



**GODS  
AND  
WARRIORS**

TEACHING PACK



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## Introduction for Teachers and Librarians

*Gods and Warriors* is an adventure set during the Bronze Age, in the period before classical Greek mythology. It follows the journey of a young goatherd, Hylas, who is attacked for being an outsider and goes in search of his sister, at the same time trying to outrun his mysterious pursuers. He meets with fortune both good and bad, makes new friendships along the way with a young girl (herself a runaway) and a dolphin, and discovers his part in a much greater story.

The novel is suitable for children in upper Key Stage 2 or early Key Stage 3 (9-12 years). The lessons provided in this pack are intended for use alongside classroom study of the novel, or as the basis for discussion in guided reading groups. The novel is rich in content, and cross-curricular links are provided throughout to History, Drama, Art, Geography and Citizenship. Students will be able to explore the background to the novel, characters and their motivations, and literary techniques used by the author. Lesson Plan 1 is meant for use with chapter one of *Gods and Warriors* and you will find chapter one in the appendix of this pack. Lesson plan 2 is meant to be used with the entirety of the novel.

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## Lesson 1: Bringing History to Life (pre-reading and Chapter 1)

### ► Before the lesson

#### Cross-curricular link: History

If possible, work with the students' history teacher to prepare a lesson revising students' knowledge of the Bronze Age. They could work in groups to research the following areas of Bronze Age civilisation in Europe, and present their findings to the class using a poster or PowerPoint presentation:

- Tools & weapons
- Housing
- Beliefs
- Way of life

If this is not possible, put students into groups and provide each of them with a copy of **Worksheet 1**. They should then be given a limited time in which to research the questions on the sheet using the library or internet.

### ► Starter

Discuss what students know about the Bronze Age and also find out what they know about Ancient Greece. Explain that this novel is set at a time before the period of Greek history usually studied, (as Michelle Paver says in her Author Note) "before marble temples and classical sculpture...even before the Greeks ranged their gods and goddesses into an orderly pantheon of Zeus, Hera and all the others". Explain that at this time, different groups of people believed in quite different gods, although there were some similarities. Many of them also believed certain animals were holy.

### ► Development

Read Chapter 1 with the class. Be aware that there is some vivid description of a child killed by the warriors – if needed, discuss the inclusion of this detail with the class and ask them why they think Michelle Paver has decided to do so.

Discuss with students what they have learned from this chapter. Begin by asking who the narrator of the story is, and who the story seems to be about (elicit that it is a third person narrative, and that it gives the perspective of a boy named Hylas). Then ask students to name facts that they have learned in Chapter 1 (be careful not to include opinions – make this distinction if necessary).





For example:

- Hylas has a sister called Issi, who is missing
- Hylas had a dog, who he loved, called Scram and this dog was killed by the warriors
- Hylas lives in the mountains
- Hylas and Issi are goatherds

Once you have established a list of questions, ask students to work in pairs to write down a list of questions. Many of these are already in the text (for example, "Who were the black warriors? Why were they after him") but students may also have some questions of their own. Compile these facts into a master list to refer to in a later lesson.

## ► Main

Cross-curricular link: Drama

Ask students to think about how it might have felt to be Hylas, living through the events of the chapter. What sort of emotions would he have experienced.

Students can EITHER:

- Use the scenes as an opportunity to explore Hylas' feelings through drama. This can be done most effectively through the use of hot-seating. Either working in small groups or as a class (depending on the confidence and ability of students), students take it in turns to sit in the 'hot-seat' as Hylas and answer questions from the rest of the class on his feelings and actions.
- Write a diary entry from Hylas' perspective, detailing the events of the day and how he feels about them.

## ► Plenary

Look at the final line of the chapter. If students are not already familiar with it, introduce the term 'cliffhanger' and explain that it is an unanswered question at the end of a section or chapter in a book, TV series or film, and its purpose is to 'hook' the reader or viewer – to keep them coming back for more. Do students think that Michelle Paver has used this technique effectively here? Where else has she used it in the chapter? (At the end of the section on page 3).

## ► Further Development

Cross-curricular link: History or Geography

Work done in this chapter and in the rest of the novel could also be linked to students' work on Ancient Greece or even to mapwork with modern Greece. Provide them with a map of Ancient Greece and use the clues given in the Author Note to map Hylas' journey, and that of Pirra, as the novel progresses. Why is Ancient Greece a good setting for the story?



