

'Well, thunder and lightning!' Zeus roared. 'I scheduled this meeting for 11 o'clock. It is now five past eleven and half the gathering is still missing!' He looked furiously at those present.

'Well, at least you are on time. Really, this is tempting the Gods!'

Persephone, the woman who was sitting behind him in the second ring, soothed him.

'Calm down Zeus, they will be here in a minute!'

Influenced by her summery radiance, Zeus lowered himself into his seat. They had all looked surprised when Zeus had walked into the conference room with Persephone, because normally his wife accompanied him on these occasions.

He watched their expressions.

'Now let's see.'

Zeus pulled the attendance list towards him and wrote the status of their absence or presence behind their names that he read out loud.

'Aphrodite, absent. Apollo, present. Athena, absent. Ares, present. Artemis, absent. Demeter, absent. Dionysus, present. Eros, present. Hades, present. Hephaestus, absent. Hera, absent. Hermes, present. Poseidon, present. Zeus, present. The following seconds are present: Piri and Persephone, with a score of a hundred per cent because for this meeting no others were invited. I will wait for ten minutes more.' He was trying to calm down.

'All the absentees are women with the exception of one. Damn...always trouble with those women.'

Zeus was staring pensively into the distance, and was deliberating in his mind what could have made the women so annoyingly late.

'Eros, do you know what is keeping your mother, Aphrodite?' Zeus asked, but Eros shook his head.

'Ares, where is Aphrodite?'

'No idea,' was his answer.

It had been a well-known fact for some time that these two were more or less having a relationship, so Zeus did not think his question was that strange.

This morning Zeus had quarrelled seriously with his wife Hera. Probably the reason for her absence, and undoubtedly for the same reason she kept their son Hephaestus away from the meeting. Then again, Hephaestus was crippled, so it was possible he was still on his way.

Zeus did not need to ask Poseidon what was keeping Athena. These two were always fighting nowadays. This was also the reason her seat was not next to Poseidon's.

11.16 hours.

In high spirits, the goddesses Aphrodite, Athena, Artemis, Demeter and Hera entered the conference room. Zeus was outraged and immediately ended the cheerful chatter with his booming voice.

'Hell and damnation! You are more than fifteen minutes late!'

In silence and grace the women nestled themselves in their seats. Finally Zeus started to speak, when the door was opened one more time.

It was Hephaestus, who excused himself.

‘Sorry, Dad, it took me more time than I expected.’

His hideously ugly and crippled son dragged his tormented body to his adjusted chair. His father sighed once more and began.

‘Okay, all fourteen are here, so finally we start but next time those who are late will merciless be placed in the second row.’

Zeus saw their startled faces and knew this was not something they would look forward to. On the second ring, you were only allowed to speak during meetings when you were asked a question. Sitting on the second row, meant quite a degradation.

This is a good decision, Zeus thought. Next meeting, everyone will be punctual. ‘The most important purpose of this meeting is to inform you on the progress of our journey to Terrade II. In addition, I will give each of you your specific tasks, so next week you can prepare yourselves for your personal purposes for this journey. A week is not long, but when we have landed on Terrade II, we will have to build it all up from scratch, so a week is long enough.’

Zeus took a short break and a sip of water. He resumed his speech with a short repetition of the preceding.

‘For a millennium now, we have been on our way from our planet Terrade to Terrade II. We have suffered no inconvenience or nuisance, because all that time you have

been asleep. I was awakened automatically every month to check if everything was still going according to plan and this has now brought us safely to a week's distance from Terrade II.' Everyone cheered, which pleased Zeus. He was not only a god, but also ambitious.

'A month ago you were awakened. As if no time has passed between the moment of falling asleep and waking up, you have ranted and raged at each other as of old. This was to be expected. And it is inevitable, because we have such diverse personalities on board. When we left our planet, you knew that we could never return there. You have accepted this enormous responsibility. This is a great honour. So behave yourselves accordingly! During our journey, we are no longer under the influence of the gravity of our planet and that is why we have not aged a day in the last 1,000 years. It will stay this way. Members of the Divine Committee, including Piri, have eternal life and most of you are in your thirtieth year. But be careful! We have eternal life, but we can be murdered or killed and then it is So we are emphatically NOT immortal. I will no longer keep you in tension and proceed with the division of tasks. Every task is specifically selected for you based on character and ability.'

Zeus built the tension a bit further by taking another sip of water. His audience looked at him tensely. Finally, the task appointed to them would be announced. Zeus cleared his throat and continued, 'I will mention all your names with job descriptions in alphabetical order.

'APHRODITE, you will be the goddess of love and beauty. I don't need to give any further description. Love and beauty, you were always good at those.' Zeus winked at her.

APOLLO, God of light, medicine and divination. You are a versatile god. Fulfil your task with zeal and good luck to you!

ARES, god of war, your assignment is based on your combativeness. I don't think this is completely justified, but still, wars will and must always exist. That is how we keep the growth of the population in check. Keep in mind that you will not be very popular on Terrade II.

ARTEMIS, as twin sister of Apollo, you will be the goddess of the hunt by bow and arrow. Bow and arrow have been chosen because the simple souls we will encounter at the beginning on Terrade II are not yet ready for more advanced weapons.

ATHENA, goddess of war, wisdom, knowledge, artists and craftsmen, this is a rather broad and extensive assignment. You are not as fierce as Ares but you can be quite temperamental, which is why you have become the goddess of war.

DEMETER, goddess of agriculture and mainly of cereal, this is a short description, but no less important. Cereals are going to be the basic nourishment for all inhabitants of Terrade II.

