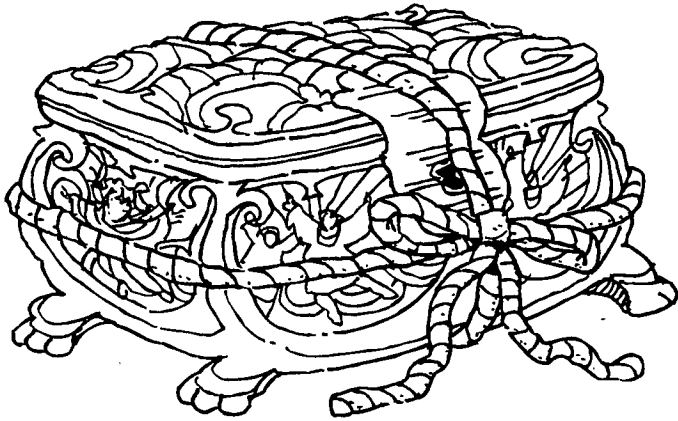


Pandora



When the gods created Pandora, each gave her a special gift. They blessed her with great beauty and happiness. When they finished, the gods agreed that she was almost perfect. She would bring joy to all who lived on the Earth.

“Wait,” a goddess said.

“There is another gift she must have. If she doesn’t want to learn about all the creatures on Earth and all she sees there, she will be bored.” So the goddess added curiosity to Pandora’s gifts.

Before Pandora left the house of the gods, she was given a chest that was tied and locked. Jupiter cautioned her, “Whatever happens, do not open the chest. Keep it locked forever. The contents will bring great unhappiness to the world.”

On Earth, Pandora was loved and admired by everyone. Her laughter and song charmed the birds and animals in the forests. She chose the handsome Epimetheus as her husband. They lived a happy life, dancing and singing with their friends. The chest sat undisturbed in a corner of their house. When visitors came, they commented on the beautiful carvings of the gods that decorated the lid. Many asked to see the inside of the chest, but Pandora explained that it was a gift from the gods that was never to be opened.

“A gift from the gods?” said one. “Then of course it must hold great magic or priceless jewels. No chest should be closed forever.”

Another nodded in agreement. “Surely one quick look would do no harm. No one would know—not even the gods themselves.”

"You spend hours polishing that chest. You think of nothing else," Epimetheus said. "It's better to forget the chest and come walk with us in the forest. We have finished our work for the day. Listen. You can hear the pipes calling everyone to dance."

"It's true," Pandora thought. "I must forget about the chest. Dreaming about it has made me very unhappy."

Pandora left the house with Epimetheus to enjoy the last warm rays of the afternoon sun. But even when she danced, she couldn't forget the chest. While the others ate their evening meal under the trees in the olive grove, Pandora went back to the house. "Just one look," she thought, "and then I'll know. After that I will put it aside and not worry about the treasures inside. If I leave it open for a moment, what harm could come of that?"

Pandora hurried to the chest. She loosened the knots and took a key from the shelf near the chest. Slowly she turned the lock. There were voices coming from inside the chest. "Hurry, Pandora. We have been waiting a long time."

Pandora moved away from the chest. "Who have the gods placed inside the chest?" she wondered. "Surely I didn't hear Jupiter correctly. Perhaps he meant to tell me to open the chest and free the poor creatures inside when I came to Earth." Pandora went back to the chest and worked the key in the lock. When she heard it click, she raised the lid and looked inside. A cloud of biting, stinging insects poured out. Their names were Sorrow, Pain, Evil, Greed, Envy, Despair, Hatred, Poor Health, Distrust, Laziness, and Lies.



Pandora slammed the chest shut, but it was too late. All the Furies had flown out of the chest. They swarmed about Pandora, biting her. She felt angry for the first time in her life. Before she could catch the creatures, they flew out the door and began to attack Epimetheus and his friends.

Epimetheus ran into the house to see if Pandora was safe. "I couldn't wait any longer!" Pandora cried. "I had to open the chest. There were voices inside calling to me. Look what I have done! All who live on Earth will suffer. The gods will never forgive me."

As Pandora sobbed in Epimetheus's arms, she heard another voice coming from the chest. "Pandora, open the chest once more."

"I will not open the chest again. Look what has happened," said Pandora. "There will never be a day of peace on Earth again."

"Pandora," called the voice in the chest. "You must let me out. I am the only one who can help."

"Perhaps you should look inside one more time," said Epimetheus. "It seems that all the harm that can be done has escaped from the chest."

"Pandora," called the voice again. "I will die if I'm left in this chest, and only the Furies will be left to inflict their sorrow on people. Open the chest and I will fly out into the world and end the suffering."

Pandora put her hands on the lid of the chest. She looked at Epimetheus. He nodded, and she opened the chest once more.

A tiny, winged creature flew from the box and perched on Pandora's shoulder. "I am Hope," it said. "When the Furies have caused their harm, I alone can take away the pain. I will fly to all who need my comfort, and they will live in peace once more."

Pandora wiped away her tears, and she and Epimetheus carried Hope out into the world.

