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IN MEMORIAM

We dedicate this book to Charles H. Long. He was the last of a group of scholars (that included Mircea Eliade, J.Z. Smith, and Joseph Kitagawa) whose work greatly contributed to comparative religious studies in North America for the latter part of the 20th century. The students of that group were the people who taught some of Scion’s writers, and their influence transmits through every page of this book. Rest in Peace and walk with the Gods.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

James Mendez Hodes and Heather Rigby, for cultural consultation.

Meghan Fitzgerald, Danielle Lauzon, and Monica Spec for brainstorming and camaraderie.

Eloy Lasanta, whom I accidentally left out of the credits for **Scion: Origin** and **Hero**. Sorry, Eloy.

Nathan Henderson for some Titanic ideas.

Rich Thomas, for giving me a chance on Scion all those years ago.

Wednesday, Lydia, and Vesper, for being little companions and staunch friends of Freya.

Hiromi Cota, for cultural consultation, and also for picking up the reins. This is your horse now, Hiromi.

And all of our **Scion Second Edition** Kickstarter backers, who made this book possible.



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shibboleth

The cold had never bothered Isak Kohen, even as a child. The brutality of a New York winter on Friday nights had never elicited so much as a grunt from his father, though Isak could tell he found the cold unpleasant. They jaywalked along the streets with everyone else in Brooklyn, it seemed, no matter the weather. He'd taken to wearing a jacket more out of habit than anything else, except perhaps to not draw attention to himself. The cold was just a part of Isak, inseparable from the chill outside, and he found deep comfort in the silence of winter. The Demigod exhaled without a cloud of steam and looked up. The buildings were taller now than when he was a child, he mused, but the air itself was warmer. If he closed his eyes and listened just the right way, he could hear the whispered lamentations of the suffering — living and dying and praying in famine and heat waves in the distant corners of the World as the planet slowly burned by degrees.

The cold very much bothered Isak's first companion, a huddled mass of jackets and complaints both vocal and not named Max. He gasped a little as the wind picked up, wisps of steam coming from his mouth like spurting blood, as if a blade of ice had sliced him. The winds, unnaturally cruel for July, merely fluttered Isak's open coat a little.

The third and fourth members of their group were both far more accustomed to the chill than Max. One was Rose Aishquaykezhick-White, child of Cheeby-Aub-Oozoo. The other was a woman named Tanisha who claimed to be a daughter of Himavat and sister to Parvati; as she strolled casually in front of the group, Isak believed her claims of ancestry to have some degree of merit.

Max was definitely the odd one out, but Isak decided early in their walk to not judge him for it. They

shared a connection, deep and familial, that gave Isak some comfort even as they walked to battle. Idly, he wondered — was he comforted by the presence of a friend, or did something deep within him lie still when he was anticipating the shedding of blood? The only answer he found was the whistling wind. The four trudged forward in the deepening snows, sharing one another's misery.

Still, only Max complained.

"How can you not be cold?" Isak's whiniest companion hissed at him, shaking the silent reverie.

"I am cold," Isak replied. "Try to focus on that sentiment: I am cold. I am cold. The cold and I are indistinguishable. I fight cold with more cold." Platitudes of the sort that would annoy a mortal, but while it clearly still annoyed Max, the other Scion caught his meaning. Tanisha just laughed. She wore black jeans and a sleeveless T-shirt, and she was as unbothered by the chill as Isak.

"Easy for you to say. My father is a lie-smith who stole the name of fire. I wish my parent was a God of winter." Max shivered some more.

"They aren't," Isak replied. "Neither of my parents were."

Rose peeked beyond the cigarette poking beyond the end of her scarf, her glance skeptical, her voice bemused. "I'm sorry, but is your mother suddenly not a frost giant? Is she absent without leave from the prayers of ski instructors from Aspen to Killington?"

"My mother was flesh and blood, like yours," Isak responded. "But so was my father, unlike yours. I was born on Shabbat."

Rose blew out a cloud of cigarette smoke and shook her head, braided hair swinging gently. "I don't get it."

