

Prometheus 1.1

a music drama based on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*

book and lyrics by Mary-Kay Gamel
music by Ralph Denzer

Prometheus 1.1

Dramatis Personae

Power, head of Zeus' secret police
 Violence, his assistant
 Hephaestus, a skilled metalworker
 Prometheus, formerly an important advisor to Zeus
 Human beings
 Daughters and Sons of Oceanus
 Oceanus ("the Admiral"), a member of the old order, now retired
 Io, a human girl
 Hermes, Zeus' aide and spokesman

The first performances of *Prometheus 1.1* took place at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Jun 4-7 1998. The production also toured to UC Berkeley and UC Davis. The production was directed by Greg Fristch, with original choreography by Tyffyne Stuart.

Power Reuben Sears
 Violence Justin M. LaneLutter
 Hephaestus Brendan McMullen
 Prometheus Drew Saenz-Hudson
 Chorus . . . Shira Burstein, Dorothy Cosby, Sol Crawford, Amy Dietz,
 Julie Douglas, Colleen Fischer, Steven Gillenwater, Lorinne Lampert,
 Devon Maitozo, Sophia Marzocchi, Daranee Oakley, Katie O'Bryon,
 Peter Pincosy, Corey Saucier, Anna-Marie vanderZee, Jessica Wright
 Oceanus Peter Kreder
 Io Ariela Morgenstern
 Hermes Kevin Whittinghill

A car makes its way as people are heard lamenting in the darkness. Power and Violence hustle Prometheus in, followed by Hephaestus carrying his tools. P. is dressed like an academic, in sport coat and tie, blindfolded, with his hands tied and a rope around his neck. They pull P. along, make fun of him with coarse humor. When they arrive in the spot, Power looks around.

Power. All right, we've gone far enough.
 This place will do.
 On the fringes, remote from the center of power.
 Not a place where anyone comes.
 Not a good location for further subversion.

5

Takes P's glasses and crushes them underfoot.

You won't be needing these any more.

They roughly strip Prometheus down to his shorts, then stand back and appraise his body.

Power. Doesn't seem so intellectual now.
Look at that delicate skin!

Violence. Just like a girl.

Power. A little bit too brown, though, don't you think?

Violence. I don't know. Not if you like dark meat. 10

They laugh. Prometheus shows no response.

Power. Hephaestus, time for you to carry out
the orders Zeus gave you: "Take this traitor
who obeys no one else's will but his.
Bind him in chains no one can ever break."

Hephaestus doesn't move.

Well? 15
It was your prize he stole.
Fire—the key to every craft.
He just handed it over to human beings.
For that crime
he's got a penalty to pay.

Violence. To the gods! 20

Power. So he'll be taught
to quit his human-loving ways,
and learn to love our leader—mighty Zeus.

Violence (sniggers). I'll bet he knows how to do that already.

Power (with obscene meaning). Sure. That's how he wormed his way to the top . 25

Violence (close to P). You little cocksucker, you think you're such hot shit.
Now you finally got what you had coming.

Heph (interrupts). Stop it! Power and Violence,
what Zeus ordered you have carried out.
There's nothing keeping you here any longer. 30

He hopes they'll leave. They don't.

Me, I'm not so eager.
Using force,
chaining up a member of my own family,
here in this weather-beaten place. . .

They look at him amazed. Is he going to refuse his orders?

But I know I have to have the heart for it. 35
It's no light matter to take lightly
a command laid on me by Father Zeus himself.

Turns to Prometheus. H. hopes that P. will recant before he is put into chains.

Neither of us wants this to happen, Prometheus.
[sings]

I don't want to do it
but I have no choice 40
You'll see no human face
hear no human voice

Have to use my art
as if I had no heart

Frost will freeze your flesh 45
sun will burn your skin
when the stars come out
the cycle starts again

Have to use my art
as if I had no heart 50

The present's only pain
The future nothing new
time just wears you down
no one can rescue you

Have to use my art 55
as if I had no heart

Power (interrupts) Why are you singing a lullaby for this guy?
Don't waste your energy. Won't do any good.

Heph. We're related. That must count for something.

Power Sure. But how can you disobey Lord Zeus? 60
Aren't you more afraid of the consequences?

Heph. You never change. Always hard as a rock.

Power. Why're you stalling? And feeling sorry for him?
How come you don't share the other gods' hate?
After all, it was your craft he stole. 65

Heph. [looking at his tools] My handiwork! How I hate it now!

Power. Why should you hate it? You aren't to blame—he is.
Use your skill to carry out your orders.

Heph. I just wish someone else—anyone—had to do this.

Power. Every job's a drag—with one exception: 70
ruling with absolute power over others.
Cheer up! We're all on the same level here.
No one is free except for Zeus himself.

Heph. [holding up the chains] These make that clear. I won't contradict you.

Power. Get going, then! Wrap the chains around him! 75
Watch out—Zeus might see you taking it easy.

Heph. All right. Here's his harness, plain to see.

Starts to work, trying to ignore Power's orders.

Power. Whip it around his hands. Hard! Use
your hammer! Pin him to the rock!

Heph. The work's proceeding. It's not standing still. 80

Power. Pound harder! Tighten the screws! No slacking off!
This guy's slick at getting out of tight spots.

Heph. This arm's tied tight. No way to loosen it.

Power. So pin the other one. Let the professor learn 85
he may be smart, but not as smart as Zeus.

Heph. No one would find fault with my work—except him.

Power. Stop being so gentle. He needs to feel it.

Power motions to Violence, who grabs Hephaestus' power drill and drills it into Prometheus' chest. As this happens Hephaestus, not Prometheus, screams with pain.

Heph. Aaaah!
Prometheus, you're tortured but I scream!

Power. There you go again, snivelling over Zeus' enemies! 90
Watch out you don't start crying for yourself.

Hephaestus realizes that if he doesn't do the job Prometheus will suffer more. He takes the Makita back and continues.

Heph. Here's the cruel spectacle you designed.

Power. I see someone getting what he deserves.
Now cinch up his ribs. Neigh, little horsey!

