

On Gods and Golden Apples

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Before the three-day venture that turned wood into weaponry, before the deceit and the surrender and the bloodshed incomparable to the 10 years of war that had already passed, before the enemy sailed away in ships with sails like ghosts disappearing into the darkness of night. Before the gods of old immersed themselves in the trivial affairs of man, feet gracing the earth and bringing with them violence and betrayal. Before there was Odysseus and Achilles and Paris and Hector—all with a damning heroism and pride and a desire for vengeance that tore empires apart. Before brothers fell and countries crumbled because of vanity and hate and a golden apple.

Before the war had finally come to an end, with celebration and jubilation. Before the weight that clung to the city of Troy, like the dense smoke after a wildfire, had finally lifted. Before the gates opened to a wooden structure of peace and victory, an offering from a retreating enemy that had finally succumbed to the loss it had faced over the years long battle. Before the last time the sun set peacefully on the city of Troy. Before the enemy attacked under the cover of night, the stars that sparkled in the sky like diamonds the only lights guiding them to their prey. Before there were bodies lining streets and screams that echoed across empty alleyways, there was a brief moment of peace. There were smiles and cries of victory. Troy had won; the Greeks had lost. The gods of legend, the same gods that were praised and loved for years by the same people of whom they destroyed, fought against each other. They finally saw fit to fight in the war they had started. Poseidon and Athena and Aphrodite. There was dancing and singing and parades that filled the streets of Troy. The air was fresher. The sunset held a promise for a better and brighter tomorrow. No more men would die at the hands of the enemy. No more brothers would weep for their sisters, no more sons would cry for their mothers, no more fathers would dream of their lost sons. Before the Greek subterfuge, the three days that signaled the Trojan win were full of hope and peace and happiness.

After the third night of euphoria the sun never seemed to rise.

After the wooden structure that was once considered a symbol of peace and victory opened to reveal its true, darker intent; after Odysseus and his crew stormed the city like the Vikings of old; after blood flowed along the streets like water after a hard rain, the city was quiet. Women and children wept in silence. Men lay dead, eyes open like the wounds in their chest left by enemy slaughter. After the mayhem and the destruction broke not only the ancient architecture and the cultural history, but also the spirits of the city's inhabitants, there were no words that could be said. No noise

could quell the fear. No sound could give meaning to the slaughter that demolished the once victorious empire. For years, Troy would never be the same. For years, this place would never know the hope and happiness that came with those three days of elation, those three days that gave an empire the means and the fight to live on, to persevere, to grow. For years, no Trojan would ever look at a horse the same.