

*Hephaestus*  
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I think often of Hephaestus  
Artisan of the Gods  
As spoken of by Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and beyond.

I think often of the Olympians  
Looking down at him  
Bent over his Forge.

I wonder if they told him he should be content  
For he is a God  
And rests far above the lot of Men.

Silent on his casting out of Olympus  
For the offense of being lame.  
Isolated upon Lemnos, or Sicily.

Admired for deep craft when needed:  
axes, clappers, helmets, sandals, armor,  
chariots, swords, and even the Aegis, by others irreproducible all.

Skill which changed history, or myth, or legend;  
Peoples and places, hopes and fears.  
All altered by his hand ultimately.

An artificial shoulder, automatons, metal animals,  
And even the thrones of those who sat above him  
Sneering as they did at his supposed imperfection.

(Even if a throne figured in his guileful revenge,  
Enchanted in entrapping embrace.)  
I muse upon Hephaestus

For skill unrespected until needed;  
Forgotten until wanted;  
Derided until necessary.

For the crime of being different.  
For the impertinence of protecting another.  
And allowed back only through artifice and guile.

Even his revenge upon unfaithful Aphrodite and Mars  
Made whole by that self-same mockery.

Was this becoming of the God(s)?

When Gods lose sight, what happens next?

What if he had simply stopped?

What ruin may have befallen history?

He stands not alone —

As did Kothar-wa-Khasis, Ugarit crafter-god;

Or Ptah of the Egyptians, stunted and called deformed;

Or Weyland the Norse smith, worker of bronze;

Or Tvastr of the Hindus;

Or Ossetian Kurdalagon.

Is this the fate of all mankind?

Is this the action of all peoples?

Is this the lot of those who move differently

Respected when needed; rejected when not

And toil amidst flames for acceptance?

I think often of Vulcan

Outcast of the Gods;

Was the crime deformity?

Or was it being clever?