**PANDORA**

It was a jar for gods’ sake… a jar, NOT a box.

*Pithos* - that’s Greek for jar - a receptacle for liquids.

I know it’s a minor detail, but that’s where the devil is,

*the banality of evil* and all that.

Gods know why they chose me to talk to you,

perhaps because I’ve seen it all – literally.

My name? - Pandora. It’s also Greek - *the bearer of all gifts.*

No one remembers that.

And yes, I know the first syllable is the same as that other thing…

They’re a capricious lot, the gods.

They moulded me from earth and water,

gave me knowledge, beauty, grace

(knowledge, note, not wisdom…

they left that in the jar).

So, they gave this gift to me,

told me it was full of wondrous things

but I should never break the seal.

Well, what would you do?

Someone gives you a jar (a jar, not a box mind)

And tells you not to open it.

What choice do you have?

I thought, after the event, that it was all Zeus’s fault.

He’d whittled my mortal existence to a single purpose -

to punish humanity.

It just wasn’t fair.

I tried to put the stopper back.

Others have had similar problems with genies I know,

but they’d all gone, the troubles,

every last foul breath of them, out into the world.

What could I do?

Nothing could stop them, nothing would be the same.

Nothing will come of nothing, they say.

so now, a few millennia after the event,

sitting round this table talking to you,

I realise it wasn’t just in the lap of the gods,

the way things turned out.

I had a vessel entrusted to my care, but it was never mine to keep.

Thinking I knew better, I raged against the deities,

thought the fates had stamped their seal on things,

yet now I realise, I could have made a different choice.

What was left there seemed, at the time,

a worthless thing,

barely a whisper,

fragile and iridescent

as a butterfly wing.

Hope - *Elpis.*

While others backtracked to Olympus,

she stayed.

You’ll often see her with her flowers at funerals,

never far from suffering.

I might have missed her,

left the world without her,

if I hadn’t looked inside again.