Heph. I know I have to do it. Stop giving me orders! 95

Power. I'll order you, and I won't whisper either!
Now you bend down and chain his legs. With force!

Heph. All right. The job's done. Short work—for me.

Power. Not yet. Drive bolts through the chains.
The supervisor of this job is a real stickler. 100
[emphasizes the word with obscene gesture]

Heph. Your words are just as ugly as you are.

Power. You be a pussy if you want. But don't
criticize me for being a real man.

Heph. His whole body's chained up now. Let's go. [leaves]

Power (to P.) Now keep on playing your role of criminal here. 105

Rips off blindfold, takes rope off P's neck and throws it to the ground.

Strip the gods' rights to give to human beings.
Which one of them will bail you out of this pain?
You've got the wrong name, Mr. Forethought.
Forethink how you'll wriggle out of here.

Power and Violence leave.

Once they are gone, Prometheus, lifts his head, listens, uses his senses, trying to find out where he is.
This is an unfamiliar activity. He is used to using his vision, intellect, analytical skills.

Prometheus. Where is this? 110
Where have they put me?

He registers sounds, weather—whatever is actually happening.

Outside . . . trees . . .
I feel
feathers of wind on my skin . . .
No light in the sky . . . 115
What time is it?
Is that a spring I hear?
A creek?
The ocean must be near by . . .

But I can't see its thousand sparkling smiles. 120

He tests the limits of his chains, perhaps tries to break free, gives up defeated;
Gradually he senses the presence of the audience.

I feel someone out there. Watching.
Who?
Guards? Or friends?
Help me!

They don't. Defeated, he cries out in anguish.

Mother Earth, who creates every thing! 125
You, great circling Sky who sees all this!
Look what I suffer at the will of Zeus!

Organizes his feelings into a structure, and sings.

See the torture invented for me
Pain like a rake's tines scours my skin
Won't stop for a thousand years 130
A contest I can never win

A new dictator commands the gods
Unjustly binds me in this chain
Present and future agony—
Is there no end to this pain? 135

breaks off and speaks

Wait. I know the answer.
I know precisely what is going to happen.
It's all been decided.
I ought to make it easy on myself.
I know there's no use fighting what has to be. 140
Should I call to Zeus and ask forgiveness?

No! I can't!
I'm treated like a criminal,
but what I did was just!
Only Zeus the tyrant finds me guilty! 145

The events he describes are staged with movement and music. This is a flashback. Gods are beautiful, elegant, relaxed; humans are a robotic chain gang, silent, working at some repetitive, mechanical, degrading task.

Once upon a time there were only gods.
We lived serenely up there in our palace.
Witty conversation, exquisite food,
Apollo playing virtuoso music.

Nothing met our eyes that was not lovely. 150
 Nothing disturbed our monumental pleasure
 except, every now and then, a touch of boredom.

One day we decided to create mortal creatures—
 human beings to serve and worship us,
 animals too, of all kinds, insects, fish. 155
 Some got hairy pelts, or thick, hard skin.
 Some got strength, some got teeth and claws,
 others speed to run away if attacked.
 To the little ones we gave the power to fly,
 or to slither out of sight. So far, so good. 160

But the human race had no defenses.
 Naked, they shivered in the open air.
 They had no homes. Crawled underground like ants.
 They had intelligence, but didn't know it. 165
 They could see, but not understand what they saw.
 They could hear, but to them sounds had no meaning.
 They didn't understand the passing of time, the seasons.
 They never knew what was going to happen next.

The gods didn't care.
 From our divine perspective this made sense. 170
 Towards us nothing but fear and obedience.
 No dissension. No time-wasting discussions.
 Highly efficient production. Nice profit margins.
 And if the human race wore out, we gods
 could just conduct another experiment, 175
 improve our skill in genetic engineering.

I thought this situation was not just.
 I wanted to change it.
 And I knew one thing that could. 180
 Fire!
 The spark of intelligence!
 The warmth of hope!

Dance sequence: Prometheus gives fire to the humans, who in the light recognize one another, join together, escape their slavery. Gods confront Prometheus.

That was my crime. That's why I'm being punished.
 I helped humans break free of the gods' control.
 Now they could think for themselves, and plan together, 185
 make shelter, find meaning and beauty in their lives.

But I'm nailed here,
 blinded, exposed,
 alone.

A sound. Prometheus is again terrified, trying desperately to understand what is happening.

What is it? What? 190
 A sound . . . a smell . . . Why can't I see it!
 Sent by the gods? Human? Or android?
 Coming to this outskirt—why?
 Witnesses to my suffering? Or what?

The daughters and sons of Oceanus, rich, spoiled teenagers, enter, excited, laughing. They spread out and examine the place, commenting in song. Though related, the members of the chorus have different opinions and do not think, move, or speak as a single unit.

What's this place? 195
 I don't know
 I've never been
 here before

What is this? 200
 I've never seen
 such an ugly
 old machine

What's that thing 205
 right over there
 shivering in
 the open air

That's no thing 210
 Who is he?
 He's in pain
 can't you see?

Being punished? 215
 Take a look
 He's too cute
 to be a crook

Won't he speak?
 Is he in shock?
 Let's go closer
 and get him to talk

They speak to Prometheus

Whoever you are, don't worry! We're friendly! 220
 That pounding came piercing right into our ears
 Went echoing all through our big seaside mansion
 We got so excited we had to come here

	Oceanus, our father, objected, as usual Said we had to stay out of harm's way Away from this risky political matter He wanted to stop us but we raced away	235
Prometheus [sings]	Oh, I'm the enemy of Zeus the tyrant a god impaled by brutal fate The other gods all side with <u>him</u> applaud their lord and master's hate	240
Oceanids.	I know who that is! Prometheus! But he's a god he's one of us	245
	Looks like a fish hung out to dry I'm feel scared I want to cry	
Prom. [sings]	See how I've been stationed here, pinned like a rag in parts unknown No one wants the job assigned to me keeping watch over myself alone	250
Oceanids.[sing]	A new pilot's steering the universe now New laws legislate what's wrong and what's right The Powers that once were now are no longer Lord Zeus makes sure that they're kept out of sight	255
Prometheus.	I wish he had kept <u>me</u> out of sight! hurled me savagely down to Hell That's where I'd rather be tonight chained in a dark and gloomy cell	260
	Then at least I wouldn't be a flag that's slapped by every breeze exposed for anyone to see a belly laugh for my enemies	265
Oceanids.	Who could be so damn hardhearted as to agree with what's happening here? No one's so tough that he wouldn't melt except for Zeus He would only sneer	
	He sets his anger to a permanent boil breaks others' will, and he won't let go until he's bored, or someone devises some subtle design for his overthrow	270

