let be;
'Tis not meant for this evening.

Nyctimus:
Nor this flame
I meant to cook our vittles... Hiss, and die!
Thou hissest, fire, e'en like a man annoyed
And tired doth sigh – thou'st sympathy with us.
[*to companions*] Let's raise the tent-cloth o'er us.

[*he rummages through the supplies*]

Mallets... pegs...
The sheet... the poles... and rope! Cold food tonight –
But warm beds, drenched not by the heavens' tears.

[*they make their tent, eat supper, arrange their bedding, then retire as the night comes on – a long, windy, peaceful silence – enter Pandora, clothed, with her jar*]

Pandora:
They're here – just as the voice alerted me
While stretched I sleepless on a bank of moss
And Epimetheus snored, turned on his side,
And mine eyes traced the starry hemisphere,
Lost in the constellations' lucent map:
“Thy grandson, and his son, and that son's son,”
Said voice, “now all approach this citadel
Forbidden them – like little boys who play
Some place prohibited, for they've not known
The horrid stroke of peril... Woman, up,
We now have need for thee.”

Taking my jar,
From out the cave I stole. The brothers slept,
Dead to my act – though they shall wish to know,
At morn, where I've mislaid the little thing.

I'll place it here, the voice commands me that.

[she opens the jar and places it at the opening of the tent]

And imps with great feet, or great hands, or heads,
Shall shortly from it walk. I'll not be here,
Rather at home again... The last that peeps
Above the lip, then tumbles heels o'er head
To spill upon the herb, that one shall kick
His womb of porcelain down shallow slope
Where it shall shatter, and it shan't be found.
Oh lovely goblins, have your liberty!
By moon and sun, run ye upon the earth,
And cleave to men as shadows cleave to them!

[she looks up]

Oh, yes! I now rush up the mount again!

[exit Pandora – lights down]

Scene III

*[lights up on a steep slope midway up the mountain – a drizzle is still falling
– enter Pelasgus, Lycaon, and Nyctimus, climbing wearily]*

Lycaon:

The stones are slick as tongues. Take care you grasp
With firmness, and let not your sandals slip.

Nyctimus:

No easy road this, and no gardens here,
As shepherds some have told thee.

Lycaon:

Some did say,

Swearing a line of spiral road they've glimpsed,
And flowers' colors – others called these lies,
And never saw I such, e'en squinting fierce.

[*pause*]

Pelasgus:
The mists disguise how far we've climbed, how far
'Tis still to reach the peak.

Nyctimus:
But we know not
Where dwell the three we search – is't at the top?
Could be some place below.

Lycaon:
Let's rest a spell
And watch our breath exhale like bellows' blasts.

[*they sit – they drink from their skins and let the rain refill them*]

Nyctimus:
It is like some white chamber with us moves,
These walls of fog – and ceiling waters us.

[*the ringing comes again*]

Pelasgus:
Even in rain, hot industry.

Nyctimus:
It sounds
Still far away, e'en though for hours we've clomb...
I hope it moves not.

Lycaon:
Son and father, whom
I may call brothers: did ye in the night

Dream something moved about us?

Nyctimus:

Nay.

Pelasgus:

Not I.

Nyctimus:

Did something trouble thee?

Lycaon:

I thought I heard

Not long after we'd swaddled our cold selves,
A rushing round our tent, patter of paws,
Then snorting snarls – like wolves'! These circled us,
Yipping some little while, swift-footed dogs –
Then seemed to downhill disappear. Whether
'Twas Sleep's wand on my forehead, know I not,
But seemed it half of waking's character.

Pelasgus:

I do myself some shattering noise recall,
Like cracking crockery.

Nyctimus:

My mind was void,

A noiseless dark.

[unseen by the travelers, Prometheus, clothed, is slowly revealed in a nearby cave by the light of a fire he kindles]

Lycaon:

Discerned I something else

Much later in the night, but this I know
Was dreaming: All the lands looked deathly dark,
Funereal plain of black; and in the midst
Of shadow, one white temple, like a ghost

Cast rays that nowhere struck through emptiness,
But made its marble gleam, as if it were
A structure of the lacy other-world,
Devoted to no god that has a name,
And no man visits... Then did seem to strike
Some tremor through the empty earth, and cracked
White steps of that firm fane, whilst thunder rolled,
Announcing driving storms. The columns shook –
I saw the roof to totter; but ere fell
The mass of it, my vision must have sped,
And left me to pure darkness, 'til the morn
Revived the conscious knowledge.

Prometheus:
If ye wish,
Lycaon, sense of this, ask it of me.

Lycaon:
[*startled*] Oh, who?

Nyctimus:
Within a cave!

Pelasgus:
It is the man,
God-man, who did us shape!

Lycaon:
Great father, hail,
We kneel to thee!

[*the three do reverence*]

Prometheus:
Come sit beside me, sons,
Partake of my warm flame.

[*slowly, reverentially, they go into the cave and sit*]

I know ye three:
Grandson Pelasgus – next Lycaon, then
Nyctimus, as the generations go,
Yet of one similar age... And I scarce look
Much older than ye.

Pelasgus:
Thou know'st who we are?
But oh, thou viewest much.

Lycaon:
Hast weary eyes;
I have not seen their like.

Nyctimus:
Art thou not wroth
For our transgression?

Prometheus:
Once, I might have been –
But man will do what will. Some judgement fell
Long ere I came to be.

