

TELEFTEOS:

I was thinking of my wife. The end of the war was so close we could taste it as we crawled out of the belly of the hollow horse. The Trojans were drunk or asleep after all their crazy celebrating, so sacking the city would be nothing, just the matter of a night, and then it would be over. Easy. I was the last to leave the horse. I watched my comrades coursing down the dropped ladder, heard the little grunts as they landed and ran, landed and ran, helmets bristling as they streamed off in different paths through the sleeping streets, swords glistening in the dimness. We'd been crouching in the dark for so long, all of us sweating together through the day and night, our fear and boredom, the way you could smell it, how we'd stunk the place up. So I just hung there for awhile, breathing the cool night air, looking at the open city below me. I thought about my wife, how I was as good as headed home to her, and then, it was the weirdest thing, I could smell her neck, the sweet musk, ten years gone. It hit me like a wave, that memory, must have dazed me, I guess, 'cause I lost my footing on the ladder rung. I fell without calling out, feeling like a fool, knowing my comrades wouldn't look back, their bare feet slapping away from me as they fanned out into the city to do the final work of slaughter. Broken, I listened to the screams beginning as the city woke up to the end of things. And then I died, the last of the Greeks, a nobody, left behind in a heap and forgotten. There was too much to do that night to remember me.

MERCURY:

Yes, I'm that one. The one who takes you down to the Underworld. It's a good job. Not without interest. I hear a lot of stories.

The long walk down the gray corridor to the shore is almost never a quiet journey. The compulsion you all have to talk—your memories, your regrets, pain and joy, babbled childhood rhymes, snatches of song, last minute attempts to assemble a theory about what it all meant, the life you just had, as the pinprick of light at our backs gets smaller and smaller... All the talk. I hear it all spooling out behind me as we travel deeper and deeper, away from the sun and down to the damp mist rising up the passage from the river shore below.

Centuries upon centuries now I've listened to you all—the tiny knots and snarls and snapped threads of ordinary existence. Because most human lives, it's just...stepping on the rake, losing that bracelet, the dog wanders off, it rains on the ballgame, a poorly aimed arrow here, a house burnt down there, oopsie daisy, coughs and bruises, bee stings and cancer, night falls before you're home safely, the dropped match is still lit, someone leaves the cage door open by mistake and...death.

Death, death, death. And that's where I come in.

I am the God of Endings.

KALLISTO:

Ten years I never quite let out my breath. So when they told me it was over and the boys were coming home, I got drunk and danced all night. I walked across the wet summer fields next morning, carrying my sandals in my hand, and when I get home, there's a strange boy outside the house looking down the road away from me, sucking his dirty fingers. I can hear the servants crying inside, my father banging around yelling for me but even then I don't worry. What could happen to me now? I thought I had nothing to lose. He seemed like just a kid, that messenger, fingers wet with spit, but then he turned and saw me, and there was this look of, well, I guess it was pity, and suddenly he didn't look like a kid anymore, and what he was about to say he didn't have to say, because I knew.

LAODAMIA

I've seen it in my head so many times. I will hear the ferryman's muttering song down the water, the tuneless tune he sings to himself as he makes his way through the fog. And then he'll be in sight, plunging his long pole into the silt of the river bottom. When he sees me standing there he won't question me. He will know. He's seen it before. The girls with the bruises on their necks from the ropes they trail behind them, the wet tangled hair of the ones who drowned themselves, and then us, the wasted eyes and waxy skin of the self-poisoners. All the sad girls who have waited for him there, as if waiting for their lovers to come out of the mist. He will put a hand out to me without a word, and I will step into the gently rocking boat. And as he pushes off from the one shore, I will turn my face to the fog and listen to the silence as we make our way across the dim water to the last.