Prometheus.	Oh, he can torture me but he won't win He's tied me like a dog upon a chain But his threats won't make my body bend His sweet talk won't entrap my brain	275
	I know a secret he needs to hear But I won't tell until I've won Till he unsnaps this heavy chain I wear and pays for everything he's done!	280
Oceanids.	You're so brave you don't give in no sign you even vacillate	
	But it's foolish to speak out so boldly You might make others share your fate	285
	Will you stay tied up for all time? Isn't there some way to come to a truce?	
	I doubt it he's arrogant, very self-righteous In fact he's really a lot like Zeus	
Prometheus.	Oh, I know he's very tough he thinks the law is his alone But I know that he'll soften up when it's time for him to be overthrown	290
	Then he'll have to come to me then he'll humble his lofty pride he'll ask for my help, and he'll get it, too finally we'll stand together side by side	295
Oceanids [spoken].	We still don't understand how all this happened. Tell the whole story. Spell it out. In detail. What's the crime Zeus has charged you with? Why is he punishing you so savagely? We need to know. If it's not too painful for you.	300
Prom.	It's painful. Yes. But keeping silent's worse. All right. Think back to the time when the gods were taking sides about the question of Zeus. He was challenging the old regime, promising change, a fresh start, new ideas.	305
	From the beginning there were those who swore he'd never get to rule if they could help it. Others just as fiercely supported him. This takeover was obviously going to be hostile.	310

The old order was very confident.
 They had more equipment, forces, funds.
 They'd always won by using superior strength.
 It was just a question of throwing their weight around,
 putting troops in the field, getting out the votes. 315
 Victory was inevitable. They thought.

I knew this battle wouldn't be won by force.
 New technologies required new strategies,
 superior intelligence, cunning, craft! 320
 I tried to help them.
 Outlined options, conducted polls,
 ran the data, predicted the outcome.
 The technical language was too complex for them.
 They'd never had to understand such things. 325
 So they called me a typical academic,
 all theory and no practice. Laughed at me!

I went to see Zeus.
 He brought me right into his office,
 looked at my charts, asked for my recommendations, 330
 appointed me chief strategist.
 I stood by his side throughout the conflict.
 And now, thanks to my "theories,"
 the old order and all who supported them
 are nowhere to be seen. 335

The Oceanids, who are part of the old order, look at each other.

That's what I did for Zeus.
 And these are the honors he's repaid me with!
 I won his war for him, and he does this!
 That's the disease all tyrants have:
 they can't trust anyone, even their allies. 340

The Oceanids have grown increasingly mystified at the direction of Prometheus' argument. Finally they interrupt.

Oceanids. Excuse me. This is really fascinating, but
 I don't understand. Zeus is punishing you
 because you helped him? Is that what you're saying?

Prometheus. Not exactly. No. There's more to it.

As soon as he could relax on his new throne 345
 Zeus handed out prizes to all his faithful supporters.
 Said he was spreading the wealth around.
 But for that poor race of humans? Not a thought.
 The gulf between them and the gods kept growing.

	I was the only one who stood up for them. I made it possible for them to live. That's the crime for which I'm being punished— "straightened out" and "brought back into line." Take a good look at this spectacle: A show brought to you courtesy of Zeus. He ought to be ashamed to take the credit.	350 355
Oceanids.	I agree completely with what you did. You deserve praise, not blame, not punishment. Only a heart of stone wouldn't feel for you. Exactly how did you keep them from being destroyed?	360
Prom.	They had no hope their lives would ever change. They looked forward to death till I gave them hope. In addition I also gave them fire—	
Oceanids [interrupt]	Fire! You <u>gave</u> it? Fire belonged to the gods! You mean you stole it for those nobodies!	365
Prom.	So they could use their minds to learn many skills.	
Oceanids.	Then you were arrested legally—for theft!	
Prom.	No <u>law</u> was involved! No justice! Only power!	
Oceanids.	Is any limit fixed for your punishment?	
Prom.	Not unless Zeus feels the urge to release me.	370
Oceanids.	Why should he? What do you expect from him? Don't you understand you committed a <u>crime</u> ? Why talk as if you don't deserve what you got? Do you find it enjoyable to hit someone who's down? Let's change the subject.	375
[to Prom.]	There must be some way out, if you'd only look.	
Prom. [irritated]	Oh, it's so easy to advise the desperate— provided you draw your shoes far away from the dirt. I've seen that often enough. It's nothing new. Get this straight: <u>I know I committed a crime</u> . I did it <u>consciously</u> . I won't deny it. By helping the humans I <u>chose</u> pain for myself. But what I didn't know was how it would feel. Splayed out here in the open air, all alone . . .	380
in a softer tone	Please don't leave. Why don't you come closer?	385

I'm not asking for your sympathy.
 I can teach you things you need to know.
 You'll see the whole great scheme from beginning to end.
 Trust me! Believe me! We should work together.
 I'm the target now, but this trouble travels. 390
 Sooner or later it's going to visit you.

Intrigued, the Oceanids look at each other, start to gather around him. Suddenly noise or music announces the arrival of Oceanus. They cry "Daddy!" "Hide!" "Let's get out of here!" and scatter into the audience and around the site. Oceanus enters. As a member of the old order he too opposed Zeus, but has since accommodated to the new regime. He arrives in some suitably impressive conveyance, perhaps driven by a young officer who salutes as "the Admiral" gets out.