Lycaon:
What dost thou mean?
Thou saidst, my dream wouldst read?

Prometheus:
Simple enough:
This world is wracked and rent, or soon shall be.
I see these flying by the airy roads:
Evil and Ruin joined in linkèd arms,
Their wings screening the sun.

Pelasgus:
Is this the curse
For going 'gainst thy word ascending here?
We wished only to seek thee – thou hadst fled,

We knew not where, but thought likely uphill,
As so it is.

Nyctimus:

The people yearn for thee,
Turn anguished in thy absence.

Lycaon:

Brother thine,
His wife – are they with thee?

Prometheus:

I trow they live
Upon the flat lands, and shan't come.

Lycaon:

Why not?...
What makes thy brow to darken?

Prometheus:

This dark thought:
That body keeps its motions and its breaths,
Beating and circulation, breath of lungs –
E'er knowing naught of this imperative:
That it must die, the world screams it must die.

Pelasgus:

'Tis caused by us, our trespass.

Prometheus:

Think not so –
This was inscribed or said long ere our time.

Lycaon:

Why sit'st thou not with couple who conceived
Arcady's queen?

Prometheus:
I'd bide with them, but they
Will have it not... All-Giving will not look
Into my eyes – and Epimetheus
Doth as his wife, in this, as in all things.

Pelasgus:
They hate thee? Why?

Prometheus:
A voice did speak to her –
'Tis what she said. It told her that my walk
To summit's point began the drop of things,
And caused her starry vehicle to fall
From place where she'd been happy – landing her
Upon this sad and sullen earth. Now she
Dwells far off on the plains, her husband too,
And they'll speak not with me... To this high place
I did retreat. Oft o'er the bluish flat
I drift my gaze, and wonder where they live –
Searching for trace of smoke, spreading of tent –
But spy no sign of them 'cross that great stretch,
And sigh for grief.

[quiet – the rain lessens – the ringing comes again]

Lycaon:
Dost know what is, great man?
And how long hath it rung?

Prometheus:
Some weeks ago
That noise began – I think it must be sound
Of hammer on an anvil... if not, bells
That ring the general death. I've searched this mount
But have not found its source.

Pelasgus:
We deeply fear

What might it signify.

Prometheus:
And I as well.

Lycaon:
Great father, we did climb in search of thee,
For thou didst flee man's sight, as brother fled;
And so great was our anxiousness (o'er this,
And o'er that ringing sound so strange), we rent
Thy rule of trespass... Answer only this:
What shall become of us? for thou hast spoke
Of Ruin and of Evil on the wing,
Two specters dire who swoop upon a fane
Of thy envisioning, and cause to crack
That holy temple, bright in shadowed lands –
And usher clouds to drum, and rains to pour.
Harsh words to us! For what hath mankind done
To merit harm or death?

Prometheus:
Ye have not done
A single thing.

Lycaon:
Then wherefore do they fly,
Such baleful spirits?

Pelasgus:
Art thou sure of this,
Dear father? Could it be that thou dost err,
And view'st only thy misery, when think'st
Thou seest vast ruination?

Prometheus:
It may be

My vision's false, when say I man is cursed,
And I regret I shaped him – say grim doom
Doth light, a fate all undeserved... But I
Trow mood of universe invades my soul,
And err I not. The rupture and the rage
Of world abated once, ere man was formed –
The earth subsiding, skies clearing with calm,
The swoll'n floods draining down to meager streams –
And peace endured 'til now – but e'er returns
What's happened once before.

Blameless is man;

The world's to blame – the eyes of every hole,
The winds in treetops, mountains frozen stiff,
Curved fang of wolf and bear, spilt blood of prey,
Cruel rivers slicing earth – blame these great things,
And not yourselves: these brainless, brutal things
Are all the world, and all one thing that is
A mindless, faceless god. The vast sea rolls
Forever round us, swelling mountain-high,
Surging the whales upon its titan back,
A million fish and creatures tossing with
Each heave and falling – grey and foaming 'neath
Tumultuous sky that water takes and gives,
A chaos of dark rains and waterspouts,
The fish up-drawing, dropping them again,
Stirring the brutal war of tooth and tooth –
Such madness is this universe!

The sky

Is its own roiling sea – scourges the land
With lashing gusts and hail, cyclonic wrath,
Twisters and hurricanes; and towards itself
The earth is wroth as well, tearing her flesh,
Gashing her body, felling rotted trees –
As man doth rend his garments, rake his skin
With fingernails, pull hair, insane with ire,
Or grief, or frenzy! Calm in nature is

But slumber of a madman – and we here,
If mad or not, are but as leaves that wait
Some great storm for to whirl us o'er th'abyss.

Nyctimus:

We dread thy words.

Lycaon:

Father, we came to thee
To see if thou wert well – but now I fear
Thou'st made us sick with grief for what shall pass
If thou be right.

Prometheus:

Take comfort – what shall be
Was ordered ere man's time, and naught man doth
Alters his sentence: sentence not on man,
But all this world's flesh.

Pelasgus:

Might we do aught thing
To succor thee – or our own souls?

Prometheus:

[*thinks*] Live days
With comfort ye might know and see your end,
While this world never shall. Somehow what's blind
Gave birth to sight... The seeing knows its end –
The end's but sightless hunger.

[*the rain picks up again*]

Lycaon:

Ought man act
Some measure 'gainst his ruin?

