



Kronos and Zeus

After the defeat of Uranus, Kronos became ruler of the world. His family had expected his first action to be the release of his imprisoned brothers, the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handed Giants; Kronos, however, feared their potential power, just as his father had before him, and decided to leave his uncles shackled in Tartarus.

Gaea was appalled by her son's cruelty and unforeseen selfishness. Though she was powerless to overrule him, she took joy in issuing a prophecy to her disappointment of a son, informing him that he would someday be overthrown by his own child just as he had overthrown his own father, Uranus.

"That will never happen," Kronos vowed, "because I can outwit the Fates. If I never have children, I can never be overthrown!"

In time, though, Kronos fell in love with his fair sister Rhea, and from their union she birthed the first of their children, a beautiful daughter named Hestia. Rhea, an earth goddess like her mother, was overjoyed by the arrival of her daughter. Tenderly, she wrapped the infant in cloth and brought the bundle of joy to meet her father. As Kronos reached out his arms to hold his child, his mother's prophecy rang in his ears. Could this pink-cheeked baby grow to become the instrument of his demise? He couldn't take that chance. He smiled a wide, wicked grin and, without word or warning, opened his gigantic mouth and swallowed Hestia in one large gulp.

Rhea could not believe her horrified eyes and Kronos left his stunned wife, walking out of the room without saying a word.

As time passed, Rhea gave birth to three more children, the daughters Demeter and Hera and a fine son named Hades. With each birth, Rhea lovingly wrapped the child in soft cloth before bringing the bundle to Kronos' throne. Each time, she prayed that Kronos would share in her joy, but each time the same painful action was repeated. Kronos would pretend to welcome the child into the family, yet once he held the young flesh in his brawny arms the prophecy would obliterate any thoughts of decency. Instead of love, his veins surged with fear and he'd swallow each infant whole.

By the time Rhea was ready to birth her fifth child, she was frantic with fright. She could no longer stand by and allow another child to be trapped within the bowels of Kronos. Rhea met with Gaea, who was also furious with Kronos over the treatment of her sons and grandchildren, and the two women set a plan. When the fifth child, a healthy son named Poseidon, was born, Gaea took the infant to a remote island, where he was to be raised by sea dieties. Back at the palace, Rhea took a foal and awkwardly wrapped the animal in an infant's blanket. Rhea presented this "child" to her husband and he, without questioning the appearance of the newborn, smiled, allowing the wicked grin to overtake his face, and he swallowed the foal whole. As usual, he left the room without speaking to his wife, but she rejoiced inwardly, realizing how her plan had deceived her husband.

For the birth of their sixth child, Rhea conspired again with her mother to fool Kronos and protect the baby. This time, an infant boy was born with a radiant glow to his skin, unlike anything anyone had seen before. They named him Zeus, the shining one, and his grandmother concealed the child, taking him into a deep cave where his cries could not be heard. At the palace, Rhea was frantic, searching to find another object that would fool her husband. Running out of time, she grabbed a large stone about the size and weight of the infant Zeus. She wrapped it tightly in binding cloth and brought it to her husband's side. As expected, Kronos took the bundle, pretending to hold it lovingly before abruptly shoving it into his mouth. Rhea shed no tears as her husband left the room; she knew her children would be avenged, even if she had to be patient in waiting for that fateful day.

With Gaea's help, Poseidon and Zeus remained hidden and protected. They came of age and, when the time was right, they agreed to help fulfill the prophecy that would unseat Kronos from his throne. First, Zeus and Gaea met with Metis, the daughter of the titans Oceanus and Tethys because she was known to be the

wisest of the goddesses. Metis mixed a drugged drink that would force Kronos' stomach to dislodge its contents and she placed the vial in Zeus' shining hand.

Back at the palace, Rhea slipped the contents of the vial into Kronos' drink. She smiled wryly as he swallowed the liquid and almost immediately doubled over in pain, clutching the fleecy rug on the floor as he vomited up everything in his stomach, including his four immortal children who were now grown and filled with intolerable hatred for their captor. Standing before their father, the four immortals were joined by Poseidon and Zeus who demanded that Kronos surrender his power. Slowly standing on shaky legs, Kronos glared at his wife and children. "NEVER!" he screamed, as he staggered out of the room.

War was declared. Kronos enlisted the support of his Titan brothers and sisters, many of whom fought against the young upstarts. For ten years, the war raged, as both sides were so evenly matched. Finally, Gaea, who had tried to stay out of the war that pitted most of her children against her grandchildren, decided enough was enough. Her oldest sons, the Hundred-Handed Giants and the Cyclopes, had remained imprisoned in Tartarus all of this time. If Zeus and his siblings would agree to free their uncles, Gaea told them they could win the war.

Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were grateful for their grandmother's help and eagerly agreed to make the dangerous journey to help their uncles. Down deep into Tartarus they descended, successfully killing the guards and evading many traps. When they finally reached their uncles, the prisoners' eyes filled with tears of gratitude. They'd thought they'd been forgotten. The Cyclopes were so thankful for their release they not only immediately agreed to help fight in the war, but also gifted the three young gods with glorious tools. To Zeus, they gave the gift of thunder and invincible lightning bolts, securing his ability to rule both the mortal and immortal worlds with unbreakable authority. To Poseidon, they gave a magical trident, a three-speared tool that would allow him to control all of the waters of the world. And to Hades, they gave a helmet of invisibility, allowing him to hide his identity whenever he chose to do so. The intimidating power of the Hundred-Handed Giants was restored after consuming ambrosia that the gods had brought with them, and all agreed to help their nephews conquer

Kronos and his Titan warriors.

Once back in the land of sunlight, the gods and their uncles unleashed a brutal assault on the Titans. Zeus climbed atop Mount Olympus and hurled lightning bolt after lightning bolt upon Kronos and the Titans. The Hundred-Handed Giants ripped mountaintops apart and threw thousands of boulders upon their enemies. The assault was unparalleled and the Titans were not prepared; they were forced to retreat to the land of Tartarus. There, the Cyclopes were waiting and, one by one, lashed the Titans with unbreakable chains, locking them in the underground prison, Kronos among them.

Now that peace has been restored to the earth, the gods made sure the region of Tartarus would be an inescapable prison. Poseidon surrounded it with a tall bronze wall and Zeus asked the Hundred-Handed Giants if they would be willing to serve as the guards of Tartarus. Since they had spent so much of their lives in the dark land and felt more comfortable there than in the sunlight, they agreed, knowing that they could return to the upper-land anytime they wanted.

Then the gods drew lots to determine their realms – Zeus won the sky, Poseidon took the sea, and Hades was given the Underworld. Zeus' rule brought peace and order to the immortal world and he taught humans to treat each other fairly. People who disrespected the gods or each other were punished by Zeus, often in obvious and public ways. Poseidon's powerful trident allowed him to create squalls and even earthquakes, but he also taught mortals how to train horses and build ships. Hades taught humans to have respect for the dead and to conduct proper funeral ceremonies that would allow souls to pass into Elysium, the Greek equivalent of heaven.

Eventually, Zeus married his sister Hera, the goddess of marriage and child birth. Hestia became the guardian of the home and taught mortals how to build houses. And Demeter became the goddess of grain, teaching mankind how to plant and reap a harvest.

The Titans were silenced and the rule of the gods had begun.

Adapted from *Theogony* by Hesiod. Used with permission.