Oceanus. Ah, here we are. [straightens his outfit]
 What a long trip I made to reach you, Prometheus.
 Of course, I didn't have to **touch** the reins
 on my mighty steed. Knew just what I had in mind. 395

Looks at Prometheus, first taking in the chains with shock, then consciously blotting the sight out of his mind.

Now.
 I deeply sympathize with what you're going through.
 I have to, don't I? We're family, after all.
 Besides, there's no one I care about more than you.
 Soon you'll see that I'm telling the truth. 400
 I've never been the kind to curry favor.
 Tell me what I can do to help you out.

Well, come on! If you do give me a try
 you'll say you never had a better ally.

Pro. What's this? My ally? Really? I'm amazed 405
 you have the courage to leave your comfortable home,
 that elegant seaside retreat with its manicured grounds
 and make your way to this iron wilderness?
 Have you come as a tourist, to gawk at my suffering?
 Going to cluck sympathetically at my trouble? 410
 Go ahead, take a look at this spectacle.
 I'm center stage now, just as I was before
 as the ally of Zeus, his right-hand man,
 who helped him get the power he uses on me!

Oceanus I see it well enough, Prometheus. 415
 And even though you're so intelligent
 I want to give you some advice,
 the very best advice. Take a look at yourself.
 Adjust your conduct to fit the new state of affairs.
 We gods have a brand-new ruler now. 420
 He's up there, far away, but if you keep on

- throwing around those threats, those sharp, rough words,
 sooner or later he is going to hear you.
 And then these tortures will seem like child's play.
 You poor fellow! Please, get rid of that rage. 425
 Find some way out of this unpleasantness.
 You know, you earned all this with your big talk.
 You just can never take it easy. No,
 when trouble starts you insist on taking a stand.
 That's the way to pile more trouble on. 430
 Let me play the professor for a minute.
 Don't keep fighting the inevitable.
 Face it—he's not a kinder, gentler ruler.
 Just the opposite—very touchy. Prickly. 435
 Nevertheless, I'll see what I can do.
 I have some influence. I just might be able
 to convince him to let you go. Meanwhile,
 keep quiet. Don't keep running off at the mouth.
 You're so smart—how come you haven't learned that? 440
- Pro. How I envy you. You're so courageous!
 You want to share with me, to be in on this!
 Though carefully standing outside the line of fire.
 Take it easy. Don't concern yourself about me.
 Besides, there is no way that you'll persuade him. 445
 Watch out your trip here doesn't damage you.
- Oceanus You always were better at watching out for others
 instead of yourself. I'll prove myself by action,
 not by words. Now don't you try to stop me.
 I'm convinced—I'm absolutely sure 450
 that Zeus will set you free as a favor to me.
- [sings] I'm going straight up
 straight up to the top
 Right up there where I belong
 You know there's nothing 455
 nothing going to make me stop
 I'll fly up there on the wings of song
- I'm going straight up
 straight up to the top
 Right back there where I used to be 460
 Soon the powers that be
 and me, we'll be talking shop
 I know they're going to listen to me
- I'm going straight to the top
 straight up to the top 465
 Ain't no detours on my route

All it's going to take is just a skip
and a hop
I'm doing all this just to help you out

Starts to leave to see Zeus. Prometheus speaks urgently.

Pro. I admire you. Seriously. I'll never deny it.
You do have courage. But please do nothing. 470
Anything you try will only hurt you,
and won't help me at all. Stay out of the way.

You might think that since I'm suffering,
I'd like to have company in my misery. No.
But I do have company. Lots of it. 475
Millions of prison inmates—three strikes and they're out.
Or in, rather, sewing t-shirts in twelve minutes flat
while getting paid eighty-seven cents an hour.
A much better buy than uppity union members,
better even than those foreign sweatshops.
No wonder prisons are such a good investment. 480
Efficient! Clean! Cities are bidding to build them!

I feel sorry, too, for the followers of that fool,
the one who defied the gods, hissing out his threats.
Soon the lightning bolts came whistling in,
green comets trailing sulphur through the night. 485
Soon nothing was left of all those men
but charcoal furrows in the desert sand.
An excellent kill ratio: 1,000 to 1!
His men paid a high price for their leader's pride.
Now it's quiet along that shore. The fires 490
have been put out, rebuilding's going on,
glowing metal's pounded into shape.
But though defeated he's a coal, still burning.
Some day soon his rage will flame up again,
race right up to the amber waves of grain. 495

You understand what I'm talking about.
You don't need me to give you a seminar.
Take care of yourself. You know how to do that.
I'll stay here and drain my cup to the dregs.

Oceanus Prometheus, don't you realize 500
a bandage of soft words can heal a wound?

Pro. Yes, at the right time. While the sore is tender
using force only makes it hurt worse.

Oceanus What risk is there in my being eager, even

bold? You're the professor; you tell me. 505

Pro. Waste of effort. Sheer stupidity.

Oceanus Please allow me be stupid, then.
 Sometimes it's good for a smart man to play the fool.

Pro. If you try anything **I** will get the blame.

Oceanus You're trying to tell me to just go back home? 510

Pro. Sympathy for me is dangerous.

Oceanus In the eyes of our new leader, you mean.

Pro. Watch out he doesn't start getting angry with you.

Oceanus Your disaster has taught you a lot, Prometheus.

Pro. Hold that thought. Now take off! Get going! 515

Oceanus Aye, aye, sir! Anchors aweigh! Why, look!
my charger's already champing at the bit!
He wants to get back home, put on the feedbag,
stretch his legs a bit! I bet you'd like—

Realizing his tactlessness, Oceanus breaks off and returns the same way he came. Prometheus sags with fatigue and despair. After Oceanus is out of sight the Oceanids come out of hiding.

Oceanids. Can you believe that? 520

Daddy—what a wuss!

Yeah—straight to the top, to kiss some royal ass!

But he didn't even go!

He was very easy to persuade.

I'm sorry for Prometheus if that's his only friend. 525

Senile old geezer!

He never defies authority.

He hasn't even given me my allowance this month!

Me either—and it's time for my new car!

I'm confused—what are we talking about? 530

About what a jerk Daddy is!

Just like back in the war!

Oh, he was just 'being prudent.'

He was 'staying neutral.'