Prometheus:
If his heart's

By such ennobled – let him work his will:
Labor declares his vision.

Pelasgus:
What's the shape
Of horror when it lights on man – dost know?
What tremor and what storm shall sweep our lives?
And when shall fall?

Prometheus:
I know not time, nor how
Great grief descends – 'tis only wings I view:
A huge form of the heavens, blocking light,
Cov'ring the mountains, cov'ring man's estate,
His gardens, and wide wilderness beyond,
'Til sight's ne'er more.

[*the winds moan*]

Oh sons, ye may here stay
This day and night – or longer. If ye list
Not to return, I'll thank your company
Each day it's granted.

Lycaon:
Father, son – what shall
We do, knowing this doom?

Pelasgus:
We must descend
To tell the people.

Nyctimus:
If cannot be helped,
What use, causing despair?

[*pause*]
Lycaon:
We will go down,

But if to speak, I know not.

Nyctimus:
Shall we stay

One night, at least?

Lycaon:
We shall – and let us warm
Our bodies by this fire our father lit
While rains patter outside.

Pelasgus:
I'll love this lamp
That brings some cheer in grayness.

Nyctimus:
And I'll love
What stories we shall tell.

Lycaon:
They all shall be
Of life – for man hath not known Death as yet.

[they huddle closer to the fire – lights down]

Scene IV

[lights up on a boulder-strewn place on the mountainside the next day, the weather still grim and rainy – enter the three travelers, descending a ledge]

Pelasgus:
'Tis close to spot we camped.

Nyctimus:
How swift the rains
Wash down the scree and pebbles! Earth's all mud –

I step a rock, it wobbles, or slides down
To splash in gath'ring pools!

Lycaon:
[*pointing*] See how are fringed
The clouds with some weird light.

Pelasgus:
They mass and move
As though a hand did guide them.

Nyctimus:
Now, bright forks
Begin to prod the earth.

Pelasgus:
And thunder splits
The air like some great trumpet.

Lycaon:
If 'tis day,
I cannot tell... How wild the winds revolve,
Spinning in ghostly cones across the plain!

Pelasgus:
Let's hide here, midst the rocks, and let it pass,
This anger of the welkin.

[*the storm intensifies as they crouch low – streams are pouring down the slope*]

Lycaon:
Near approach
The sparking bolts – more frequent crack their noise!

Nyctimus:
It 'gins to overwhelm my feet, this rush
Of water!

Pelasgus:
Cling thy fingers, dig thy toes!

Nyctimus:
Dost come already, Doom?

Pelasgus:
Shall this be how
Mankind expireth?

Nyctimus:
I begin to slip –
Oh, help!

[Pelasgus rises to grip Nyctimus's arm, but is struck by a bolt]

Pelasgus:
Cruel heavens' fire's on me! I die –
I fall forever!

[the ground around him crumbles and collapses, and he vanishes]

Lycaon:
Mercy, raging storm!
We cry thee mercy! Father – where art thou?

Nyctimus:
At bottom of the ledge, and ne'er shall stand!

Lycaon:
Thy grip is loosening!

[he rushes to Nyctimus and prevents him from washing away – they both cling to a boulder]

We must weather this,
Then seek thy grandfather.

Nyctimus:
I see him whirl –
Oh dreadful sight! – upon the froth below,
Where black mud bears his body down through rocks,
And disappears him from us.

Lycaon:
We shall search
Far round this mount for him, then carry him
To temple of our home!

[Nyctimus looks about wildly]

Nyctimus:
Oh father – now
I hear some great voice call! Dost hear it? No?

Lycaon:
'Tis only thunder – no one speaks but we.

Nyctimus:
It echoes 'mongst the stones, outshouts the storm!
It booms an awful thing – once – twice – again!
Canst hear it not?

Lycaon:
I hear only the blasts
Of tempests, cracks of thunder, and thy voice.

Nyctimus:
Oh cease, commands! Whence come ye? You demand
My death?

Lycaon:
What sayest, son? Thou hearest but
The empty voice of tortured air. Let not
The storm thee madden!

Nyctimus:
Father, still the words
Ring down through gale and lightning: I must die,
And thou must kill me, lest this water rise
E'en higher, and it sweep away us both!

Lycaon:
Speak not – this is but dread and crazèd sense.
Would thou couldst stop thine ears!

Nyctimus:
E'en then would this
Transgress into my mind: Since thou didst not
The twelve sheep sacrifice, now some stern god
Asks that my blood be spilt! Father, draw knife –
Slay me, that mayst be spared! The stabbing blade
Is what demands this voice.

Lycaon:
I shall not do't,
Not ever! Speak no more. This storm shall yield,
This wash of rain subside, and we'll descend
To find thy grandfather.

Nyctimus:
Oh, it doth rise,
Cruel deluge, father! – lifts me off my feet,
Swift-running water!

Lycaon:
Grasp me by the waist –
We'll cling here longer than the weather's strength
Might linger.

*[Nyctimus finds his father's knife, draws it, and stabs himself in the throat –
the water takes him away]*

Ah, alas! Now both are gone,

And cleave I here to rock as cold and hard
As universe bereaves me of my son
And father! Swirl they now on currents bent
To crash upon the plains immense below –
White currents that shall overwhelm the lands,
Stretching that grief so thoroughly skewers me
To each and every soul! Woe, woe to man!
Mercy I cry ye, skies and airy plain!
This earth becomes as sea – let it abate
Some little while, ye heavens! Have ye not
Taken my son? Oh chambers of the air,
Seal up yourselves again – disperse, grim clouds:
So young is man, his death ought keep far off –
But in his infancy, you murder him!

