

Ap and Zeph

by Grey Smith

CHARACTERS

AP – Means it.

ZEPH – Doesn't mean it.

SETTING

Greece but like mythical Greece.

TIME

Like before antiquity.

The sun sets on a beautiful Greek hillside. A tiny hyacinth flower is sprouting in time-lapse hyper-speed in the middle of the grass. A large stone discus lies in a fresh patch of mud nearby, splotted with red. AP sits on his knees, hands to his face in disbelief. Tears are running down his cheeks, but he is silent. The clouds behind him silhouette his bare shoulders with oranges and pinks and reds. Loudly and from far away, ZEPH comes pounding up the hill, breathing heavily. He stops, hands on knees, squinting and pointing at the flower. ZEPH laughs.

ZEPH

Oh my god I'm so out of shape! Whew! Are you okay? That was crazy, I don't even know how that happened.

AP says nothing.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Did you see that? There was uh- uh-

ZEPH tries to explain the geography of the incident with his hands, indicating and manipulating little invisible models of his story.

ZEPH (cont'd)

There was this guy running and- well before the guy there was a stone or a uh- uh-

He sees the discus on the ground.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Oh I guess it was a discus! Anyway, he was running after it- this is a good-looking guy by the way- and all of a sudden, the discus just changes directions like that!

ZEPH snaps.

ZEPH (cont'd)

And it slammed-

He makes a cartoonish slide whistle effect and punches his palm.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Right into this guy's head, it was crazy! And he falls, I mean he collapses onto the ground, and I guess he turned into this flower here, 'cause I don't see his body anywhere or anything. Huh. I didn't know they could do that. The more you know.

He makes a little shooting star gesture.

Very, very long silence.

AP

What?

ZEPH

Oh you know like the uh- the show, it had fun facts- or I don't know if you'd really call it a show- it doesn't matter.

AP looks at ZEPH for the first time.

AP

You are the god of the western winds.

ZEPH

I am! Yep. Messenger of spring!

AP

You did this?

ZEPH

What?! No! No! I would nev- I don't do that- I don't- I don't- I don't. I don't. Do that.

AP stares at him.

ZEPH (cont'd)

What?

AP nods at the flower, which has now become rather mature.

AP

He was my lover.

ZEPH gasps in slow motion, putting a hand over his mouth. AP allows him to react.

ZEPH

Oh. Oh my god. Oh my god! Wow. I am so sorry this happened. I had no idea! (*horrified*) Oh my god and here I am, running up, being a gigantic asshole, pardon my language. I am so sorry.

AP

(*pointedly*) It's okay.

ZEPH

What happened if you don't mind me asking?

AP looks at him.

AP

He's a prince. He lives in Sparta. I remember crowds of people every day, coming into my temples, asking me for the future, light, a song. Did you know almost every single who prays asks me for something they could already have?

ZEPH does the same shooting star gesture.

AP

Days, weeks of sitting and listening and waiting for something interesting to happen. The people have our myths and legends, our adventures and quarrels, but that all happened so long ago, they've become just as ancient to me as to anyone. Then a boy, foolish and cosmic, with wisdom to match his beauty. The days we spend together I have no grasp on. Time continues and we remain wrapped together, suspended in water, existing for ourselves alone.

AP looks at ZEPH.

AP (cont'd)

Many others desired this stasis.

The flower has grown to the size of a sapling. AP breathes.

AP (cont'd)

We came here to relish in sun and bathe in the river. I thought we should play a game of quoit.

He drops his head into his hands again.

ZEPH

Sorry- quoit?

AP

Quoit.

ZEPH

Is that a game?

AP

Yes.

ZEPH

How do you spell that?

AP

I don't know.

ZEPH

Oh!

AP

I threw the discus first, and he was enraptured by my strength, a mortal fascinated by gods' talents. He ran after my throw all spirit, and now he roams a shade beyond our sight. The discus changed directions, as you said. But it changed because of the wind.

ZEPH

What! You can't just go accusing people of things, I already said I didn't do this number one, and number two- it's- we're here, y'know- we're here and he's a flower or a little tree and move on or- we're immortal- he wasn't meant to be some god's pet obviously- and that's probably harsh I'm sorry- I'm just trying to say I guess we have to move on from mortal stuff and maybe if things were better we could live in- without the impermanent- y'know- all the stuff we have holding us down- in an ideological ideal y'know. And it- it just goes to show ya. About everything.

ZEPH nods. AP looks at him.

AP

What?

ZEPH inhales.

ZEPH

Yep.

ZEPH laughs.

Silence.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Oh is that a tree? I thought it was a flower.

AP

It's a flower.

ZEPH

Huh. Looks like a tree.

ZEPH laughs.

AP

I didn't accuse you of anything.

ZEPH

What? I- You did, just now.

AP

No.

ZEPH

What- yes! You literally did like five minutes ago and then before that too when I first came over to see if you were okay, which, by the way, I didn't have to do.

ZEPH laughs.

AP

I didn't. I just said it was the wind that moved the discus.

ZEPH

I'm pretty sure you explicitly accused me earlier but whatever-

AP

I didn't.

ZEPH

Whatever! Ha. God.

AP

I was so impatient in my youth.

ZEPH

Yeah I know we went to high school together.

AP

What?