Come on, let's do something! 535

Like what?

Oceanids [sing] Even if no one else will stand beside you
Even if everybody says you're wrong

Even if all your friends have vilified you
There are those who sing another song 540

[refrain] All the human beings are in mourning
in every land from deserts to the sea
In your punishment they see a warning
no one in power wants them to be free

No matter how different they are from one another 545
They all know you tried to bring them aid
All of them regard you as a brother
All of them are sad, but not afraid

[refrain]

There's anger in the crashing of the ocean
There's weeping in the rushing of the stream 550
Deep inside the black earth we feel motion
Nothing stays eternally supreme

[refrain]

Oceanids expect a response from Prometheus, but he has either spaced out during the song or isn't willing to provide the appropriate response (e.g. gratitude). They look at each other, irritated.

Oceanids. Doesn't our support mean anything?
Is your own opinion all you care about?

Prom. Please don't think that. It just gnaws my heart 555
to think how unjustly I'm mistreated here.
When I was the one who handed Zeus his power
and all the other new gods too—!

He's about to start on that again. They sigh. He notices.

All right.
I've gone over that already. Let's go back 560
to where we were before your father arrived.
Discussing how I improved the humans' life.
Once I taught them how to use their minds, they learned
the basis of all understanding—letters and numbers.

They figured out the cycles of the seasons. 565
Animals, yoked and saddled, helped them work.
They began to travel on land, and through the sea
great ships went splashing, flying on linen wings.

Those are all devices I gave to others.
But I don't have one to get myself out of this. 570

Oceanids.	Zeus—deposed? What do you mean?	
Prom.	Even he doesn't stand outside the law of Fate.	620
Oceanids.	What is his fate except to rule forever?	
Prom.	He's going to make a very big mistake.	
Oceanids.	A mistake? What kind of mistake? What do you mean?	
Prom.	That's for me to know, for you not to find out.	
Oceanids.	This isn't a prophecy. It's just wishful thinking.	625
Prom.	I do wish it. But it's going to happen.	
Oceanids.	Aren't you scared to throw out threats like these? Zeus will demand that you reveal this secret.	
Prom.	If Zeus wants to hear it he'll have to unlock these chains! I helped him win. I can help him lose.	630
Oceanids.	He can make your punishment much worse.	
Prom.	Let him! I know everything he'll do.	
Oceanids.	Intelligent people respect the powers that be.	
Prom.	Go on, worship, grovel, genuflect! To me Zeus is nothing, less than nothing! Let him use his power any way he wants. He's only got a short time left to do it. Once he stumbles and goes sprawling down he'll learn what it means to be a slave.	635
[sings]	Zeus, I defy you! With a calm, fixed mind all you can inflict I bid you to do! Foul tyrant of gods and human-kind, Here's one being you will not subdue! Your power will soon become a crown of pain, clinging like burning gold around your brain!	640
	Do your worst! You are omnipotent. Over all things but me I gave you the power. Everywhere you look you'll see assent until the siren sounds your final hour. Then your power will be a crown of pain, clinging like burning gold around your brain!	645
		650

Oceanids [sing]	Lord Zeus don't come looking for me I'll never become your enemy I'll stay far away from his foolishness	
	No one can fight Lord Zeus's rule If you think you can then you're a fool Blindly vowing never to acquiesce	655
	He'll hear you've predicted his fate send someone to interrogate when the moment comes be sensible and confess	660
	Look at what you're going through for helping those who can't help you except to shed a teardrop at your distress	
	Don't you see they're totally weak You have no hope your future is bleak but all you have to do is just say yes	665

To enters. She staggers with exhaustion. She is NOT dressed as a cow. Every step hurts, but she is moving as fast as she can. She trips and falls, picks herself up dazedly, sings deliriously.

10. Where who am now I these eyes look at me
brain with tied chain inside pain never free
move still keep chill prove it will refugee
no stop food chewed crop mooded by the sea 670

bound quick like a hound cover ground always new
north or west seek a nest no rest ever true
words noise destroys always that voice will pursue
attack maniac cut back never through

hurt drums comes the rain no reason why 675
stare all glare eyes ensnare me a lie
I pray they all bay delay no reply
why try I fly by I cry only die

Her words break down into moans of pain, as she continues on her journey.

I...O...I...O...I...O...

Trying to keep her from going, Prometheus joins her song.

Prom.	Listen to me Please don't flee You are free Just listen to me	680
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Io.	No reason to try Just want to die	685
Prom.	Don't run away I want you to stay	
Io.	Can I believe you	
Prom.	What I say is true	
Io.	It's just more lies	690
Prom.	Look in my eyes You can see There's no mystery Follow my lead Just tell me What do you need	695
Io. [spoken]	I-o . . . How do you know my name?	
Prom.	You told it to me.	
Io.	How? Who are you?	
Pro.	You're looking at the one who gave the fire to human beings.	700
Io.	You . . . Prometheus? The one who helped us all? But . . . you're in chains? Why? Are you being punished for a crime?	
Pro.	I can't sing that painful song again. Don't ask!	705
Io.	Then you won't give me this gift?	
Pro.	I'll tell you anything you need to hear.	
Io.	Who imprisoned you in this lonely place?	
Pro.	Hephaestus did the job. Zeus ordered it.	
Io [starts]	Zeus! Why—	
Pro.	That's enough! I'm not going to talk about that!	
Io.	Then . . . at least . . . You're one of them. The gods.	

Tell me! How long am I going to be on the road?
 I'm driven out of every place I stop.
 I'm so exhausted. I can never sleep.
 Will this ever end? What's ahead for me?

Pro. Better for you if you don't know the truth.

Io. Don't hide it from me, whatever I have to go through!

Pro. What I'm withholding from you is no gift.

Io. Tell me everything! I can handle pain.

Pro. I'm not teasing you. I don't want to break your heart.

Io. Don't worry about me. All I want is the truth.

Pro. You're so persistent . . . strong . . . brave . . . I thought
 I was the only one who could resist.
 All right, then—

Oceanids [interrupt] Wait! I want to know more about her.
 What's her story? Let her tell us about her life.
 Where does she come from? Is she in trouble? Why?
 Then you can say what's going to happen later.