## Worksheet 1: The Bronze Age

*Gods and Warriors* takes place in Greece a long time ago, in what we now call the Bronze Age. You may have learnt something about this time before. Use this knowledge to answer the following questions. You can use the internet or library to find out anything you do not know.

1. Which period in years (approximately) is called the Bronze Age?
2. Why has this period been given the name Bronze Age?
3. What tools did Bronze Age people use? What were they made out of?
4. What sort of houses did people live in during the Bronze Age?
5. What sort of clothes did people wear?
6. What did people living in the Bronze Age believe in? What sort of gods did they believe in?
7. Did Bronze Age people wear jewellery? What was it made of?
8. Find a picture of a Bronze Age weapon or piece of jewellery and draw it in the space provided below.



## Lesson 2: Friendship and Family Loyalty (whole novel)

### ▶ Starter

Early in the novel, Hylas talks about “the Grey Sisters, who crouch in their cave like ancient spiders, spinning their web which contains one web for every living creature”. Students can complete the spider-web game in Worksheet 2 by following each thread from one side of the paper to the other. Alternatively, more advanced groups could be asked to draw a web of their own, showing how the lives of the different characters in the novel intersect. Then discuss this idea with them – how does the story connect the lives of Hylas, Pirra and Telamon? Do they believe as the Greeks did, that each person’s life is part of a bigger web or tapestry?

### ▶ Development

Gods and Warriors is, among other things, a story of friendship. Ask students to identify the key friendships in the story, i.e. Hylas and Telamon; Hylas and Pirra; Hylas and Spirit. Then, working in groups, they should identify the key characteristics of these friendships (assign each group a different friendship). These should include descriptions of the personalities of the two friends, how their friendship begins and develops, what makes each of them an attractive friend to the other, and what obstacles they face in being friends.

Then introduce the idea that friendship and loyalty can sometimes create difficult choices. For example, Hylas finds it very difficult to be friends with Telamon, knowing that he is one of the ‘Crows’. However, Telamon is divided because he also has a strong sense of family loyalty. This is clearly an important part of the characters’ cultures – Hylas tells how killing one of your own family members is the worst possible sin, and summons the Angry Ones. However, he finds Telamon’s loyalty to his father hard to understand and forgive. Discuss with the class how important family loyalty is. Which is more important – family or friends? Make sure the discussion remains open and that students listen to each other’s opinions.

### ▶ Main

Cross-curricular link: Drama

Telamon is clearly in a difficult position, and he makes some mistakes along the way because of his divided loyalties. Should he have lied to Hylas? Should he have lied to his father? Should he have disclosed his connection to the ‘crows’ to Hylas sooner, and if so, when? What should he have done about the dagger? What should he have done on the beach when his uncle attacked his friend?

In order to explore these moments of difficult decision making for Telamon, the class will form a ‘conscience alley’. This is a drama technique particularly useful





for moments of decision experienced by characters in a novel. Students form two rows, and take it in turns to walk between them in character – through the 'alley'. While they do so, each student gives advice to the character. Students can give their own opinions, or they can be organised so that each side of the alley represents a different opinion.

For this activity, it may be useful to identify the key moments where Telamon's loyalty is torn (when he sees Hylas for the first time after the attack, when he sees him on the island, during Kratos and Hylas' fight) and then repeat the activity for each moment in the novel.

### ► Plenary

Ask students to reflect on how it felt to be in the alley. What insights have they gained into Telamon's position? How sympathetic do they feel towards him now compared to the start of the lesson?

### ► Further Development

Cross-curricular link: Citizenship

Students can EITHER:

- Consider the friendship between Hylas and Spirit. It is clearly meaningful to both of them, even though they cannot inhabit the same worlds. Hylas describes his experience of reuniting with Spirit at the end of the novel – how might Spirit describe the same scene? Have students write this chapter from his perspective.
- Use the friendships in the novel as a starting point to discussing friendship in general, including the rights and responsibilities of being a friend. What makes a good friend? How could they improve their own friendships?