*[the winds and rain gradually lessen – the skies clear – the rushing water
dwindles]*

Some little respite... Did they hear my plea,
The spirits of the storm? Far, far from here,
A beam of sun slants down from clouds to earth,
Lighting one distant spot. The rest is gray,
All landscapes and the welkin – waters drain
Into the sucking ground below the hills,
And no more threaten they might all things whelm
In universal deluge, topping peaks.
Is this not doom of man, then? Or but doom
Of innocence in me? Now trickles low
The rain-wash all about – I might stand up,
Again climb down... Not just yet – I shall rest,
Let subside more the tempest. I shall sleep...
For truly they are gone, father and son,
And might not be recovered.

Sun, expand
To fill the sky: dry up what sea remains
Ling'ring o'er rock and soil. When I've slept,
The earth shall have its calm... Now lie I down,

And set my head while light spreadeth above.
To Arcady I'll walk when I awake.

[he rests – the storm continues to settle – lights down]

Act III

Scene I

[lights up on Mulciber at a forge-lit place on the mountain, beating manacles into shape with a hammer – a light rain is falling]

Mulciber:

Anvil of souls, anvil of sparking tears,
With fire-drops wat'ring ground of mortal dole –
Beaten and beaten, this world's beaten on thee;
And thou'rt beneath the world, art beaten too,
Yet never utter pain: These ringing sounds
Are dull, form no complaint, yet echo they
From crag to crag unto the far-off earth,
This noise of metal striking, noise of work –
Labor unending, tasks that must be done...
Tasks that are ordered. Young is yet the sum
Of all men's works, and gods'.

What now I shape
Shall hold, I think, 'til that sum hath an end –
Beyond, could be. The chains have all been linked;
These cuffs approach conclusion. Oh, such task
To weigh a heart with sorrow! May my strokes
Shape nobler things in ages yet to come:
The shields and helms of heroes, staves of kings,
Breastplates and cuirasses, chased, filigreed –
Great chariots and thrones! Shall be the craft
I'm honored for – not this, nor vehicle
By which strange girl descended: those my shame,
Works strictly were compelled.

The last stroke's done,
And now they cool, these grippers of the wrists,
Awaiting that bold being who e'en now
Is brought to me... I've linked them to the chains,

And own the maul shall drive the spikes through rock
To fasten him forever.

[*enter Prometheus, captive, gripped by Strength and Violence*]

Prometheus:

I am led
By those two faceless figures which I saw
Guarding the fire to either side. They move
And grasp without emotion... Who art thou,
Holding such fetters as strike chill my soul?

Mulciber:

A metal-striker, owner of this forge,
And one who heeds the will of high above.

Prometheus:

Whose name is that, above?

Mulciber:

I know not name –
Only that such will lives, and sends to me
His messengers. The order hath come down
That I shall chain thee.

Prometheus:

How long?

Mulciber:

'Til I hear

Order to this undo – or 'til event
Doth sweep away thy punishment with all
Transpires on this earth.

Prometheus:

And what's my crime –
Wherefore such torment?

Mulciber:
Thou know'st.

Prometheus:
Speak to me
The charge, as well as sentence.

Mulciber:
That ye did
Rob golden flame from crown of this same mount,
And 'gan a breed should not exist.

Prometheus:
A bird
Enticed me, metal-striker.

Mulciber:
These two forms
Should have dissuaded thee. How soulless, firm
They stood to either side of fire – and now
Stand either side of thee.

Prometheus:
I loathe such will
Would leave a thing to find, then punish him
Who found it.

Mulciber:
If thou hadst but kept the flame
For thine own use, and not thought to create
Children from clay, bake them to life, thy scourge
Would not last half so long, or be so cruel.
But thou didst wish to be a god, and make
So populous what was unpeopled left
By first creation! This goes hard with me,
Thy torture – though thou wast a fool indeed,
I hate to smite such torment.

Prometheus:
Yet ye struck
Those fetters, and do bidding toward my ill.

Mulciber:
No more than thou mightst wriggle from the grip
Of those who clutch ye, might I 'scape commands
Which issue from the infinite.

Prometheus:
Who came
To bid thee bonds to fashion? How know'st thou
'Tis destiny, an iron deem, and not
But whim of petty potentate, some word
Sent by impostor?

Mulciber:
He of flying shoes
Spoke resolute decree, and all do know
He is the messenger of that great king
None vieweth, but all rev'rence.

Prometheus:
This one I
Know not.

Mulciber:
Ye strive so far to be a god,
Slapping from clay thy world of men – and yet
Ye know not those above you? Thou wouldst brave
Regions sublime, and think them all thine own,
Not recking whom disturbest?

Prometheus:
I was placed
Upon this earth – I know not how nor when –
In utter emptiness: none spoke with me
Save brother – none explained me what I was,

Or how did come about. I must infer
And speculate, and call this certainty,
Knowing of high ones by some reasoning,
When might they all the while themselves make known
By effort that is nothing?

Mulciber:

Thou wert meant
To live a lowly life, and venture not
Towards where the greater dwell.