Prom. It's up to you, Io.
 Want to do them this favor?

with a side glance at the Oceanids

When you know your audience is sensitive,
 can feel your sorrow, give you sympathy,
 then it's worth the pain to tell your tale.

Io. I can't say no to you.
 I want you to know.
 But if I tell about that hurricane
 hurled on me by Zeus,
 and how I changed,
 my mind, my body,
 I'm going to sob.

Music begins; flashback sequence

At home—when was it?
 seems so long ago—
 I'd be in my room.
 Then the voices started,

speaking so silkily:
 "Io!
 You're so pretty.
 Really beautiful.
 Why are you all alone?
 And still a virgin . . .
 You're a lucky girl.
 Lord Zeus himself
 has been watching you.
 He's in pain for you.
 He wants to take you in His arms.
 It's not going to hurt.
 He'll give you pleasure you can't even imagine.
 Don't fight it now.
 Just give in.
 You know you want to.
 Go outside.
 Wherever you are, He'll find you.
 That's the only way to stop the pain.
 It's inevitable.
 This is an honor he is doing you.
 But don't tell anyone else about it.
 They might not understand.
 Now go on.
 What are you waiting for?"

These dreams wrapped themselves around me every night.
 I was terrified. I didn't know what to do.
 I finally told my father. He was frightened.
 He asked the official sources what to do.
 The word came back—get me out of his house.
 At first he refused. Then threats began arriving.
 If he didn't get rid of me, our whole family would die.
 We both cried as he closed the door on me.

Since then I've been on the run.
 I don't know what else to do.
 Something's after me.
 I feel this pain all the time.
 There's no escape.
 I've prayed and begged for help.
 Why me, Lord Zeus?
 What did I do to deserve this?
 Are you listening?
 But nothing changes.
 All I can imagine is keep on going.
 Try to take the pain for one more day.
 The worst is not knowing if it will ever end.
 I can hold out if there's any hope.

[to Prometheus] If you have some information about my case,
 tell me. I want to know. And don't let pity
 make you try to tranquilize me with lies.
 Even if there's no hope I'd rather know.
 What I hate most is art used to deceive.

Prom. If you're sure. All right. I'll tell what I know.

Dance sequence as Prometheus speaks. His tone is dispassionate; these are facts. The Oceanids respond with women's magazine placebos, Io with lyric flights of song.

Prom. To the woman he said "I will greatly multiply your sorrow. In sorrow
 you will bring forth children. And you will be under your
 husband's control, and he will rule over you."

Oceanids: Any demon will go away if there's enough love. Build a white picket
 fence to keep nightmares out.

Io. More and more of me is becoming detached.

Prom. Under no circumstances will women show themselves naked to any
 man other than their husbands. If medical advice is necessary
 the woman will use an ivory statuette, indicating to the doctor
 the location of her pain.

Oceanids. Sometimes you feel down for no reason at all. Do something just for
 yourself—go to a movie, or buy a new dress. Soon the world will
 seem much brighter.

Io. Once I leave my body I don't look back.

Prom. When slaves are caught trying to learn to read or write, whip them
 with a cow-hide. The second time with a cat o' nine tails. The
 third time, cut off the first joint of the forefinger.

Oceanids. Fight the urge to let yourself go, to spend your days in comfortable
 shoes. Go to the hairdresser weekly. Dress for every day, starting
 with breakfast. Hormone cream will help to keep your skin
 young.

Io. I journey as far away as possible. I soar in the blackest depths of space.

Prom. If a woman commits unlawful intercourse, or engages in conduct
 which could be construed as unlawful intercourse, her father,
 brother or other kinsman is permitted to kill her without
 punishment, by any method he chooses, either at the time of the
 offense, or later.

Oceanids: New spring must-haves: an unconstructed suit; add a touch of Day-Glo; drape your body with a sexy dress in fluid jersey; wear your athletic, hooded top for weekends; slip into colored metallic sandals.

Io. I seem to be surrounded by a cloud of energy, moving at great speed, humming like a hive of bees.

Prom. Slaves must not be permitted to copulate at will. Since the children of slaves are the owner's property, an intelligent master will arrange for slaves to be scientifically bred so as to produce the strongest and most useful children.

Oceanids. Explore your super-slut side by wearing your choice of corsets, wigs, rubber and leather lingerie, six inch spiked high heels, garter belts, false eye lashes. Drive your man wild.

Io. I know this cloud is made up of the melded force of countless other beings like myself.

Prom. The little girl, entirely nude, is immobilized. Two women hold her thighs apart by force. A short prayer is said. Then the old woman takes her razor and makes the cut. Afterwards she applies a paste and sews the girl together with an acacia thorn.

Oceanids: The orange Tang-like powder is loaded into the pipe and a butane torch is lit, heating the pipe until the powder vaporizes and is completely inhaled with two large hits.

Io. Our separate entities no longer matter.

Sequence ends with Io exhausted, weeping.

Prom. [to audience, didactically]

Another example of Zeus' tyranny.
Notice how democratic his violence is:
everyone who knows him gets a share.
This girl, for example: she's done nothing wrong
but goes through torture because of his lust for her.

Io [sings] I see clearly now
I'm under a curse
No hope anywhere
In the whole universe

I thought it was my fault
Thought I had to atone
Now I understand

It's not me alone

One law for the weak
another for the strong
No change over time
No matter how long

If there's no hope for justice
Why try to survive
Living like this
I'm not really alive

Speaks to Prometheus.

Thank you for telling me.
Now I understand what I should do.

Looks around, finds the rope used on Prometheus, finds place to hang herself and calmly makes preparations. Prometheus gradually realizes what she is doing.

Prom. Stop, Io! Don't! Your life is important!

Io. Yes, to those who want something I have.

Prom. You're right. That's just what I mean.

Io. You're not going to tell me I should give in to Zeus.

Prom. No! But you have a gift to give to others.

Io. A gift? What gift? I'm naked. I have nothing.

Prom. You have the strength to bear your pain. You know that.
If you didn't you'd never have gotten this far.