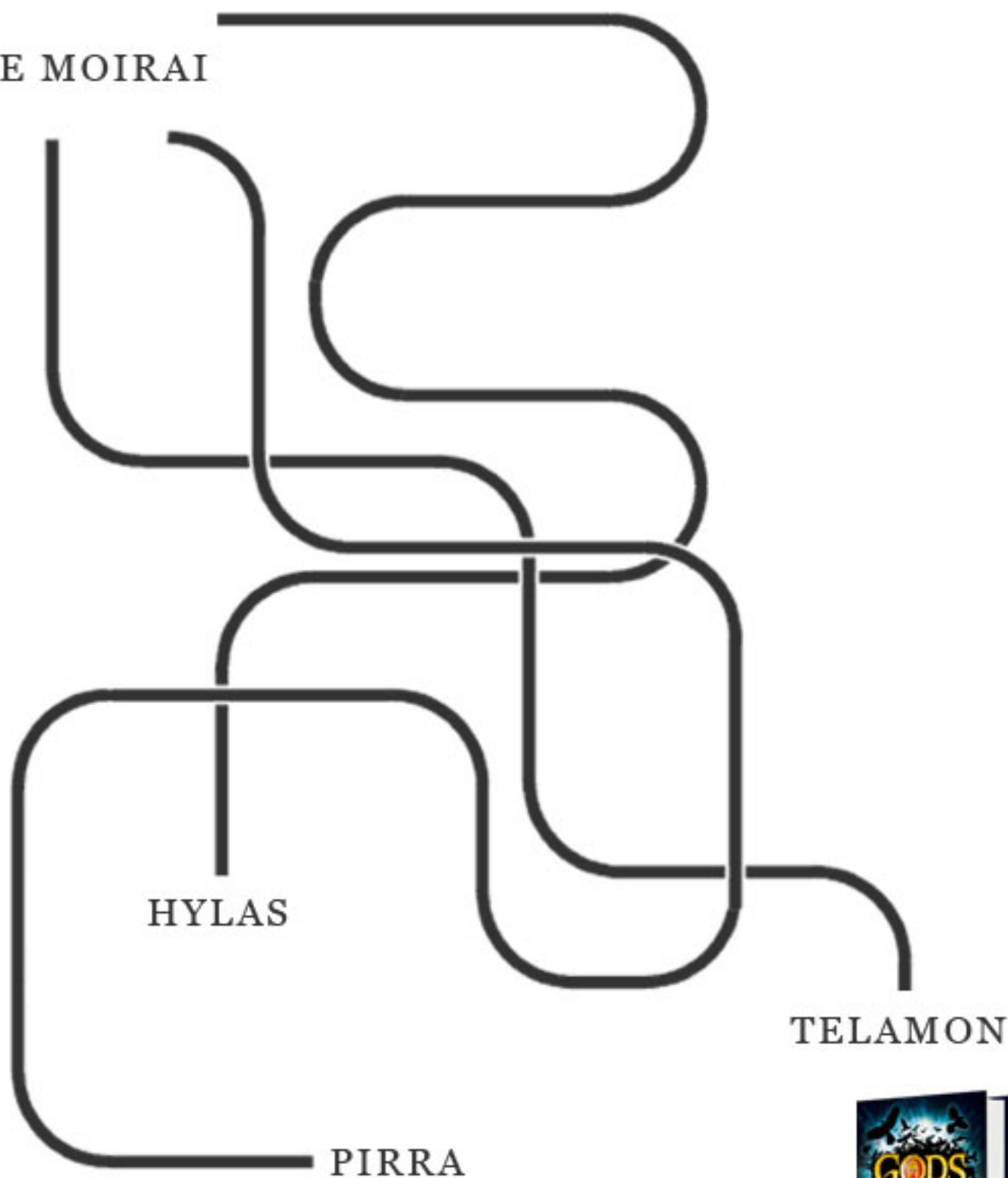


## Worksheet 2

Hylas' community believed in the myth of three sisters (the Moirai) who wove a tapestry of fate in which every person was a single thread. In *Gods and Warriors*, the lives of Hylas, Pirra and Telamon are woven together. Can you trace their threads in the picture below?

Hint: Use a different colour pen for each thread.

### THE MOIRAI





## Further Lesson Ideas

1. *Gods and Warriors* is almost cinematic in the way that scenes are described in great detail and pacing is extremely quick. Explain to students that they will be planning a film adaptation of the book for a film studio. They will need to write a plot summary, to create a cast of actors to play the main characters (they can use famous film and TV actors here) and then create a storyboard for one of the key scenes.