Prometheus:

Yet I was made
Not to be lowly! Small thing on this earth
I am, indeed, before such savage scale
Of massif, glacier, hinterland, and crag:
A naked, little creature, hungry, wan,
Unclothed, hunted by beasts, dwarfed by the woods
Colossal, swallowed up by shade of peaks,
Engulfed by gloom and darkness, towered o'er
By such sublime and huge things – yet I think
Such frightening wild, such limitless expanse
And crowd of horrors, is but as the black
Of night which shows the taper's piercing beams,
Invisible in daylight. This vast cell,
This endless chamber, in it was I set
To grope my way as in a murky maze,
With brother only to commiserate
Such lonesome desolation. Was this done,
This riddle thus effected, that I ought
Keep humble, never journey, seek not lights
Amidst such somber, solemn, obscure world,
E'en if I knew not what I might offend
In questing, gaining knowledge? Was this earth
Left empty so to stay forevermore,
A blind and mindless jungle? Why such zeal
In breast of mine, to know and to create,
To people emptiness, if such are crimes,

Deserving of my anguish? Answer this,
And I shall ask no more.

Mulciber:
Such awesome dark
And awful frame of universe ye speak –
Perhaps were meant to frighten you, and stay
Thy yearning eagerness.

Prometheus:
That power ye heed,
It loveth fright and terror?

Mulciber:
Thou didst say
Wouldst ask no more.

Prometheus:
So, so – but answer me
This last thing.

Mulciber:
What it loveth, is that war
Of striving opposites: ever and aye,
If aught is to exist, it must contend
With that it is not.

Prometheus:
Thou hast answered me –
Though little comfort is't. I have all time,
Perhaps, to contemplate this.

Mulciber:
Then, thou wilt
Be fastened?

Prometheus:
I shall be, if will or no.

[Mulciber drives the spikes attached to the chains into the rock with his maul as the storm intensifies – Violence and Strength secure Prometheus’s wrists with the manacles – exeunt those two beings]

So my anguish beginneth. Rain, I see,
Falls heavier again. It ’gins to drown
The places far beneath us... Ere you leave,
Oh smith, do one last favor.

Mulciber:
What is it?

Prometheus:
I would ye call that one who spake to you
How it must go with me.

Mulciber:
Wherefore?

Prometheus:
So I
Might ask him act the messenger again,
This time for my sake.

Mulciber:
I shall do it.

[he produces a deep, resonant horn and sounds it]

Comes
Anon that speeding courier.

[enter Mercury, descending from the air]

Mercury:
What would
The lord of smiths?

Mulciber:
I call ye not for me,
But for this one enchained.

Mercury:
This abject one,
Punished by justice perfect and serene,
Now bound and fixed, so that he might not budge,
Who erst did dare to godhead? What would ye,
Oh wretched one?

Prometheus:
I would that ye fly down
To Arcady, to that man I did form
And heat with fire, Deucalion his name,
And that firstborn of brother mine, his queen,
Pyrrha, who even now must watch their land
Swamped ever deeper. Tell them where I writhe
Constricted here – what path up mount to climb,
And how I suffer. Ask them go with haste,
That I may speak with them; and bid them bring
Axes, augers for labor... They'll not wish
To leave their people – but to them say strict
Such is my bidding. Messenger, hast thanks
An hundredfold if this perform'st.

Mercury:
I care
Not for thy thanks – but since the smith, my peer,
Hath summoned me to do thee service, I
Will act what sayst.

Prometheus:
Then speed, and may the storm
Not hinder thee.

[exit Mercury, lifting off]

Mulciber:
Auger and axe? What mean'st
Thy children are to build?

Prometheus:
Thou'lt watch their task
From where thou sittest while this storm grows great –
Or thou mayst list to me when they are here
And learn what they shall act.

Mulciber:
In truth I care
Not overmuch, if thou'lt not say... Seems strange –
Some hardy, sweaty task for king and queen
Thou dost intend! And now, I leave – but must
Speak one thing more.

Prometheus:
What is't? Let it be soft,
Thy final word to me.

Mulciber:
I fear 'tis not;
But I must speak it.

Prometheus:
On.

Mulciber:
These chains make not
The whole of scourging for thee. Each new morn,
Beginning on the morrow, when rose flush
Of dawn toucheth the foot of night – then look
As something dreadful nears thee – and prepare.

Prometheus:
What is't? Thou wouldst not clue such awful thing,
And not tell substance of it... How might I

Prepare, if know I not what comes?

Mulciber:

No hint

Of form or nature was I told – my charge
Was but to agonize thee by this news,
So vague, of looming torment.

Prometheus:

I'll not curse –

I must endure. Go, smith, I blame thee not.

Mulciber:

Thou art a poor beast caught within a snare,
No more or less. I pity, weep for thee,
I am not barred from saying.

Prometheus:

I am more

Than thou sayst, and e'er shall be. Go thy way –
Serve him above thee with a loyal breast,
While I shall no one serve, but ever here
Think on what never chain might bind or clasp.
Oh children, walk earth's route, to meet with me!

