

6: The Olympians

Before the world began there was only chaos. Out of this swirling void the first beings emerged. The most powerful of these beings was Gaia - the Earth mother.



She created the land, the seas, the mountains and trees. She fell in love with the God of the stars and planets - Ouranos.



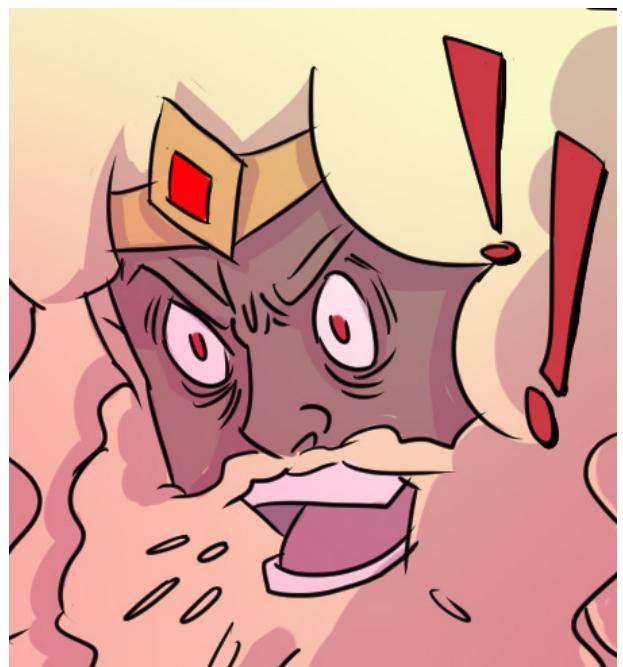
Ouranos and Gaia ruled as king and queen of the universe.

They had many weird and wonderful children: twelve gods, called the Titans; three one-eyed giants, called the Cyclopes; and three creatures called the Hecatoncheires, each with fifty heads and one hundred hands.



Gaia loved all of her strange offspring, but Ouranos felt a little differently.

'They're all monsters!' he screamed.





He banished the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires to Tartarus - the Underworld.

Gaia was horrified. She asked her Titan son, Kronos, to fight Ouranos and take the throne.



Kronos chased Ouranos down with a scythe and then made himself King in place of his mean father.

Gaia asked Kronos to release her children from the Underworld. But Kronos was scared of them, just like his father had been. So Gaia cursed Kronos to be overthrown by one of his own children.



Kronos and his wife Rhea became king and queen. They had six children of their own, all gods and goddesses. But Kronos had heard Gaia's curse that one of his children would overthrow him. So, naturally, he decided to eat each child at birth.



He swallowed the first five babies whole, but his wife Rhea switched their youngest child - Zeus - for a rock. Kronos didn't notice and swallowed the rock whole.





Rhea hid Zeus away in the caves of Mount Ida. Over the years the young god Zeus grew strong, clever, brave - and a big bushy beard! He and his mother Rhea plotted to get rid of Kronos.

Zeus, disguised as a servant, gave Kronos a poisoned glass of wine.



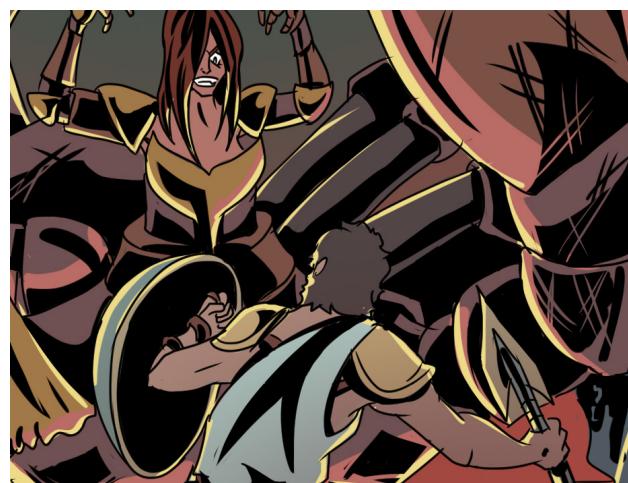
Kronos was sick, and out popped Zeus' five brothers and sisters - now fully grown - having lived for years in Kronos' tummy. They were immortal after all!

Zeus was as angry as a lightning bolt. He and his brothers and sisters declared war on Kronos and the Titans. The world shook for ten years as gods and goddesses fought.



Gaia wanted peace and told Zeus that if he travelled to Tartarus - the Underworld - and freed the Cyclopes and the Hecatoncheires he could win the war with their help.

Zeus did just that, freeing them by battling past Kampe, the guardian of Tartarus - a monster with a female head and the body of a scorpion.



The Cyclopes were so grateful they gave Zeus and his two brothers gifts to help them defeat Kronos and the Titans. Poseidon was given a powerful trident; Hades was given a special invisibility helmet; and Zeus was given thunderbolts to throw.



With their new weapons - and joined by the Hecatoncheires and the Cyclopes - they fought one last mighty battle.

Kronos and the Titans were defeated. Most were imprisoned in the Underworld, to be guarded by the Hecatoncheires.



Those that fought against Zeus and his army were punished. The Titan, Atlas, was forced to hold up the skies on his shoulders for eternity, to stop them from falling to Earth.



Zeus and his brothers and sisters settled on Mount Olympus where they became rulers of the universe, known as the Olympians. They sat back and began to think about what they should do with the world and what sort of creatures they should fill it with...but that's another story for another day.