Isak took a deep breath, furrowing his brow as he properly sorted the precise feelings of reverence within himself. "Skaði is my patron and a second mother to me, special and powerful, it's true. She chose me. But I was chosen long before, and she is a giant first and foremost. There is only one G-d." Isak shook his head. "The fact that you phrased it that way is, hm, a kind of shibboleth, I suppose."

"A what?" asked Max.

"Shibboleth," Isak responded, enunciating carefully. "When the soldiers of Gilead defeated the tribe of Ephraim, the survivors tried to cross the River Jordan. To tell friendly traveler from Ephramite, the soldiers made them say the word shibboleth. But they couldn't, because their dialect didn't have the right syllables, so they would say *sibboleth* instead." Isak exhaled. There was no steam in his breath. "And then they died."

Tanisha grinned. "Moral of the story: When your time comes, Max, stay frosty. Your life depends on it."

"Huh," Max said, ignoring the jibe. "They never really mention those stories in Pentecostal Sunday school."

"I guess they focused more on other things."

"Yeah, I never really paid much attention," Max muttered.

The four kept walking, their shoes making soft crunching noises on the fresh powdery snow. In the swirling flakes, through the low-hanging fog against a pitch-black sky, 9 DeKalb Avenue stood silent sentinel, lit and heated lower floors contrasted by the halation of lamps shining through a bare superstructure on the upper levels. A standing sign on the street, glowing LED screen shining through the thin layer of frost, listed a series of upcoming events. The most current one was Christmas in July.

All around them were bodies, preserved in pallid color by a thin blanket of ice — people wearing shorts, wearing business suits, people just walking their dogs. Isak knelt down beside the body of a surprised-looking man in a black suit and kippah. "Zikhrono livrakha," Isak said, quietly — may his memory be a blessing. Tanisha heard him, no doubt, but she granted him privacy by pretending not to.

"Christmas in July. Think this is it?" Max said to him, and Isak knew what the it was before he spoke. "Fimbulwinter? I've been preparing. Örvar-Odd, that old fool in the tree, he gave me the key to it all for an apple seed. I think I've..."

"No, this isn't Fimbulwinter," Isak said, standing up and cutting his friend off. It was honestly best if he didn't know the plans Max had to survive Ragnarök. Hearing the prophecy might tie him to it, and he had long ago learned to avoid such pitfalls, for the law was not in the heavens.

"Whatever it is," Rose said, exhaling a cloud, "It's been going on for a week, and this is the epicenter. Temperatures falling, snowfall, and now a deep freeze."

"At least people are saving on air conditioning," Max said.

The lobby of the skyscraper had ceilings at least 30 feet high, done in a marble temple style that would make the Theoi proud. Eleven massive columns stretched floor to ceiling in a circle in the center of the room just past the entrance. At the security desk sat a huge creature, black-furred and boar-tusked, heavy and squat. He sniffed the air blowing past the four, swung cloven feet down from the desk, planted them firmly, and stood to his full height. A stink washed over the group, animalistic and rotten. The beast gripped some sort of engraved iron rod, trailing mist and cold. Literal cold iron, Isak thought.

The beast growled in human speech. Isak wondered if it was a minotaur. "I smell you, worms," it said, in a baritone deep and rich.

"It's a kallikantzaros," Rose said, dropping the filter-less stub of her cigarette on the ground as she answered Isak's unasked question. She didn't bother to extinguish it as she pulled out a leather cigarette holder with a sticker of a turtle slapped on it. "It's a kind of big European goblin. Can't count past two, dies if it does, really likes colanders, not known for their intellect."

The kallikantzaros slammed a hoof down, sending spiderweb cracks along the stone flooring. It was, perhaps, seven-and-a-half feet tall, but it looked like it weighed maybe 600 pounds, most of it muscle. "Goblin? Who do you think you're talking to?"

Interesting that that was what offended the creature most.

"Colanders?" Isak asked.

"Colanders," Rose affirmed.

"It's snarling at us," Max said. "It sounds like it's trying to talk."

Isak turned to regard his companion. For a brief moment he thought it was a bit of trash-talk meant to deny the goblin's personhood, but he realized Max's question was genuine. "Do you not understand him? He's speaking English."

"No, I'm fucking not," yelled the kallikantzaros.