[exit Mulciber – lights down]

Scene II

[lights up on Deucalion in his palace – the wind is howling, and the storm and rising water can be seen beyond a colonnade]

Deucalion:

Abates still not, this second frightful fall –
Not wild, perhaps, as first, yet longer-lived
By far, and only gaining in its force:

Now saplings 'gin pull up beneath the wind,
The leas and meadows drown, beasts seek the hills,
Men row in casks and barrels, rivers merge
With lakes and cousin-creeks... Men's roofs are isles
Where families huddle close: all this I see,
And might do nothing! Sacrifice I would,
But every ox and ram hath drowned or fled,
And no man might strike flame. All've fled from here
But wife and I – and grandson ours, abed,
The only child who came back down from mount
On quest prohibited... Now Pyrrha comes;
She'll tell how doth Lycaon!

Pyrrha:
Husband, oh,
How terrible! Such change, such horrid change!

Deucalion:
What's happened?

Pyrrha:
Can I speak it?

Deucalion:
Speak – or I
Go in to see him.

Pyrrha:
He's not there!

Deucalion:
What's this?

Pyrrha:
Not in next room... not any room of here,
For he arose – and ran. The water splashed
'Neath paws as loped he off through storm and mist,
In grayness disappearing.

Deucalion:
Thou sayst 'paws'?
What change? What transformation saw you?

Pyrrha:
Love,
As grandson lay before me, still asleep
For great fatigue from that ill trek which slew
His father and his son, he 'gan to twitch,
Shiver, and mumble – as though fever'd cast
Its shroud across his soul. A chill of wind
Blew through the room, wet chill, and I embraced
His shoulders, called to him, while yet strange sounds
Tumbled from lips – nothing of sense, as though
He rambled what might only to the dead
Bear meaning... I did shake him, called again,
Rubbing his arms, imploring him to wake –
But while the tempest waxed, its patt'ring rain
Joined by the grumbling thunder, then his sounds,
Rapid and tangled, something of a snarl
Of beastly rage took on...

His teeth he bared –
Sharpened to points now! Barked he, howled, gnarred,
Tore off his sheets – he writhed, he thrashed! – I fled
To corner of the room, and from that place,
Hunched low, this dreadful thing I soon beheld:
From all his skin, like frantic moss, quick grew
A coat of fur, obscuring every inch
Save palms of hands and feet. His face drew out,
His jaw grew long, ears pointed, eyes went red,
Fangs jutted from his gums. Fingers and toes
Transformed to claws, and from his back a tail
Sprouted and thrashed – in short, before my eyes,
Like nightmare dream, grandson had changed to wolf,
Still thrashing on his bed; and by the light
Of stormy flashes, witnessed I his gaze

Like demon's glare upon me! Husband dear,
Believe what terror then, bewilderment,
With which I thought this creature – late so weak,
Helpless, and loved – sweet kin – would tear my gorge,
Spill blood of mine! And yet, it did not stir,
Fierce animal, for what seemed timeless spell,
The clouds beyond drifting through shudd'ring light,
My soul appalled and baffled.

In some while,
Those eyes loosened their trance – head turned away,
Its body rolled and twisted, gained its feet,
Then bounded 'twixt the columns, out through rain,
Howling again, hair shining in the wet.
I crossed the room to look – outside, amidst
Dark ragged fogs, I saw the wolf set 'pon
Three lambs stuck in the mud: It throated them,
Ripping their flesh – but did not stay to feast –
Then through the mists swift vanished. If thou think'st
I lie or rave, go in to where of late
Our grandson slept, and view the scattered sheets
And gentle creatures three outside who bleed,
Their gore redd'ning the muck.

Deucalion:
Can this have hap'd?
Is't true? Now whole of nature seems oppressed
By hideous incubus, madd'ning its sleep,
Smoth'ring all sense and reason; and no rite
Nor ritual availeth! All of us,
Who are children of nature – daughters, sons
Of universe – by dreams are swept along,
By cursèd dreams blown, poor limp leaves and flow'rs
Swirl'd on some vexèd blast! The waters mount,
Men swim and wade and climb to higher spots;
Their houses now turn sea-grots, and their fields
Of crop and vine are plains of waving weeds
At ocean floor... It is the dire result

Lycaon brought, by scaling sacred mount
Forbidden every soul – and this cruel change
His special retribution!

Pyrrha:

Oh my King,
Should flee we now? This palace stands on hill,
But only one path, not yet overwhelmed,
A ridgeline route, leads on to higher points,
And may not stand e'er 'bove the flood. There's naught
For us to do, no rescuing our land,
Or any soul therein.

[enter Mercury, flying down through the colonnade]

And now I dream

A second time.

Deucalion:

It is a man whose shoes
Do flap him through the air... Thou art not wet,
Oh stranger; and thy every part bold shines
Like bronze work by fire's light.

Mercury:

Good King and Queen,

In your unhappy hour I bring ye word
That man who fashioned thee, Deucalion,
Wisheth to speak with you. He standeth high
Upon the sacred mountain, where chains forged
Of firmest iron restrain him 'gainst that peak –
His punishment for theft, for impudent
Transgression 'gainst prerogative of those
Who own creating pow'r, true right to shape
Beings and universe! For that the smith
Who built his shackles asked I work his wish,
I stand here now, this speaking. Wretched man
Requests your utmost speed, and that you bring

Augers and axes with ye. Round the mount
A spiral course shall lead you: take this path
By which the reprobate himself did climb
To steal we high ones' flame – which sometimes shows,
And sometimes not, that road, but ought exist
This day, and 'til the deluge whelms it 'long
With most of hills and summits.

Deucalion:
Chains, thou sayst?