Io resumes suicide preparations. Prometheus thinks desperately, comes up with this story.

Listen. A woman had ovarian cancer.
Advanced, discovered too late. A death sentence.
Her doctors were developing a new treatment,
a powerful drug with awful side effects.
It was so toxic testing was very risky—
even the smallest overdose could be fatal.
She asked the doctors to experiment on her.
They refused. "This can't help your case.
Enjoy the time you have left without pain."
She insisted. "I'm not trying to save my life.
That's exactly why I can be of use.
I want my death to have some kind of meaning."
They tested the drug on her. It killed her. But

she died leaving behind a gift of hope.

Io, you're not dying. You can survive.
 You've got to stay alive and tell your story.
 Tyrants love silence because it keeps them safe.
 Document Zeus's cruelty and injustice
 and he will fall.

Io [her attention captured] Zeus—fall? Who'll bring him down?

Prom. His own arrogance. And you.

Io. Me?

Prom. There's a secret only I know about:
 a prophecy that Zeus will yield to a woman.

Io. "Yield to a woman . . . " What does that mean?

Prom. I didn't know before. Now I think I do.
 He yielded to you. That's why he pursued you.
 His lust shows his arrogance—and his need.
 He can't maintain his power without others.
 He tries to keep this hidden, but he can't.
 He's done to others what he did to you.
 If they find out, they'll know they're not alone.
 Together you'll find the courage to oppose him.
 Zeus will learn that together the weak are strong.

Io. How will anyone learn what happened to me?

Prom. Same way I did. You'll tell them, wherever you go.

Io. I'm too ashamed. They'll say it's my fault.

Prom. No!
 You didn't ask for this. You're not to blame.
 And your very vulnerability is a strength.
 You don't seem like a threat, so he didn't bother
 with the protocols he uses for enemies.

Look at where my public defiance has gotten me.
 I'm stuck here, helpless, useless. I can only
 talk to whoever happens to wander by.
 You can go where you want, and you can speak
 to others who're exploited and abused.
 This is the gift you have to give to others:
 if you can stand up to Zeus, then anyone can.
 But if you don't speak out, then nothing changes.

Io. It's useless. He's too strong. I can't—

Prom. Stop it!
Will you quit being such a stupid coward!

Io flinches back. Prometheus is appalled at what he has said.

I'm sorry.
Please, Io. Help me. I need your help.

Io. My help? You're a god. How can I help you?

Prom. Only you can free me from my chains.
As long as I know you're out there, I can hope.
I'll think, I'll know that some day I'll be free.
This is the gift you have to give to me.
When they come to take off these chains I'll know
you're the one who opened up the locks.

Io takes the noose off her neck, sings.

Io	I will go
Prom.	Go, Io
Io	I'll say what I know
Prom.	Say what you know
Io	No matter how far
Prom	You have to go
Io	No matter how long
Prom	I have to stay
Io	It won't be long
Prom	You won't be away
Io	Now I know why
Prom	Why you go
Io	Now I know how
Prom	How much you know
Prom and Io	Now we know how
	How much we know
	How much we owe

Io leaves. Hermes enters. He is elegant, well-dressed, self-assured.

Hermes. Ah, there you are, Professor Prometheus.
As usual, on the cutting edge. But this time
looks like you're the one who's getting cut.

Prom. Hermes! The Doctor of Spin! As smooth as ever.
Spoken just like the mouthpiece of the tyrant.

Hermes. I'm so sorry to see this happening to you.

You were one of us. Essential to our success.
 I just don't understand what came over you.
 How could you hand over the legacy of the gods
 to human beings, those worthless, homeless beggars?

Prom. You best and brightest, Zeus's right-hand men,
 think you'll close the gates of your brave new world
 and live with no concern for anyone else.
 As long as you have, you don't care who has not.

Hermes. Don't you believe in private property?
 In the rules and procedures which keep things running smoothly?
 How else can we keep from falling back into chaos?

Prometheus makes no response.

You should have stayed in academia.
 You were always better at abstractions.
 But you wanted to get out of your ivory tower,
 so you wasted your talent helping those nobodies.
 Well, now you're out. But you still haven't learned your lesson.
 We hear that you've been boasting about a secret.
 Some big mistake that Zeus is going to make.
 Something that will throw Him out of office.
 I'm sure our sources must have got it wrong.
 You wouldn't want to make things worse for yourself.
 Why don't you tell me what this is all about?
 I can intercede for you with Zeus.
 He misses you, you know. He'd like you back.

Prometheus remains silent.

Well then? Out with it! Every detail! Come on!
 And don't try to confuse me with any mumbo-jumbo.
 If your information's false I'll just come back.
 And you don't want me coming back here again.
 Surely you know by now that your little games
 are no longer titillating to Lord Zeus.

Prom. I recall that certain other leaders
 seemed invulnerable right up to the moment
 they suddenly pitched headlong from their mountaintop.
 I foresee there'll be another soon.
 And I'll see him fall—not first but worst.
 I hope you're taking note how I play my part,
 how low I bow and curtsy to my new masters?
 No, I lack the flexibility. You
 go back to that little niche where you belong,
 your snug cubbyhole in the power structure.

You won't get one thing you came here for.
I'm freer than you are, even in these chains.

Hermes.

Prometheus, like a typical academic,
you've gotten stuck in an outworn paradigm.
You talk as if Zeus rules by tyranny.
He doesn't want to. And he doesn't have to.
You say humans are miserable, exploited.
Then why are our approval ratings so high?
Don't you see this is the best time in history?
An accelerating increase in the standard of living!
And an unprecedented surge of knowledge!
Nothing can reverse this kind of progress!
The power of mind is prevailing over nature.
Instead of accepting what fate has handed us,
we're mobilizing nature to our advantage.
The transcending of matter is on the horizon.