"No," said Max. "It's all snarls and growls."

Weird, Isak thought. "He's asking who we think we're talking to."

"Some naked Greek asshole," Rose said.

"A dead thing," Tanisha said.

"Someone who isn't where they're supposed to be," Isak said.



The kallikantzaros bellowed loudly and charged. The rolling thunder of hooves shook the floors, and Isak heard more coming.

"Don't look at me," Max put his hands up. "I'm just an honest thief." And then Max's hair was aflame — no, Max's hair *was* flame, a flickering crown upon his head and a wildfire crawling around his chin. He grasped a pair of shears in one hand and snapped the fingers of his other hand at the stampeding kallikantzaros. The hooved creature burst into flames, screaming and stomping past the group. Isak heard glass shattering behind him and felt the cold air rush in; he turned to risk a glance and saw the beast struggling and smoldering outside.

"Get the rod, get the rod!" Max yelled. "I've seen it before! The dead use it to measure water depth in the river Élivágar! It's gotta be the source of all this!"

Another of the goblins stomped around a corner, then came right for the Band. Isak braced himself, ice forming around his legs and rooting him to the spot. He swung hard to meet the onrushing goblin's hammer-blow punch with one of his own, ignoring the shooting pain traveling up his arm when the two connected. The ice shattered, and Isak stumbled back.

The other kallikantzaros grabbed his hand where Isak had punched it. "My hand! My hand! Aw, why are you doing this? What do you care, Israelite?"

"I'm from Brooklyn," Isak said, though the creature probably didn't care about the distinction. "Why are you doing this?"

"Christmas," the goblin snarled. "It only comes once a year, and it came early. Lots of oath breakers and adulterers partying upstairs. This is our time."

Four more kallikantzaros burst from a stairwell. Tanisha and Rose were in fine form; both were as strong as Isak, and he was stronger than anyone he'd ever met. Descending from a mighty spirit, a literal mountain, and a giant did wonders for one's muscle mass.

"Two by two by two by two by two by two," the kallikantzaros growled. "This is our time, and we will leave you reeling in our revelry."

That was at least 12 of the monsters, and there must be more in the building. Isak hoped that the number added up and wasn't multiplied. He took a step back and yelled over to Rose, who was putting one of the goblins through a wall. "Rose! Are you sure about that counting bit?"

Rose yelled back as a bolt of flame flew by her head. "Yeah, why?"

Isak inhaled deeply; the mist from the rod outside rolled in, surrounding him. He breathed deep the air and moisture of Hel, tasted the icy waters of the river Élivágar, felt the occult sigil that amplified the chill.

Isak *was* the cold, though; in an instant, he breathed a bubble of air out, blowing and shaping it like glass until it stood before him, huge and spherical, a shell of ice glittering in the overhead lights with the colors of the rainbow. Lightning-quick, his fingers danced over the surface, their strength and speed leaving small holes wherever they went.

All of the kallikantzaros suddenly stopped. One dropped a chair he was about to smash over Tanisha, then clomped over to the shell. The others did the same, ceasing battle with the Band. Their eyes danced obsessively from hole to hole, and they stood counting. Isak lifted a hand and shifted his perceptions; he could see the dim fire of their intellect burning deep within their skulls, like faded embers. He brought his arm down and snuffed out what remained.

Max stepped up to the goblins, who could now barely stay standing. "Count for me," he said slyly, and they complied.

"One..."

"Two..."

"Three—" and with that, they were gone. They were kallikantzaros; the counting proved it.

• • •

Winter broke over July, and snow steamed upon the ground as the battle-weary Band walked outside. News vans pulled up; above, a helicopter hovered in the now-clear sky, illuminating the Band. Isak watched the mists begin to form as the ground thawed.



INTRODUCTION

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible Gods and Goddesses. To remember that dullest, most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship."

— C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

To be a Demigod is to redefine your people.