Cross-curricular link: History or Citizenship

2. Hylas is an Outsider, meaning that he does not come from one of the village families and has to literally live outside the village since he doesn't have any ancestors. Ask students to consider what it means to be an Outsider. What might it feel like? Do we have Outsiders in society today? What might classify someone as an Outsider? Students could each pick one figure in history who has been different from his or her peers, and research their life to find out what made them an Outsider.

Cross-curricular link: Drama

3. Myths were an important part of Ancient Greek life, and were often used to explain events beyond human control, such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis. Discuss these events in the novel with students as well as the stories and beliefs held by the different groups in the story, including the dolphins. Students could then come up with their own myth to explain a modern event, and dramatise this.

Cross-curricular link: Art

4. Another means that ancient societies used to tell their stories was wall art. In the novel, Pirra tells how she has learned to recognise ships from different countries, simply by looking at pictures of them. Challenge students to draw a wall frieze telling the story of the novel. To do this, you should divide them into groups and break up the book accordingly. They can then work on rolls of paper that will later be displayed in the classroom. They should remember to tell the story sequentially from left to right, so that eventually you will be able to see the whole narrative by walking around the classroom clockwise.

Cross-curricular link: Art

5. Michelle Paver describes the setting for the novel (the island) in great detail. Students could use this information to create an illustrated map of the island, with clear labels, and display these around the classroom.



### Cross-curricular link: Science

- Michelle Paver did a lot of research into dolphins to write *Gods and Warriors* (including swimming with them herself). Students could do their own research into both sharks and dolphins, comparing the two creatures. They could then move on to write a poem or descriptive piece about what it might be like to experience swimming with Spirit in the way that Hylas does.
- The novel uses multiple perspectives (explain this if necessary). Trace the different perspectives in the novel and consider how this is a good technique for telling the story. Why does it work? Are there any missing perspectives? Students could be asked to write a scene from the perspective of one of the 'silent' characters – Kratos or Issi, for example.
- Students write a book review. Remind them of the conventions of a review and encourage them to give their own opinions on the novel and to rate it out of five.
- Gods and Warriors* is the first book in a trilogy. What do students think might happen next for the characters? Ask them to make at least five predictions and then discuss these as a class.
- Michelle Paver uses extremely evocative language to describe what her characters experience. Divide students into groups and give each a different chapter, then find five examples of powerful language. Ask them to provide three alternative words or descriptions for each example, using a thesaurus to help them if necessary.



## Questions for Discussion

These questions are ideal either as plenaries while reading the novel, or else for use with guided reading or book groups.

### ▶ Chapters 1-3

- What sort of landscape is Hylas in?
- How do we know that Hylas is superstitious? Find evidence in the text to support your answer.
- Although Hylas believes that stealing is wrong (especially stealing from the gods), he does so to survive. Are there any situations where it is okay to do something that you normally think is wrong?
- What sort of character do you think Hylas is? How do you know this?

### ▶ Chapters 4-8

- What are the similarities and differences between Hylas and Telamon?
- Why does Hylas choose Jinx instead of Smoke when he leaves the chariot?
- What is the Edge and what is the Black Beneath?
- What have you learned about the characters of Telamon and Pirra in these chapters?

### ▶ Chapters 9-13

- What do you think of Pirra's decision to damage her face?
- In which chapter or chapters in this section does Michelle Paver use a cliffhanger to good effect?
- How does the author build tension in these chapters?

### ▶ Chapters 14-20

- Two new friendships are formed in these chapters. Who are they between, and how do they overcome misunderstandings?
- What do you think has happened to the dolphin pod?
- Make a graph and chart the tension in these chapters, especially from the end of Chapter 18.
- What is the effect of telling the story from three different perspectives?

### ▶ Chapters 21-25

- What do you think of Hylas' decision to leave Pirra behind?
- Who do you think is the One Beneath, and what really happened to the Vanished People?





## ▶ Chapters 26-30

- What do you think the goddess meant when she said that the truth bites?
- Who are the Angry Ones?
- What hints do you get that the stranger is not all bad?
- The Angry Ones hunt those who have done 'terrible things'. What sort of crimes do you think might deserve this punishment?

