

About Prometheus and The Others

I am Prometheus. Well, maybe I haven't proved myself as such yet, but I will. And my real name is not Prometheus, even though if I could turn back the time, I would force my parents to call me that. I'm Sameera. Yes, I am a girl. So what? Who said that Prometheus always has to be a man? Sure, so far the position has been reserved for the weaker sex, but that only makes my mission more challenging. In fact, I even had a dream in which I was Prometheus! I know that I somehow sacrificed for the humanity; the problem is that I don't remember how. It will come back to me. It'd better. To be quite honest, I don't have any other ideas on how to sacrifice. After all, it is not easy to be Prometheus.

First, let me tell you how I discovered my mission. I was fifteen, sitting on a literature class in high school, attentively listening to the teacher. We were doing mythology. When I heard the myth of the brave Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and gave it to people on earth, I shivered. Well, maybe not exactly, but it was somewhat impressive. I remember the teacher say that Prometheus is now a symbol of an ultimate self-sacrifice for the good of mankind. To most of my classmates those were empty words. Actually, they meant very little to me too. But a few days later my mum, who is a literature teacher herself, brought a mythology book home. I opened it randomly, and I couldn't believe my eyes – Prometheus was there, on his way to the sun, with a mission of devoting himself to earth. Now, I'm not that naïve to think that with such coincidence my destiny was revealed, but I do know that it was a sign. How could I possibly ignore it? I grabbed the book, ran to my room and read the whole story. That's when I first thought that I want to be like him. Surely, after over 2000 thousand years the world needs a follower, I convinced myself.

“Mum, I know who I’m going to be in the future,” I exclaimed from my room.

“Yes, I’m listening,” she shouted.

“Prometheus.”

“What?”

“The world needs another Prometheus. It’s me.”

She came into my room and stared. She heard me say that I want to be an actress, a model, a journalist. But this was something brand new. Or rather, antique, considering how long ago my idol had lived.

“Yes, Prometheus is certainly a wonderful inspiration. What exactly are you going to do,” she asked and viewed me with a smile. She was always very supportive of my plans, but than again, I was only fifteen then, so she didn’t take it all that seriously.

“I will sacrifice. For the people. Unless you’ve heard of someone else take his place.” My mum was a great source of knowledge about the world. When I asked her the question, I was praying that she would say no.

“Well, there have been a few people after him.”

I trembled. I wanted to be the only one. Let’s see who my competitors were, I thought.

“Who???”

“Honey, you have a long way before you. You’ll discover them yourself.”

“But I don’t have time!”

“Sure you do. There is always time to do something good.”

“You mean, they all did different things.”

“Yes. And that makes it a very subjective issue.”

I couldn't understand why she wouldn't tell me. Maybe she wanted to delay the moment of my sacrifice. Maybe she was worried that I would get there too soon. Anyway, at least I knew that I wasn't alone. I decided to find out what the rest did, and then come up with something so enormously big and original, that all the others who made the sacrifices would go pale and withdraw their contributions to the mankind.

"Mum, where they all male?"

"The best known ones - yes."

That's how I found out that there wasn't a female Prometheus yet. That was another sign that I should become one.

Even though the uninteresting math and science homework stood on my way to focus on the research, I kicked it out of the road, knowing that my future sacrifice would outshine all the equations and inventions put all together. Besides, Prometheus never went to school, I reminded myself and started looking around the home library. What my mum told me, about the others who were given the honor of being called with the name of the mythological hero, spoiled my mood. But I couldn't stop. What if Prometheus decided not to steal the fire? What if I was to do something big and if I gave up, I would cause an enormous loss to the world? Thoughts were flying in my head. I picked up many books, but my plan seemed to be failing. Where can I find traces of the greatest heroes? "Everywhere," was my mum's advice. Surely, there has to be a quicker way to find their names out, I thought. And even though I grew impatient, I also was sleepy, and so I went to bed hoping that the next day would solve my mystery.

The following day, my first class due was religion. Let's get this straight: I never considered myself Catholic, but I did attend the religion class. Not because I was a hypocrite,

but because in my country, where over ninety percent of the population is Catholic, that class was obligatory. Anyway, the nun was okay, except for the fact that she was obsessed with us remembering the lines of the Bible by heart. Strangely enough, another sign appeared to me on that class. The nun was talking about Jesus Christ “who sacrificed his life for the people’s sins.” I almost jumped when I heard it.

“Sister, so Jesus is an imitator of Prometheus!”

Everyone looked at me as if I said something wrong. Including the nun.

“My child, Jesus Christ didn’t imitate anyone. He is the greatest man that ever lived. He is the son of God. You cannot compare Him with some pagan figure from the myth!”

She smiled at me pleasantly, at the same time letting me know that the discussion was over.

“Jesus lived two thousand years ago,” I said out of the blue, as it seemed. The nun agreed with my remark and opened the Bible on some passage.

“So he lived after Prometheus!” I exclaimed, more to myself than to her, but loudly enough for everyone to hear it.

She looked terrified. She closed her Bible and took a closer look at me.

“How dare you say that?”

She raised her voice. She told me never to speak of it again. She said it was a sin.

“You will memorize a psalm. See me after class about this assignment. And I will talk to your mother.”

I didn’t say anything more. Later, she told my mum, who was conveniently working in the same school, that I was rebelling against God, and that I was contradicting the fundamental truths of our religion. My mum wasn’t a material for a nun either, so all she told me was to respect all viewpoints, even if I didn’t agree with them.