DIONYSUS, god of animals, plants and of course, drinking; the last one is a favourite of yours. I knew that.

EROS, god of love, you are going to assist your mother Aphrodite in helping people fall in love. Make sure you listen to your mother, you little rascal.

HADES, god of the underworld, just like on our home Terrade, we cannot escape from you. It has to be this way, and I know you will take this task very seriously. Anyway, good luck with your assignment.

HEPHAESTUS, god of fire and forging, for now, dear boy, you are only given simple technology. After all, we are 11,000 to 13,000 years ahead of a more or less advanced civilisation. There will be more developments on Terrade II, but for now, you must keep a low profile.

HERA, my pride and goddess of marriage; you know better than anyone else how important marriage is.'

Eyebrows were raised. What was Zeus saying now? Marriage important? Well, he'd better set an example himself. He took advantage of every woman he could lay his hands on. Zeus saw the raised eyebrows, but he did not respond. He wanted to make up with his wife after this morning's fight, so she would lie with him tonight. After all, he had no flirtation in mind for tonight anyway. Zeus took another sip and reached the conclusion of the first item on the agenda.

'HERMES, god of mutual communication between gods and goddesses, but as this is a rather limited task, you will also deal with thieves and trade. The last one will undoubtedly keep you busy.

POSEIDON, god of the sea; well, Poseidon, old friend, water is the most important element on Terrade II, so you can rule till your heart's content.

It is possible that more gods and goddesses will join us, but they can only come from our own ranks, and they will be based on what we encounter as we go along. Each of us can

propose new gods and goddesses to the council, and everyone has the right to veto. Altogether, we consist of almost 100 members, so undoubtedly there will be more talents among us. Then finally, the last one is me. ZEUS is supreme god and god of thunder and lightning, so beware!’

A small and harmless thunderbolt was released from his wand. He had also spoken in a menacing tone, and he was disappointed to see it had missed its purpose. All those present were whispering excitedly with each other, and Zeus noticed their exhilaration and intonation. They all seemed very happy with their assignments.

‘All right,’ Zeus said, ‘I propose a short break so we can all relax and enjoy a sip of water. After that, we’ll continue with the latest news on Terrade II. Cheers!’ Zeus raised his glass and the audience responded with the same gesture. Seats were pushed back and everyone stretched their legs. The ladies were exited. Most of all, Aphrodite. She immediately fulfilled her task by flirting openly with Ares. Zeus did not approve this. What on earth was the goddess of love doing with the god of war? Zeus did not understand, but he tempered his opinion when Aphrodite stroked his hideous and crippled son Hephaestus over the head.

After fifteen minutes, Zeus tapped his glass and got the desired attention. Seats were drawn up again, because everyone was very curious where this long trip was leading to.

‘Ladies and Gentlemen, we have now arrived at the explanation of Terrade II. When we left our planet, we had

already mapped precisely where our journey was going to. However, due to the location of our own planet in relation to Terrade II, we could only see part of this planet. It turns around its sun in this solar system. Terrade II also turns around its own axis with a velocity of 24 hours per day. So this coincides completely with what we are used to. Piri, our cartographer, will now continue this explanation.’ Zeus nodded towards Piri, who set a hologram in motion with a simple gesture of his hand, depicting the solar system they were now crossing.

‘Look,’ Piri said, ‘Terrade II is the only planet in this solar system on which life is possible. It is almost a copy of our own planet as far as life circumstances are concerned and it took a long time to find such an ideal and still reasonably unharmed planet. Terrade II has a North and a South Pole. We cannot see the North Pole and on the South Pole, there is only ice. What we could see 1,000 years ago was this large island that turns around the ice surface of the South Pole. When we left, we already knew quite a lot about this island, like size, surface condition, humidity and quality of oxygen. I have charted all this meticulously prior to our journey. Big animals were and are on this island, which look a bit similar to the mammoth that we know from our history.

Well, a month ago, I made another study and I have discovered that this large island with mammoths has moved quite a distance towards the axis of Terrade II. Simultaneously the ice surface on the South Pole has melted for a large part and has shifted, as you can see. It is my conclusion that this

island will shortly reach the axis of Terrade II and will be completely covered with ice. Any questions so far?’

Piri looked at his audience, but there were no questions. So his explanation had been clear.

‘Okay, no questions, so I can proceed. First, it had been our intention to land on this island, but in view of the change of the situation, we have abandoned this plan. Because of this shift and other shifts, we now have a better idea of what this planet has to offer. Now two continents are partly visible on the planet. In between an ocean and in its middle, more to the north, a large island which we have now chosen as our new destination. We call this ocean the Atlantic Ocean, because we have this at home too. The surface condition of this new island is satisfactory, but we presume the surface crust is thin. I have seen a number of volcanoes on this island. This is lucky because it makes the island fertile. So this will be our destination. Still no questions?’

‘Yes, I do,’ Apollon said. ‘Do we have a name for this island yet?’

‘Yes,’ Piri said, ‘we call it Atlantis.’

For a moment, everyone was quiet, and then they all started talking at the same time. Zeus put a stop to it in his own way that could not be misunderstood – by tapping his wand on the ground.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, I have an important housekeeping notice. Then we proceed to the snacks and drinks. In a week, we land on Atlantis and we will never leave it, at least not through space. After three days, our spaceship will destroy itself and there will be no traces of it to be found. I

recommend everyone to take their personal belongings with them when we abandon ship and to get started with our duties straight away.'

Zeus ended with 'good luck' at the very moment that the drinks and snacks were wheeled in.