What horror dost thou speak?

Mercury:
E'en as my words:
Thy father's bound by iron – 'tis his due.
From nigh the top of mountain, clamped against
A buttress of the rock, he there o'erlooks
Swift washing tumult of the plains beneath,
Near far as earth doth reach.

Pyrrha:
Let us not spend
Our breath on words, oh husband, but begin
Our urgent flight, as this strange one commands.

Mercury:
Heed what she saith. I vanish.

[he exits, lifting off]

Deucalion:
Then, shall be,
Our giving up this place, this throne, this hall,
These orchards, gardens – this our Arcady.
Already do the waves nip at first steps
Of palace's foundations... I shall find
The tools my father bids us bring with us,
And thou the rest of things journey demands.

This rain lends grievous mood – exhausted, sad.
It seems to quiet slightly, now I fall
To resignation, pity, utter loss,
Bewilderment... Some gray dream is this world,
E'er blown and swept away – some misty wind
Which may recur, but for the time hath fled.
Farewell, our home of such short years – farewell
To people ours, slain in their infancy,
Hardly aware of what they were, or what
This world might be, in truth.

Pyrrha:
I'll bundle up
Provisions, meet thee shortly here again –
From there, to tread the long road toward the mount.

Deucalion:
We are but of few years – and yet I trow
We'll grow some weary age ere we might rest.

[exeunt severally]

Scene III

[lights up on Prometheus at daybreak – the storm rages and howls – enter Deucalion and Pyrrha, who kneel before him in horror]

Deucalion:
Oh, father! What, such cruelty? What hands
Could bind, compel thee so? Thou mayst not e'en
Shift arms an inch... I'll find a stone to break
Thy hateful shackles!

Prometheus:
Do not so, good son –
No rock might crack these adamantine chains

By heaven's strength fresh-forged; and e'en if ye
Did manage this, I fear some greater wrath
Should light on our three heads, for having rent
Strict deem of greater powers.

Deucalion:

What are they?

Where live they? By what right do they pronounce
This everlasting anguish?

Prometheus:

By that right

And pow'r that floods this earth... Look from this height
And witness whirling, witness such despair
That howls upwards! – threats to break the shell
That is the egg of heaven!

[Deucalion and Pyrrha crawl to the cliff]

Pyrrha:

Mercy, oh,

Ye rains, ye tempests! Never shall I view,
Though live I 'til the doom of life, such scene,
Such drowning chaos vast, infernal storm,
The wash of nations, cities! As we clomb
Our circular way, wading through flowers drowned
And pouches in the steeps which drained and pooled,
We looked not back, for so intent were hearts
On reaching thee – but as the night did wear,
The deluge all hath drowned!

Deucalion:

To root and trunk

And wasted branch, and pinnacle and spire
Men cling, and wail; but each is swept away
As forests, towns, and mountains all submerge –
Some singly vanish, some by groups and knots
Who hug, embrace each other 'til their deaths:

The foaming currents snatch them, plunge them low
All whilst they scream, implore those ones for whom
The sacrificial beasts were slain and burnt –
But naught avails them... Heaven, shall these pleas,
Their sum and piteous total, shall these beat
Like surge upon thy hard and rocky ears,
And go unanswered? Spumes of water leap
A mile in air as crash they 'gainst the crags;
Rain-curtains drop and shimmer; spouts ascend
To clouds – totter, unravel; and beyond,
A red sun glares through mists, like eye of wrath
His vengeance witnessing.

[*the couple return to Prometheus*]

Pyrrha:
What flood we saw
Ere parted we from home, was but as pond
Against this ocean... Well, oh sire of man,
Thou bad'st us bring these tools.

Deucalion:
Shall it ascend,
This tide, e'en where we are?

Prometheus:
It may indeed,
Oh son – those waves below may come to lave
These toes, these fingers, e'en these shoulders – but
Shall never drown my head: This am I sure,
As one doth know the sum of things in dreams –
And for I know my life shall be preserved
By that pow'r which doth will my life-long ache.

But you, ye need not ever touch this flood,
For I command you work your guessed-at task,
And with your axes, fell these pines nearby
To chop them for a raft – with augers drill

Holes for the pins (of branches you shall hack)
To fasten tight the framework of the logs
Which, wrapped with vines that flourish in this wood,
Shall doubly be secured. On this your craft
Three days you'll drift, e'er waters shall recede.
At this great height with me ye may not stay,
For wild shall be the sloshing, but atop
Such vessel, you'll endure it: best to ride
This deluge – better far than clinging here
To rockface, ever soaked with foam and froth,
Scarce freer in your movement than myself.
Three days shall be the span; then tide shall set
Your raft upon high ground.

Pyrrha:

So we'll endure;

And thou sayst thou'lt as well – but what of they
Who did produce me?

Prometheus:

They have passed beyond
My ken and knowledge... I believe they'll drift,
Boatless, their flesh their vessels, borne by waves,
And shall not perish. On some distant shore
That soon becomes no shore as waters drain,
In barren emptiness, I see them set
Unconscious; and the sun shall glow again,
Piercing the gray, its beams blessing the ground,
To wake them to wide desolation: there,
Across the damp and yellow sands they'll walk,
Seeking for where the herb might sprout again,
And trees undrowned endure to give forth fruit,
Where they'll settle, and live.

Pyrrha:

Are they the cause

Of this calamity?