“He is the Prometheus the Second, isn’t he? Jesus, I mean.”

“What do you think?”

“Yes.”

Of course, how could I not think of it? Jesus, the messiah, was crucified; he died for human sins. Fine, I thought, so maybe he does deserve to be called Prometheus, but just because he died, doesn’t mean that he deserves a bigger publicity than Prometheus. In fact, my mythological hero was severely punished for his actions: angry Zeus chained him to a rock where an eagle pecked out his liver every day. Now that’s what I call suffering.

“Mum, does every Prometheus have to suffer?” I asked while looking over some writing assignment for school.

“Anyone who is ready to make big sacrifices must also be ready to face the consequences,” she said and went back to her lecture. I knew she was busy, preparing something for the morning class, so I left it at that.

In bed, I wondered how much I would have to suffer. Was I ready for it? I didn’t want to die. I was fifteen. I could see the front pages of the world’s biggest newspapers: New York Times with my photo in that purple dress that I got for Christmas, The London Times announcing the birth and death of a new Prometheus, The >>>> crying over the loss of a young Sameera who sacrificed her life for the world by doing... Oh, by doing what? I was stuck again. What can I do, I kept on asking myself desperately.

The next few days passed along with far too many tests and too much homework. My mum told me that I could be whoever I wanted to be, but that there was no point in cutting off school, and she was right. And since I had no clue where to look for the next hero, I took her advice to be patient and in the meantime enjoy my life. After all, I was a teenager.

A teenager predestined to be the savior of mankind. For some reason, no one believed me. My friends laughed at my ideas; not in a mean, critical way, but gently they turned the whole mythology issue into a jock. And it didn't help when I told them that one day they would be grateful to me. I liked their company, but since I discovered my destiny, I didn't hang out with them that much anymore. From a normal fifteen year old girl I turned into a determined human being. While others thought about going out for an ice cream, I was planning on how to conquer the world. I didn't despise my classmates; and yet I felt that they were not able to comprehend the task that I was to take. My boyfriend was even worse (By saying boyfriend I mean a good looking, seventeen year old high school senior whom I saw after school sometimes).

"Sameera, you might try to fool the rest of your friends, but you won't fool me, and you won't fool yourself. Stop this nonsense," he said when sitting next to me on a school bench.

"I'm not pretending. I really will do something great."

"You're going crazy. Who the hell is that guy anyway?"

"Someone you'll never be," I said and stood up.

"Do I know him? I mean, is he around?" he got up too and put his hands into his pockets. I laughed in his face.

"Okay, I give up. How about doing something fun? That Saturday party at Dan's house – you're still coming, right?"

"I'd love to, but I just remembered that I can't. I have a date with Prometheus. Sorry!" And I ran off. What a jerk! I need a man who will not only understand me, but also support me in my decisions, I thought. So a good look is not everything, after all.

More days passed and there were no more signs. I tortured mum to reveal the other names of the “competitors,” but she kept on saying that it was up to me to decide who I want to call that. Eventually, I stopped torturing her and waited patiently for some secret message that would be sent from the stars. The message came; not right after, but almost three months later. I started to lose hope, especially while being distracted by the beautifully tragic love of Romeo and Juliet (In fact, I was close to breaking up with Prometheus, and taking up a role of the romantic Juliet!) That day the English teacher assigned reading of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. I always loved reading, so as soon as I got home, I opened the book and there it was, the title: “Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus.” I couldn’t believe my eyes. I stared at the page as if I saw a ghost. I found the third Prometheus! Who was he? Doctor Frankenstein, created a human being, or rather a monster, and afterwards run away, unable to face the consequences of his actions. Is that what a modern Prometheus is to be like? Play God and then abandon his own invention? Sure, Frankenstein wanted to contribute to mankind by creating an almost immortal, and definitely long-lasting life, but he himself couldn’t handle the responsibility of being God. In other words, he failed as Prometheus. Therefore, I decided not to put him on the list. I must admit, however, that the plan itself was brilliant.

“Mum, how many Prometheuses have you discovered,” I asked that night.

“I’ve lost count. But there is always a room for a new one.”

“But how will I know that I’m not repeating something that someone else has already done? I need to know all of them,” I raised my voice. I felt like crying, because suddenly I realized that I might never be able to fulfill my mission.

"Sameera, whatever sacrifice you make for people, it cannot be repeated," she said slowly and clearly, as if letting me know that it was an important message. And it was.

A few years have passed since that night. I thought about it a lot. I'm not that obsessed anymore. And I do realize that my chances of stealing fire or dying on the cross or even creating human life are rather slim. But I still believe that I can be Prometheus. In fact, I believe that everyone can be one. Even if it's just for one day. Even if it's just a small sacrifice. At first, I thought that I had to do something big, on the scale of Prometheus. But now I know that the world is in need of all those small sacrifices. Small, but for a person in need it will be like stealing fire from the gods.

"Sameera," Olivia interrupted my thoughts, "I don't know how to prepare for my French test. I've missed a few classes because of my cold, and now I'm totally behind the rest."

"I'll help you," I said.

"But you were supposed to go home and read that book. Something about that Greek hero."

Okay, I said that I wasn't that obsessed anymore, but I still kept on looking for those who followed in Prometheus's footsteps. I was reading *Crime and Punishment*. Of course, Raskolnikov committed a crime, but he believed that by killing the old mean woman he would give people a favor and.... well, I won't go there.

"That can wait. I'll meet you at four."

Olivia looked at me as if I had just saved her life. And maybe I did.