As a Hero, a Scion becomes a figure of myth and story, an exemplar of some virtue of their chosen society or the culture into which they're born. Sometimes, this is because a Scion openly chooses to become a guardian of the people, or a fierce warrior against the enemies of their people. Other Scions make their names by existing outside the boundaries of their culture, reinforcing societal norms by providing a sharp behavioral contrast. There are famous Heroes, and there are infamous ones, and there are inscrutable children of the Gods, but no Hero is obscure. Attempts to lead a quiet and simple life, be it in rustic splendor or suburban mundanity or urban anonymity, inevitably lead to a disproportionate response by Fate as the Scion's delayed Deeds come crashing into their living rooms. The Scions of the Gods will be loved, and they will be hated, but they can never be ignored — not even by themselves.

Even before their Visitation, the children of the Gods are a breed apart. Scion lives are full of portents, and their heritage becomes obvious to those who reflect upon the time before their Visitation in hindsight. Even Chosen Heroes led lives so indelibly linked to a God's Legend that adoption is more a formality than anything else; the Scion always belonged to that God, even if they were born to mortal bloodlines. The act of Visitation is never forced upon a Scion — they choose to enter the World of Gods and monsters, even if that choice is an unconscious one.

Yet for all their fame and supernatural puissance and strength of will, Heroes are unlikely to be radicals and even less likely to be visionaries. They are mortal, their Legend linked to that of their parent deity. A Scion of Tyr is likely to be maimed and meet his end in the jaws of a wolf. A gigantic Nemean wolf, maybe, but definitely some sort of canine. Aphrodite's daughter will find her beauty opening many doors, though many or most lead to a cruel, ironic end like the one that befell Narcissus. A Hero's life is cursed to be eternally interesting. No Hero retires, but many reach old age, and a few have even gone to their respective Underworlds within the peace of their own homes, surrounded by descendants telling stories of their famous progenitor for centuries afterward. For many, this is enough, and this last repetition of their parent's Legend continues after the grave.

Some want more than this lesser form of immortality, forever in the shadow of their parents. The golden ichor within the Scion's heart sears them from within, burning away any human frailties of the Scion and driving them toward more audacious Deeds. They seek to become truly transformational figures, leaving the World forever different in their wake. At the fifth dot of Legend, it all reaches a tipping point, where the Scion is formed more of divine ichor than mortal flesh — more immortal than mortal, a true Demigod. They have declared to the World that they will not be pawns of Fate, but players in their own right

ALL MYTHS ARE TRUE

But not all myths are equal. In **Scion**, this phrase is descriptive in that it's an acknowledgement of real-world complexity of mythological narratives, and of the in-setting mutability of myth, rather than proscriptive — a maxim Storyguides must adhere to. We use this phrase to mean that mythic events in religion and folklore have a basis in the game's truth, and the events typically happened in the manner in which those myths and folk tales told. If someone claims they're the child of a God in our world, we usually don't believe them; in the World, it's safer just to accept the claim at face value. We don't mean it to say that all myths, regardless of timelessness or plausibility, are literally true and occurred — although you'd be surprised at what mythology encompasses. **Scion** is ultimately a game: We've done research and thought about how to incorporate the spirit of the divine into the work, but at the end of the day, feel free to go with what feels true and right at your table. You don't need to open any book but this one (and, **Origin** and **Hero**) to play **Scion** to the fullest.

Demigod takes this a step further. Many myths are about how epic Heroes changed the World forever. Let that be your guiding principle: Don't be afraid to leave the World permanently and drastically altered in the wake of your character's life. Make a story as large or as small as you want it to be. Destroy a city, or save it with an ambitious parks program; forge an empire, or turn the tide of imperialism back for one small group of your people; cure a scourging plague, or heal the one you love; bring peace to a nation, or just to your family.

Though your family members are probably Gods themselves.

— and the World responds. These Demigods will succeed in becoming a God, or they will die with their failure.

Everything up to this point was your prologue. Now it's time to live your myth.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Scion: Demigod continues down the path set by **Scion: Origin** and **Scion: Hero**, with players embodying mythic characters in the process of forging their Legends.

This game requires **Scion: Origin** and **Scion: Hero** and builds on the Storypath system by adding rules for expansive mythic Deeds and supernatural miracles. **Scion: Demigod's** primary purpose is to expand **Scion Second Edition's** power level and chart the next level of power tiers for the Scions of the Gods. **Demigod's** design focuses on the theme of “Live the Myth;” to that end, the book's main focus is on the Heroic cycle, giving Storyguides and players the tools to play through the tropes and story mechanisms of classic mythology (and whether to avert, subvert, or play straight those same tropes).