ZEPH

Yeah, we were in the same history class sophomore year.

AP

Oh. I don't remember.

ZEPH

Yeah. It's crazy 'cause y'know everybody said you were gonna be the successful one, and here you are! A pantheon god it's crazy. It's like you wanna believe that the kids who have it easy when they're young will learn that life is actually hard when they grow up, but most of the time it just stays easy!

ZEPH laughs. The flower-tree has become taller than the men. AP wraps his arms around its widening trunk, his face pressed against the smooth bark.

ZEPH (cont'd)

It's like I've never even had a lover to mourn y'know, like that's crazy. But that's just life, and I feel so- so grateful for the growth that I've experienced because of those things.

AP

You knew him?

ZEPH

Oh barely, I knew of him- who didn't? I mean I know Hyacinth, I actually had a crush on him for a while, which is also crazy. But yeah I mean I knew him yes.

ZEPH nods. AP looks at him.

AP

You did this.

ZEPH

I've already said no- if you aren't going to respect me enough to believe-

AP

It was not a question.

ZEPH

What?

AP

You did this.

ZEPH

What?

AP

I am the god of knowledge.

ZEPH

Well you're also the god of medicine and uh-

ZEPH nods at the tree, which is now easily over fifteen feet tall. AP stands.

AP

(intense) You did this.

AP begins crying. He draws a bow from mid-air. He pulls back the bowstring and aims it at ZEPH.

ZEPH

Hey hey, you know I don't want to hurt you! If you attack me it's assault! Y'know people only like you because you're hot! That's all he wanted! He was just a dumb hot idiot running around having sex with pretty gods! You and him are so shallow! You don't know shit about anything! I'm real! I do things! You are so fragile! Your happiness is nothing!

AP

You are a god. What do you do?

ZEPH

What?

AP

What do you do? You said, "I do things." What are they?

ZEPH

I- I- I- I- I have- I have pain and bad things happen to me, and my life is hard, people don't like me, I don't get prayers or offerings to ignore, I get nothing! I control the wind! I bring the flowers and rain and- and grass and everything! It's me! And I get nothing!

AP

You don't get offerings?

ZEPH

No! No! You get prayers! People appreciate you and build statues of you with abs and shit! And I'm a footnote at best! Only poets describe me!

AP

Poets write the foundation of artistic creation.

ZEPH

But no one cares! Everyone's a fucking writer! Anybody can put words on paper! Only you and everybody gets the temples and the statues and the cities! It sucks!

AP

Anyone could get a temple. You might have one next year.

ZEPH

But I don't have one! That's the point! And I won't! But fucking the billionth Athena one, (*doing a dumb voice*) "Sure! Sounds great! Let's put it next to the other three on this street, and while were at it lets build an Aphrodite statue, and make sure her tits are out!" It's ridiculous! But the ones of us doing actual hard work are making sure their crops are alive and their houses don't blow away, we're the same as the fucking dirt that we also give them! Are you fucking serious?!

AP lets an arrow fly, and it hits the mud near ZEPH's toes. He yelps and jumps back.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Are you fucking crazy? You could've taken my foot off!

AP

You are ungrateful.

ZEPH

Excuse me?

AP

You live an eternity. You require constant worship and sacrifice in your name? You are a child.

ZEPH

I just wish things would go my way every once in a while! Is that so much to ask?

AP

You cannot die.

ZEPH

But I can feel pain!

AP

You wish not to feel pain?

AP impossibly draws his bowstring further.

ZEPH

Well- no that was just an example- you know what I mean!

AP looks at him. There is a long silence. The tree's branches begin to bend with the weight of fruit: peaches. They both look up to the blossoms, the distraction relaxing the tension, the bow disappearing from AP's hand.

ZEPH (cont'd)

Are those- are those peaches?

AP smiles and cries.

ZEPH (cont'd)

(laughing) I suppose that makes a certain kind of sense, considering his uh- his appearance.

AP's focus snaps to ZEPH. AP laughs. ZEPH begins laughing. ZEPH thinks that they are both laughing about the joke he just made.

AP

You are a child.

ZEPH

What?

AP

You are a child. Peaches.

ZEPH

What about it?

AP

(righteous, angry, crying, euphoric) It's an inside joke.

AP quickly retakes his bow and draws the string faster and more ferociously. ZEPH falls on his back and cries.

ZEPH

Wait! Wait wait wait wait wait!

AP

What.

ZEPH

What do you think of me- no really! Really please! What do you think of me? Am I powerful or hot or something? What am I? Please! Am I good, would you want to be friends with me?!

Would you ever have lunch with me or- or text me first?!

AP stares at him, beautiful.

AP

(serious) I think you are a sad person.

As AP lets the arrow fly, ZEPH scrambles bug-like away from him, slipping in the mud and crying. The arrow hits him in the back, and he continues running down the hill. After he crests the peak, AP fires several more arrows after him, none of which miss their target, yet ZEPH's heavy footfalls remain consistent. AP eventually stops, letting go of his bow. He trudges over to the now dying tree and kisses the rotting fruit with lips wet by tears. He laughs and cries, then reclines against his lover's trunk. AP closes his eyes and tries to fall asleep, adjusting his position several times, but the stench is becoming unbearable, and the roots are rather uncomfortable. AP cries in and for and with his lover's shade.