And this revolution is egalitarian.
People everywhere have a chance to take part,
put their talents to work!
Immigrants and outcasts,
street toughs and science nerds,
the fraternity of the pizza breakfast,
the Ferrari dream, the silicon truth,
in a rainbow parade of all colors and wavelengths,
the crewcut and khaki, the ponytailed and the punk,
from Iowa and Havana, Vienna, Vietnam!
From the ambition and hunger of the outsider,
the banished and bullied, a new world of knowledge is born!
In this new world all have their information,
their screens, their lifelines to joyful, powerful knowledge!
No longer is geographic proximity
necessary to work and play together!
Virtual community! So much more efficient
than huddling in some uncomfortable space
[he looks around, including at the audience]
to participate in some awkward realtime experience,
listening to others' half-baked ideas.

Come on, Prometheus. You're one of us.
You know meritocracy is right.
Just say the word, and you'll be out of here.

Oceanids [enthusiastically]

Tomorrow belongs to symbolic analysts!
In the post-quantum world, the foundations of knowledge quake!

The meaning of space and time is redefined!
 Intellectual capital—our most important product!
 Libertarian capitalism—the air we breathe!
 When people are fluid, brand names become deified.

Prom. [interrupts] A very compelling presentation, Hermes.
 I believed it once. Wish I still could.
 But you're confusing knowledge with information.
 Getting or distributing raw data
 doesn't mean there's any advance in thought.
 But why should Zeus encourage critical skills?
 What he wants is efficient problem-solving.
 If all the options have been pre-programmed,
 what passes for thinking becomes a closed loop.
 Students get those problems whose solution
 is useful to the controllers of the system.
 Those most able to do this are your "brightest."
 So gradually our model of mind becomes
 the malleable, programmable machine.
 Thinking comes to mean what machines do,
 or what we do to interact with machines.
 What an elegant tactic of domination—
 make people want to be machines!

"The best time in history?" For a few.
 Exciting for the jugglers of symbols,
 harsher for the vast majority.
 As we disengage from the body, from emotions,
 we also disengage from one other.
 Individuals, families separate.
 Inequalities become more savage.
 Your revolution is built on suffering bodies:
 teenage Filipinas going blind soldering circuits,
 liver tumors in chip factory workers.
 For them matter hasn't yet been transcended.

Your "meritocracy" is tyranny.
 A subtle, elegant, persuasive form,
 but tyranny nonetheless. You can't deny it.

Hermes. That's exactly the kind of attitude
 that landed you in this unpleasant spot.

Prom. Be clear about this: I will never trade
 my suffering for your position, slave.

Hermes. I see. You would rather obey these chains
 than be the trusted messenger of Zeus.

- Pro. Your rhetoric is getting sharper. Bravo!
Of course, that's a requirement of your job.
- Hermes. Now I get it! You've got a taste for bondage.
Tying you here doesn't give you pain, but pleasure.
- Pro. Pleasure? I hope to see my enemies
feeling pleasure like this—including you.
- Hermes. Me too? Am I to blame for your disaster?
- Pro. I'll make it simple for you. I hate every one
of you who take your privileges for granted
and think they give you the right to decide what's just
- Hermes. You're impossible. If you were free—
- At the word "free" Prom. involuntarily moans or growls
- Prom. Aaaaah!
- Hermes (mocks him) "Aaaaah"? What's that? A new academic term?
You're speaking some language we don't know up at the palace.
- Pro. Just let a little time go by. You'll learn.
- Hermes. But you will never learn to be sensible.
- Pro. Guess not, or I wouldn't waste my time with flunkies.
- Hermes. You don't plan to tell Father what he wants?
- Pro. I'm eager to do him the favor he's done for me.
- Hermes. Come on—does this do you any good?
- Pro. I knew long ago how this scene would play out.
- Hermes. If you knew, then how come you're here?
Look, you fool, make yourself think straight!
Stop talking about the past, about the future!
Look at what you're going through right now!
If this isn't enough, Zeus can make it worse for you.
- Prom. Get this through your head: I'm not afraid.
Do you think I'll kneel to him, stretch out my hands
and beg him please to let me out of here?
That one I hate so much? No! Never!
No device, however ingenious,

will twist me into telling what I know
 until this torture stops! And if your master
 doesn't say he's sorry, doesn't beg my pardon
 for what he's done, so much for him and his.
 Your spies won't figure it out until too late.
 Let him do his worst! It's just a sign
 how afraid he is of enemies like me.

Hermes. All right. Your position's clear—clearly insane.
 [to the Oceanids] As for you, I suggest you move aside.
 I'm sure you don't want to get involved
 in what's about to happen. Come on, hurry up!

He beckons Power and Violence, who approach through the audience. Oceanids look at each other, uncertain. Finally one decides, says "No!" to Hermes. Gradually all the Oceanids gather in front of Prometheus, defying Hermes, Power and Violence.

Oceanids [sing] Even if no one else will stand beside you
 Even if everybody says you're wrong
 Even if your friends have vilified you
 We are here to sing another song

Prom. [sings] Let the lightningbolts begin the battle!
 Let the thunderbolts declare the war!
 Let great whirlwinds convulse the atmosphere!
 Let great hurricanes begin to roar!

Oceanids Though we're different from one another
 We all know you tried to bring us aid
 All of us regard you as a brother
 We are sad, but we are not afraid

Prom. Let the earthquakes rumble through the valleys!
 Let the earth split open to the core!
 Let the ocean splash the stars in heaven!
 Let great tidal waves dissolve the shores!

Oceanids All who see this sight should be in mourning
 in every land from desert to sea
 In this arrogance they can see a warning
 no one in power wants them to be free

Prom. and Oceanids In this battle he may subjugate me
 He may throw me down to Hell's dark floor
 But he never can annihilate me
 After me there will be always more

Hermes blows police whistle, Power and Violence get furious, yell "Stop it!" drive off the Oceanids, silence the musicians (pull out wires, grab drum sticks etc.). They then advance on Prometheus.

Prom. O mother Earth!
 O Sky whose light and air is shared by all!
 You see, you know my suffering is unjust!

Hermes tapes Prometheus' mouth shut. Power and Violence make him into a statue by putting a long "classical" robe on him, concealing his chains, and crown him with laurel. They take one last look, and laugh.

Power. All right. He's history now.

They leave. Prometheus opens his eyes and gazes at each member of the audience.

THE PLAY IS OVER