## ▶ Chapters 30-35

- Why does Hylas feel so betrayed?
- Telamon realises that things will never be the same between him and Hylas. Is this true? Is there anything they could do to change this?
- At the end of Chapter 35, both Telamon and Hylas have a choice to make. What do you think each of them should do? Pirra in these chapters?

## ▶ Chapters 36-41

- How does Michelle Paver bring together all the different threads of the story in these chapters?
- What do you think Kratos chants as he dies?
- How have Hylas' friendships changed from the beginning of the novel to the end?
- How has Hylas himself changed? How have the other characters changed?



## Appendix: Chapter One

The shaft of the arrow was black and fletched with crow feathers, but Hylas couldn't see the head because it was buried in his arm.

Clutching it to stop it wobbling, he scrambled down the slope. No time to pull it out. The black warriors could be anywhere.

He was ragingly thirsty and so tired he couldn't think straight. The Sun beat down on him and the thorn scrub gave no cover; he felt horribly exposed. But even worse was the worry over Issi, and the aching disbelief about Scram.

He found the trail that led down the Mountain and halted, gasping for breath. The rasp of the crickets was loud in his ears. The cry of a falcon echoed through the gorge. No sound of pursuit. Had he really shaken them off?

He still couldn't take it in. Last night he and Issi had made camp in a cave below the western peak. Now his sister was missing, his dog was dead, and he was running for his life: a skinny boy with no clothes and no knife; all he had was a grimy little amulet on a thong round his neck.

His arm hurt savagely. Holding the arrowshaft steady, he staggered to the edge of the trail. Pebbles rattled down to the river, dizzily far below. The gorge was so steep that his toes were level with the heads of pine trees. Before him the Lykonian mountains marched off into the distance, and behind him loomed the mightiest of them all: Mount Lykas, its peaks ablaze with snow.

He thought of the village further down the gorge, and of his friend Telamon, in the Chieftain's stronghold on the other side of the Mountain. Had the black warriors burnt the village and attacked Lapithos? But then why couldn't he see smoke, or hear the rams' horns sounding the alarm? Why weren't the Chieftain and his men fighting back?

The pain in his arm was all-consuming. He couldn't put it off any longer. He picked a handful of thyme, then snapped off a furry grey leaf of giant mullein for a bandage. The leaf was as thick and soft as a dog's ears. He scowled. Don't think about Scram.

They'd been together just before the attack. Scram had leant against him, his shaggy coat matted with burrs. Hylas had picked out a couple, then pushed Scram's muzzle aside and told him to watch the goats. Scram had ambled off, swinging his tail and glancing back at him as if to say, I know what to do. I'm a goathound, that's what I'm for. Don't think about him, Hylas told himself fiercely.



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Setting his teeth, he gripped the arrowshaft. He sucked in his breath. He pulled.

The pain was so bad he nearly passed out. Biting his lips, he rocked back and forth, fighting the sickening red waves. Scram, where are you? Why can't you come and lick it better?

Grimacing, he crushed the thyme and clamped it to the wound. It was a struggle to bandage it with the mullein leaf one-handed, but at last he managed, tying it in place with a twist of grass that he tightened with his teeth.

The arrowhead lay in the dust where he'd dropped it. It was shaped like a poplar leaf, with a vicious, tapered point. He'd never seen one like it. In the mountains, people made arrowheads of flint – or if they were rich, of bronze. This was different. It was shiny black obsidian. Hylas only recognized it because the village wisewoman possessed a shard. She said it was the blood of the Mother, spewed from the earth's fiery guts and turned to stone. She said it came from islands far across the Sea.

Who were the black warriors? Why were they after him? He hadn't done anything.

And had they found Issi?

Behind him, rock doves exploded into the sky with a whirring of wings.

He spun round.

From where he stood, the trail descended steeply, then disappeared round a spur. Behind the spur, a cloud of red dust was rising. Hylas caught the thud of many feet and the rattle of arrows in quivers. His belly turned over.

They were back.

He scrambled over the edge of the trail, grabbed a sapling and clung like a bat.

The pounding feet came nearer.

Scrabbling with his toes, he found a ledge. He edged sideways beneath an overhang. His face was jammed against a tree root.

He glanced down – and wished he hadn't. All he could see was a dizzying view of treetops.

The warriors came on at a punishing run. He caught the creak of leather and the rank smell of sweat – and a strange bitter tang that was horribly familiar. He'd smelt it last night. The warriors' skin was





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was smeared with ash.