Prometheus:

No, child.

Deucalion:

Are we?

Is man the culprit? Did Lycaon bring
Such fate upon his kind, drowning as well
All beasts of wild and farm?

Prometheus:

Naught rains this flood

But that mysterious will which binds me here –
That will which formed our own, from which descend
Our hearts, our wishes, thoughts. This storm was writ
Upon a scroll long ere I came to be –
E'en longer ere ye did.

If I'm to blame –

If I am whom all things declare the cause
Of some 'before' and 'after,' I accept
This scourging – for 'tis then my purpose comes
Clearly before me: Sadness and the rains
Swirl round forever, but at last must rest
Upon some spot, some person, on some brow –
Or else vexation never shall have cease.
The ocean surges, winds blow, and the lands
Perpetually are tormented; and naught thing
Might find its place or reason...

Let the spray,

Its stinging salt, blear eyes of mine, raise sores
Upon my body – let downpours and hails
Bleed head, and face, and chest. Let thunder break
Mine ears, let howling frigid winds turn blue
This fleshy tree, from branches and its roots
To very trunk: This is the deathless death
For which some hand did frame me.

Deucalion:
We know not
What made thee, father – but we know thou mad'st
My being, and we venerate thy hands,
And love thee.

Pyrrha:
Half of mankind fell from stars,
Half sculpted was of earth.

Deucalion:
When rains shall cease
And skies shall clear, oh father, then beneath
A vault which shines as blue and cruel as hell
I'll shudder for sheer madness.

Prometheus:
Tremble not,
Oh son, before this infinite world, but bear
Thy gaze up stiffly – for through that bright cope
Thy noble mind may wander; and naught else
That dies might wonder so.

I say to you,
Sweet pair, your kind, our kind, shall grow anew
Once touch ye land once more: On that fourth morn,
As drain the great seas gurgling, raft shall set
On mountain slope, and o'er the surge-washed earth
I bid ye find the rocks and stones that rolled
Of late 'neath miles of currents – backwards toss
Those bone-bits of the world, and they shall change,
Miraculous, to men – those that thou throw'st,
Oh daughter, shall be women: thus our race
Might flourish, breed again.

Deucalion:
Thou knowest this?
How can it be? Much labor did demand

My making – shall creation by our touch
Proceed so freely?

Prometheus:

She who is the earth,
Whose phantom dwells throughout the lands, as doth
Thy spirit through thy frame – she is not of
Proud clan which rules the sky... nor is the sea,
Nor breed of lakes and rivers, nor what springs
From waters of the world: fair groves and holts,
High tow'ring mighty woods – these things may prove
More friends to thee and thine than those who sway
Cruel realms of fire and air: From upper flame,
The burning sphere, command was sent to sky
To loose its rains upon us – things below
Have harmed us never.

Deucalion:

Where the first of men
From stones develop, there shall our new race
Build shrine and fane to earth.

Pyrrha:

And we shall keep
A flame therein, in memory of thee,
Prometheus, e'er burning – e'en if 'tis
A symbol of the cruel sphere.

Prometheus:

Now I've said
All that I must to you – all that I shall.
Haste now to nearby woods, and quickly build
The raft shall ye preserve.

Deucalion:

One token more
Of rev'rence for thee...

[kneeling, they kiss his legs, weeping]

Prometheus:
Do not weep – this earth
Hath 'nough of moisture.

Deucalion:
Now we go, to live,
Remembering thee ever.

[exeunt Deucalion and Pyrrha – the storm howls and whistles]

Prometheus:
Man shall thrive,
Shall flourish o'er these lands – how long, 'tis hid,
As obscure as the term of my own life,
Or term of this harsh strait. I would I saw
Far off – as far as eyes might see the sun
As dawns it, past the storm... Still stares it fierce,
A god of bloody blame, inflicting scourge
On what is innocent – for wrath must whirl
Forever round this earth, 'til finds it rest
On innocence, which takes th'astounding blow
Yet still remains unmoving.

[the storm rages harsher – he looks up]

And descends
Upon me now the thing I would not speak
To children – what god-smith did hint to me,
Some shadow of vast torment, hateful, vague,
More hard for that I know not form it takes,
How looks it, what intends, how brings it harm.
I see the speck grow larger, dark and winged...
I know what 'tis. Through clouds that spill and roll,
O'erturn themselves, this terror flies at me;
And know I eke this be but first of dawns
When from the vault sublime this bird shall swoop –

This eagle, he who led me to the flame,
And did the making of mankind grant heat –
Shall swoop, descend, rend flesh with claws, and dig
His beak into my side, my liver tear,
Pull from my flesh, devour, all whilst I
Scream loud, wrapped fast in anguish! Neareth sure,
This first of countless mornings, awful morns,
Whose truth now flashes on me!

Shall renew

Each day, I know, this organ, seat of all
Tempestuous passions – wrath, and love, and lust,
Delight, abysmal mourning, courage, fear –
All swallowed down the gullet of the gods –
But never dying, e'er reserving pow'r
To germinate again, as sprout green things
With every turn of year.

Then come, fell wings –

Cast shadow o'er my brow, darken mine eyes,
Set on me, rend my flesh, and batten on
All that's within my soul... but be assured:
The tree, by heat of spring, e'er blooms anew,
And even scorched by fire, still lives within.

[the shadow of the Eagle falls upon him – lights down]

Finis