The Demigod story arc is about forging one's Legend, but this is not a haphazard thing. Rather, players will take their characters through a tightly designed yet flexible story arc that ends in apotheosis or death — either way, the character will no longer be mortal after this book. Your characters don't have to follow every Milestone with their Deeds — but they cannot run from their destiny once they've chosen to embrace it.

The time needed to complete the story arc is completely up to the players and Storyguide, however — the characters might feel rushed, but the players shouldn't be. Demigods can live for long decades, but they are not passive years, and their stories end one way. Even Herakles had many adventures after completing the Twelve Labors — and then he died.

THE PANTHEONS

The five pantheons featured in **Demigod** are fully available to use at the **Origin** and **Hero** levels for parentage and association — Storyguides should feel free to incorporate them into their World and character generation regardless of level, and future books will assume they exist. Many of them are, frankly, a little more down-on-their-luck than the pantheons of **Hero**. They are:

- **Annuna:** The Mesopotamian Gods, proud standard-bearers of an authoritarian outlook that is startlingly effective yet dangerously out of touch with the modern World;
- **Apu:** The Incan Gods, golden and brimming with supernatural authority, calmly and methodically

working to restore their place and the place of their people within the World;

- **Atua:** The Polynesian Gods, deeply in tune with the natural ebbs and flows of the World, threatened by colonization and climate change;
- **Bogovi:** The Slavic Gods, in the winter of their power, waiting for their spring to return;
- **Tengri:** The Mongolian Gods, the spirits of the steppes and the mountains, cosmopolitan but threatened by vast changes in the World.

WHAT THIS BOOK CONTAINS

- **Chapter One:** Storyguiding Apotheosis describes the Milestones every Demigod must undertake to achieve Apotheosis, the act of becoming a God.
- **Chapter Two:** Pantheons details the five pantheons in this book, suitable for any level of play.
- **Chapter Three:** Character Creation details new and improved Birthrights and character options at the Demigod tier of play.
- **Chapter Four:** Chasing Divinity introduces new rules and expanded powers, including Dominion Boons, to represent a Demigod's powerful association with a Purview.
- **Chapter Five:** Underworlds describes the various Underworlds of the pantheons, physical locations that a Scion may venture to.
- **Chapter Six:** Antagonists features a number of new antagonist rules and entities who can challenge a Demigod.
- **Appendix:** The Keepers describes The Keepers of the World, a group of cross-pantheon Scions who aim to become a new pantheon, to the detriment of every other God in the World.

MEDIA

We particularly recommend the following as sources of inspiration for the content and tone of your **Scion: Demigod** stories.

Percy Jackson & The Olympians, by Rick Riordan

Riordan's series (and every book in that universe) has demigods coming into their power and dealing with the various myths and personalities of their parents. The treatment of Greek and Roman deities is a great example of switching mantles, and the physiological effects of being a Demigod match quite well.

City of Mists, by Son of Oak Publishing

City of Mists is a role-playing game that posits a modern world where fairy-tale and mythological personas are claimed by various entities. The book has a lavish noir style and intriguing gameplay, and while the power level is a

little lower than Demigod, the book posits an interesting choice between mortality and immortality.

***Immortals*, directed by Tarsem Singh**

Featuring a surprisingly talented cast, the hardcore action film's visuals done in Renaissance style mostly hold up. *Immortals* features visuals of the Titanomachy and Demigods doing battle, Gods interacting with mortals in a variety of different guises, and an epilogue that would fit well with tales of a Demigod's Deeds.

***Clash of the Titans*, directed by Desmond Davis**

One of the original great epic movies, this movie features some of creature animator Ray Harryhausen's best works. More important than the visuals (some of which have aged badly) is the story of the Gods influencing the lives of mortals, and how Scions might want to throw off the yoke of their forebears' Fate in order to make their own.

Sample file



CHAPTER ONE
STORYGUIDING
APOTHEOSIS