The overhang hid him from view, but to his left the trail curved round and jutted over the gorge. He heard them run past. Then they rounded the bend, and through a haze of red dust he saw them: a nightmare of stiff black rawhide armour, a thicket of spears and daggers and bows. Their long black cloaks flew behind them like the wings of crows, and beneath their helmets their faces were grey with ash.

A man called out, terrifyingly close.

Hylas stopped breathing. The warrior who'd shouted was directly above him.

Further up the trail, the others wheeled round and moved down again. Towards him.

He heard the crunch of pebbles as a man came walking back. His pace was unhurried – Hylas guessed this was the leader – and his armour made a strange, hard clink.

'Look,' said the first man. 'Blood.'

Hylas went cold. Blood. You left blood on the trail.

He waited.

The leader made no reply.

This seemed to rattle the first man. 'Probably just the goatherd's,' he said hastily. 'Sorry. You wanted him alive.'

Still no reply.

Sweat streamed down Hylas' flanks. With a jolt, he remembered the arrowhead, left lying in the dust. He prayed they wouldn't spot it.

Craning his neck, he saw a man's hand grasp a boulder on the edge of the trail.

It was a strong hand, but it didn't look alive. The flesh was smeared with ash, the fingernails stained black. The wrist-guard that covered the forearm was the dark red of an angry sunset, and so bright that it hurt to look. Hylas knew what it was, though he'd never seen it this close. Bronze.

Dust trickled into his eyes. He hardly dared blink. The two men were so near he could hear them breathe.

'Get rid of it,' said the leader. His voice sounded hollow. It made Hylas think of cold places beyond the reach of the Sun.

Something heavy pitched over the edge, narrowly missing him. It crashed into a thorn tree an arm's length away and swayed to rest.

Hylas saw what it was and nearly threw up.



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It had once been a boy, but now it was a terrible thing of black blood and burst blue innards like a nest of worms. Hylas knew him. Skiros. Not a friend, but a goatherd like him: a few years older, and ruthless in a fight.

The corpse was too close; he could almost touch it. He sensed the angry ghost fighting to break free. If it found him, if it slipped down his throat . . .

'That's the last of them,' said the first man.

'What about the girl?' said the leader.

Hylas' belly tightened.

'She doesn't matter, does she?' said the other man. 'She's only a –'

'And the other boy. The one who ran off.'

'I winged him. He won't get far –'

'Then this is not the last of them,' the leader said coldly. 'Not while that other boy remains alive.'

'No,' said the other man. He sounded scared.

Pebbles crunched as they started up the trail. Hylas willed them to keep going.

At the bend where the trail jutted, the leader stopped. He put his foot on a rock. He leant over to take another look.

What Hylas saw did not resemble a man, but a monster of darkness and bronze. Bronze greaves covered his powerful shins, and a carapace of bronze overlaid his short black rawhide kilt. His breast was hammered bronze, surmounted by bronze shoulder-guards of fearsome breadth. He had no face: just an eye-slit between a high bronze throat-guard masking nose and mouth, and a black-painted helmet made of scales sliced from the tusks of boars, with bronze cheek-guards and a crest of black horsetail. Only his hair showed that he was human. hung below his shoulders, braided in the snake-like locks of a warrior, each one thick enough to turn a blade.

Hylas knew the leader might sense his gaze, but he couldn't look away. He just had to keep watching the slit in that armoured head, knowing those unseen eyes were raking the slopes to find him.

For a moment, the head turned to scan upriver.

Do something, Hylas told himself. Distract him. If he looks back and sees you . . .

Bracing himself on the ledge, Hylas silently let go of the sapling with one hand, and reached for the thorn tree where the body of Skiros hung. He gave it a push. The corpse shuddered, as if it didn't like



## Appendix: Chapter One

The corpse shuddered, as if it didn't like being touched.

The armoured head was turning back.

At full stretch, Hylas gave another push. Skiros fell, rolling and bouncing down the gorge.

'Look,' chuckled one of the warriors, 'it's getting away.'

A ripple of laughter came from the others; nothing from the leader.

The helmeted head watched the boy's body crash to the bottom – and then withdrew.

Blinking sweat from his eyes, Hylas listened to their footsteps recede as they headed up the trail.

The sapling was beginning to give under his weight. He grabbed a tree root.

He missed.

